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This dissertation examines women utopian authors of the Progressive Era who depict New Women protagonists awakening to new possibilities for their work, marriages, and domestic responsibilities; these protagonists model the process for other female characters and by extension the novels' readers. The texts I address in this dissertation are utopian because the female protagonists revise systems of labor, marriage, childcare, domesticity, and racial relations to improve women's status and to ameliorate society. However, unlike many utopian texts, they do not present an alternative time or location with a revolutionized world, but rather a revised contemporary society, which I term a reformist utopia. While these works reinstate many of the same traditionally patriarchal and capitalist systems, the novels' tempered radicalism can persuade a wider range of readers about their utopian visions. The New Women's narratives of reformist utopias frequently begin with the protagonists' newfound yearning to make money, an unconventional desire for many middle and upper-class women who more often participated in charitable labor. The novels highlight the benefits of women's profitable work by showcasing its positive impact on individual women and the community. This entry into work could thwart romantic relationships, especially because so many men opposed this pursuit. However, the novels suggest that mutually supportive companionate partnerships fostered women's autonomy, including their decision to continue wage-earning work after marriage. Although the pervasive racism of the period complicated matters for black women, black authors addressed this

oppression by creating localized utopias removed from institutionalized racism.

Managing domestic work and childcare while working for wages seemed particularly challenging for women authors to imagine in their contemporary culture, causing them to create societies outside of the United States that lessen women's work in the private sphere and enable their development in the public sphere. By demonstrating the potentially transformative consequences of women's actions, these authors seek to wake up and empower their readers to work for self and community betterment.

“YOU HAVE WAKED ME ALL UP”: NEW WOMEN’S REFORMIST UTOPIAN
NOVELS OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

by

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*To the New Women who created worlds of possibility, and to my ever-supportive kin,
Eric, Melanie, Jeffrey, Robert, and Madison.*

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did*, Mrs. Viva Weatherstone tells the protagonist Diantha, "Now you have waked me all up...I begin to see things now" (*The Forerunner*, vol. 1, no. 8, pp. 17). Thanks to Diantha, Viva has a new understanding of her role in her household and her capacity for conducting business. This awakening commonly occurs in American women's utopian works in the Progressive Era, an age of reform stretching from 1890-1920. The female protagonists, their fictional acquaintances, and by extension the readers themselves, "wake up" to new possibilities for their work, marriages, and domestic responsibilities. The protagonists often align with the New Woman who came into international cultural focus in the 1890s as individuals awakened to new possibilities for womanhood. Popular media often depicted the New Woman as a young bicycle-riding, college-educated, single, white, middle or upper-class suffragette. However, the New Women depicted in Progressive Era reformist utopian novels—along with the authors themselves—vary in their racial and socioeconomic identities. These New Women Heroines awaken to new interests in pursuing wage-earning labor, marrying a romantic companion, lessening their domestic responsibilities, and bettering their communities through reform.

This project examines reformist utopian novels from 1890 to 1919 including Adeline Trafton Knox's *Dorothy's Experience* (1890), Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola*

Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted (1892), Helen Maria Winslow's *Salome Shepard, Reformer* (1893), Lena Jane Fry's *Other Worlds* (1905), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did* (1910), Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island* (1914), Lillian Jones Horace's *Five Generations Hence* (1916), and Martha Bensley Bruère's *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* (1919). By blending the reformist and utopian impulses of the Progressive Era, these women authors affirm the hope and methodology of reform movements and encourage readers to change their lives and communities. Like the authors themselves, the protagonists exemplify New Womanhood by earning wages, bettering their communities, and marrying supportive partners. These novels expand understandings of Progressive Era women's literature by depicting areas of women's concern beyond suffrage, including labor reform, racial relations, and childcare. Additionally, unlike traditional New Woman fiction, the novels I discuss here present blissful, even utopian, endings for the protagonists. To understand what makes the restoration of these works to literary studies so worthwhile, I elaborate on their historical and cultural contexts, beginning with the figure of the New Woman herself.

Visual representations of the Progressive Era New Woman illuminate her distinctions from the True Woman, "a female role bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid with piety and purity, and crowned with subservience" (Smith-Rosenberg 13). Unlike this "innocent, helpless" woman, Frederick Burr Opper's cartoon image of the New Woman (see fig. 1) confidently stands with her feet spread apart and her hands in her pantaloons (Schneider and Schneider 16). Her stance evokes figures such as Teddy Roosevelt, the epitome of Progressive Era manliness. The woman's short hair emphasizes

her unconventional break from traditional gender norms, and her glasses suggest education and intelligence. Though a common feature of woman's fashion, the puffy sleeves actually widen her shoulders in a masculine way, but her trim waist reminds viewers of her femininity. Unlike the "Old Woman" pictured behind her who stands on a table to evade a mouse, the New Woman stands fearless and unbothered by the three mice around her feet. Oppen's New Woman breaks with numerous gendered fashion conventions, but more importantly she exudes a strength and self-assurance atypical for many representations of turn-of-the-century women.



Figure 1. Opper, Frederick Burr. "The 'New Woman' and Her Bicycle.--There Will be Several Varieties of Her." *Puck*, vol. 37, no. 954, June 19, 1895, back cover. Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012648801/>.

While Opper reinforces the New Woman's image as bold, confident, and progressive, the cartoonist resists commonly ascribed limitations regarding age or socioeconomic status. The image's caption explains that "there will be several varieties of her," spanning class levels and stages of life; servants, washwomen, nurses, widows, mothers-in-law, and Salvation Army volunteers may all be bicycle-riding New Women. However, given its publication in humor magazine *Puck*, Opper satirizes the figure. The women's appearances vary widely; some look young and fetching while others seem quite unattractive. Additionally, compared to the widow and the nurse-girl, Opper presents the washerwoman and the servant girl in an animalistic and dehumanizing fashion, likely representing women of color or immigrants from regions like Eastern Europe. While the drawing problematically presents these women, Opper's inclusion of such ethnicities in his New Woman caricature is unconventionally inclusive. Opper's cartoon offers a visual representation of a figure that Americans confronted, not just in literature. Much like analyzing the period's cartoons, studying the era's fiction deepens and complicates our understandings of American New Women who were not only interested in resisting gendered expectations, but also transforming society more broadly.

An 1898 article by Missourian Mary Hime Baker, published in *The Club Woman*, effectively captures the many and varied interests of the New Woman.¹ Baker explains the new relationship between women and work: "Labor is life and happiness for woman

¹ As a primary text from the Progressive Era, Baker's article offers insights into the range of views on women, especially those who wanted to alter traditional female roles. Throughout the project, I have incorporated primary texts such as magazine and newspaper articles to offer some historical context and examples of specific claims that individuals made about women's work, marriage, domestic tasks, etc.

as for man. Now since parents train their daughters as well as their sons for some special life work, women become producers as well as consumers, and the so-called prejudice against women wage-earners is being removed” (8). Baker posits labor as not only a source of income, but also a wellspring of “happiness” for both men and women. Though Baker may overestimate how many parents prepared their daughters for careers, progressive citizens increasingly celebrated women’s participation in wage-earning work. This new endeavor caused ripples into other aspects of women’s lives, especially marriage and motherhood. Baker addresses the latter when she asserts that “home-making and motherhood...do not come by instinct,” and that more focus on acquiring these skills would not only “reduce...domestic work” but also lead to “the ideal marriage, ideal parentage, ideal home and ideal nation” (9). The repetition of “ideal” emphasizes and perhaps overexaggerates the wide-reaching and transformative potential of increased domestic training. By arguing against instinctual maternal skills, Baker creates separation between womanhood and motherhood; she claims that the “woman ought not to be sacrificed to the mother” (8). In other words, women should not be defined exclusively by their reproductive ability, and motherhood should not preclude them from pursuing other goals.

In addition to pursuing wage-earning work and revising roles within the family, the New Woman “shows a growing discontent with the present methods in school and state” (Baker 8) and “strives to create a new society” (Baker 9). The New Woman’s reform efforts aimed both inward and outward: toward her personal and domestic life and toward her greater community’s wellbeing. Though Baker sees improvements already in

women's life trajectories, she frames the future as a better, even utopian, world for women. She writes,

In this 'good time coming'² it is prophesied that the wringer and washing machine will keep the spinning wheel company in either attic or parlor—that the new woman will no longer be an irritable, overworked upper servant, but the loving companion of husband and growing sons and daughters... (9)

Baker imagines improved domestic technologies transforming women's emotional well-being and demeanor, resulting in a companionate partnership between husband and wife. As an "independent human being who has but added strength and reason to her womanly charms," the New Woman fulfills any and all desired roles, namely worker, wife, mother, and social reformer (Baker 9).

During the Progressive Era, however, some critics argued that the New Woman was not new. For instance, Alice Hilton, in an article for *The Chautauquan*, writes that the New Woman is "not new anywhere in the world. For *the* woman of all countries and times . . . is a woman strong, capable, economically a producer of wealth, and socially equal to 'her man' or any other man of her environment" (622). Hilton reports that the idea of the New Woman emerged from urban areas where women's labor was not always visible as it was in rural, farming communities where women had been laboring for centuries. Even fiction published earlier in the nineteenth century, such as Louisa May

² Baker may reference Charles Mackay's poem "There's a Good Time Coming," set to music by Henry Russell. Though both men are from the United Kingdom, Charles Magnu of New York published their song in *500 Illustrated Ballads*. The poem reads, "There's a good time coming, boys, / A good time coming; / We may not live to see the day, / But earth shall glisten in the ray, / Of the good time coming" (Mackay). While the song addresses men and the utopian promise of a world without war, Baker describes the coming improved status for women in the domestic sphere.

Alcott's *Work* (1873), provides evidence that the New Woman may not be entirely new. Alcott depicts a female figure, Christie, who aligns with the New Woman largely because of her various employments. She eventually becomes a widowed mother who develops a supportive community for women across racial and class lines.³ Compared to the New Woman protagonists of reformist utopian novels, Christie's economic constraints require more focus on wage-earning work and less on the support she can offer the community until the end of the novel. Christie joins the evolution of the New Woman that Mary Hime Baker argues has been developing for centuries: "In the long list of new women from Mary at the tomb to our world-beloved Frances Willard, she has ever been the zealous apostle of the world's reforms, teaching not how to die a holy death but how to live a holy and whole life" (9). From Christ's mother to the national president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Baker evokes a long history of strong women who align with her understanding of the New Woman. Despite the adjective in the term itself, people such as Alice Hilton and Mary Hime Baker debated whether the figure differed from previous manifestations of womanhood. Was it only the term that was new, or was the type of woman a novelty? Or, was she just becoming more common?

While certainly qualities of the figure appeared previously, the New Woman's rise marks an irreversible change in women's progress. In 1870, 14.8 percent of women over sixteen worked. By 1910, 24 percent of women more than sixteen years old were

³ In her forthcoming chapter "Louisa May Alcott's *Work: A Story of Experience: A New True Woman at Work*," Nancy Myers argues that Christie in Alcott's *Work* "blend[s] the social ideals of the True Woman's feminine domesticity with the New Woman's desire for financial independence and self-fulfillment." Alcott "negotiates the agenda of the New Woman through Christie's exploration into meaningful work, financial independence, and social change."

“gainfully occupied” and this number continued to rise slowly over the following decades (“Comparative Occupation Statistics, 1870-1940” 92). Progressive Era American women increasingly pursued work and service outside the home, which also transformed their role within it, marking a permanent shift in women’s possibilities.

The term New Woman typically describes a very particular figure: a middle class, white, urban woman who often joined clubs, explored work in the public sphere, and advocated increased rights for women. Yet, evidence of the ideals that the New Woman embodied exists across racial, socioeconomic, and regional lines, such as in the clubs that black women joined or in the strikes that working class industrial workers initiated. For many working-class women and women of color, work was not a new endeavor, though they were interested in expanding the available employment options and improving their working conditions and compensation. Responses to the New Woman varied widely; some applauded her efforts and others chastised her transgression of typical gender boundaries. Martha H. Patterson explains that the term New Woman described “either what her detractors called an unattractive, browbeating usurper of traditionally masculine roles, or she was what her champions proclaimed an independent, college-educated, American girl devoted to suffrage, progressive reform, and sexual freedom” (2). Many readers considered New Women self-absorbed largely because they often pursued fulfilling work. Conservative citizens often criticized this interest, arguing that New Women problematically prioritized their desires over their family’s needs. However, the novels I discuss in this project offer alternative depictions of women who pursue work

not only for their own social and economic benefits but also for the good of others, reflecting the reformist and utopian impulses that molded the Progressive Era.

Utopian Fiction

The term “utopia” originates from Thomas More’s 1516 text by that name, which combines the Greek *u*, meaning “no,” and “*topos*,” meaning place. Thus, the term emphasizes the nonexistence of such a civilization. But, as Lyman Tower Sargent and Gregory Claeys point out, Thomas More “punned on *eutopia*, or good place” (1). The connotation of utopia has become a good or even perfect society. However, many utopian theorists push against this understanding of the literary genre. For instance, Carol Farley Kessler argues that utopia is “a fictionalized society in the process of becoming better, though not perfect” (7). In Kessler’s definition, utopia refers to a society making positive improvements rather than an already perfect place. Utopian fiction describes communities or worlds intended to be better than the author’s and/or reader’s own. Tom Moylan’s explanation aligns with this perspective, as he asserts that “[u]topian writing is, at heart, rooted in the unfulfilled needs and wants of specific classes, groups, and individuals in their unique historical contexts” (1). Moylan suggests that utopian authors do not imagine elaborate visions for a perfect society outside of their own context, but rather, consciously or not, address problems from their historical moment. Most scholars argue that utopia defined as perfection is impossible, and I agree, largely because what is good or ideal is subjective. While utopia for an individual may be possible, though

unlikely, a community reaching consensus on the desired elements of a society seems highly improbable without any manipulation, which would negate the utopia.

I define utopia as a community of individuals who actively improve their lives and the society as a whole. In literary utopias, the author creates the alternative community by determining what her chosen population needs to change about themselves and society to flourish. The novelists deal with real-world issues but operate entirely within the fictional realm in their utopian visions. The tension between the individual and society is a key consideration of this project, resisting the perspective that the utopian genre solely concerns itself with the social order rather than individual characters. While many utopian novels focus on societal-level perfection, these texts by women authors in the Progressive Era explore not only ways to improve their communities, but also how to better individual women's lives.

As a genre that actively pursues ideas that the author perceives would better society, utopia aligns well with the forward-thinking, optimistic, reformist attitude of the Progressive Era. Utopian fiction was a popular genre in the late nineteenth century despite—or sometimes because of—the dystopic realities for many people of color, immigrants, and working-class families. Only *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Ben-Hur* sold more copies than Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888) in the nineteenth century (Mintz and McNeil).⁴ Though unpopular throughout most of the

⁴ The utopian impulse is also clear in attempted utopian communities, from Fruitlands and Brook Farm earlier in the century, to Prestonia Mann Martin's seasonal utopian community called Summer Brook Farm initiated in 1896 in Keene, New York.

nineteenth century, Bellamy's novel caused a resurgence in the utopian genre's popularity, and many authors of utopian fiction responded directly to *Looking Backward*. As Francis Robert Shor explains, "When *Looking Backward* was published in 1888, it became a lightning rod for the revival of utopian hopes, generating a thirty-year period (from 1888 to 1918) of reform and radical change" (xiv). The novel even inspired the creation of the Nationalist Party, demonstrating the connection between fiction and reality at the time. But according to Shor, the novel's vision impacted society beyond the formation of this political party, contributing to the era's reformist impulse. Authors often intended their utopian fiction to outline plans or ideas explaining how reformers could change society. Women writers that I discuss in this project such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Frances E. W. Harper felt strongly that fiction could change the minds of their readers and, in turn, their communities and world. As such, the genre of utopian fiction overtly strives to make an impact beyond personal entertainment. Female utopian authors of the Progressive Era often addressed reforming women's position in society, especially regarding their roles as wives, mothers, and laborers.

Utopian fiction arose concurrently with the Progressive Era in America; the historical period and literary genre share the hope of a better world. While historians disagree on the period's exact date range, many approximate 1890-1920. In *A Very Different Age*, Stephen J. Diner marks the start of the Progressive Era by the increase in middle-class Americans "looking to government to do something about [the] wrenching changes in America" caused by industrialization and urbanization (3). Lewis L. Gould similarly argues:

The origins of the Progressive Era can be extended back into the 1880s, but the outlines of what would become the reform campaign began to appear about 1890. In a number of areas, Americans identified major social problems, called for an expanded role for the state, and pursued a more active regulatory government. (Gould 3)

Thus, many historians characterize the start of the Progressive Era by the changing perceptions of American citizens, especially regarding the government's responsibilities. However, they did not leave everything up to the political players. Stephen J. Diner explains that in 1890, "settlement house residents and local citizen groups initiated a variety of reform movements" (13). Citizens inaugurated the Progressive Era when they actively sought to reform society, especially for the poor, and demanded that the government do the same.

Compared to their British counterparts, American utopias about New Women maintain elements of domesticity while highlighting women's ability to work and transform the public sphere. Though the Progressive Era occurred within United the States, British women writers also published utopian and New Woman fiction at the turn of the century. In fact, some of the most prominent New Woman writers, such as Mona Caird and Ella Hepworth Dixon, were British. Their novels describing the figure frequently focus on the hardships and growth of individual women, rather than depicting women who transform their communities. This element of British New Woman fiction aligns with American versions of the literature outside of the reformist utopias. While British women also wrote utopias in this era, their imagined worlds were typically "national in scope, highly urbanized and politicized and generally limited to the public

(‘male’) sphere: reference to the domestic world of marriage and family is almost exclusively limited to a demand for easier divorce laws” (Albinski 4). In contrast, “American women’s utopias are...set closer in time to the writers’ present; the primary transformation role is not political but social—and these utopias are likewise generally communal rather than national” (Albinski 4). In other words, American women’s utopias often highlight localized changes in both the public and private spheres. In *Dream Revisionaries*, Darby Lewes characterizes a prominent distinction between protagonists in British women’s and American women’s utopian fiction: the former “eschew[s] the domestic sphere and opt[s] instead for a public life,” whereas the latter “extend the benefits of the hearth and home to the community as a whole” (58). The American New Woman heroines of Progressive Era utopian fiction do not want to pursue work and accomplishments in the public sphere instead of their domestic duties; rather, they hope to advance their careers and improve their communities while retaining options for marriage and motherhood.

Revolutionary and Reformist Utopias

Utopian fiction varies widely in its connections to the author’s historical time and place. Some utopian texts are set in the future or in a far-removed location that is radically different from turn-of-the century America, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* or Pauline Hopkin’s *Of One Blood*. These utopias, which I term *revolutionary utopias*, do not address the possibilities of transformation in Progressive Era America. Instead, they depict fantastical, separatist utopias where people can flourish, far removed

from the turn-of-the-century United States. Revolutionary utopias include both spatially-distinct utopias in an undiscovered or isolated location and temporally-distinct utopias in the past or future. Though revolutionary utopias sometimes include gender equality, the parity is typically an existing cultural norm. They do not provide narrative examples of individual people actively creating a more just world; thus, this subset of utopian fiction offers few tangible ideas for American readers to change their ideological and material realities.

In contrast, the novels I discuss in this project depict individual women substantially altering their own lives and their communities, empowering readers to do the same. The New Women protagonists change childcare arrangements, redefine the terms of marriage, or advance women's opportunities in the workforce. The novels often depict a woman moving from the home into the workforce, where she successfully provides more economic security and personal satisfaction for herself and other women in her community. These utopias, which I call *reformist utopias*, make an argument about the everyday woman, suggesting that anyone can significantly change elements of his or her current location and historical time.

Evidenced by the term itself, reformist utopias build from the nineteenth century's reformist traditions while emphasizing the utopian quality already inherent in the Progressive Era. As María Carla Sánchez explains, reform "was a crucial component of nineteenth-century life in the United States" (4). Regardless of class, race, region, or gender, many Americans participated in reform efforts including abolition, suffrage, and

temperance. Reform emerges from the belief that a better world is possible; thus, the concept has an inherent tie to utopianism. Shor explains the connection between these two impulses:

To the extent that the goals of the reformer constitute a critique of the dominant order and a radicalization of certain common ideals such as liberty and equality, the struggle for the realization of those ideals becomes invested with utopianism. Utopianism, therefore, achieves a historical resonance at those exact moments when agents engaged in a willed transformation of reality seek to redress the imbalance between what is lacking and what they desire. (Shor 183)

Both reformers and utopists identified flaws in the society's current structures and systems and strived to make improvements. Both groups also employed fiction to advance their goals. Sánchez argues that reform writing contains "explicit attempts to alter the institutions, systems, and processes that order our lives, and to alter them profoundly, in the here and now" (5). Depicting problems that citizens should address, writers of reform fiction want readers to actively help resolve current social issues. Though utopian fiction may have a similar goal, it typically depicts a society moving towards perfection in the hope that readers will help create such a world. While reform literature reminds readers of the ills in their own societies, utopian fiction emphasizes the better place. Reformist utopias combine these impulses; protagonists and their communities often start in an undesirable state but move towards perfection. Thus, the novels discussed in this project arise not only from the increasingly popular utopian genre, but also reformist literature that was influential in the nineteenth century.

The reformist utopias do not contain total overhauls of society; rather, they offer plausible revisions that provide impactful benefits for the protagonist and her community. Reformist and revolutionary utopias range in the extent of the society's transformation, though generally revolutionary utopias are more comprehensive. U.S. educational and intellectual historian Derrick P. Aldridge explains, "Progressives believed that humans were innately good and kind, and that social reform, not revolution or a complete overhaul of society, was the best means to improve American society" (423). This explanation provides the terminology of reform and revolution and suggests that the reformist utopias better capture the spirit of the Progressive Era. Though progressive reformers wanted to change negative elements of society, they also saw goodness in culture that they could maintain, even in their revised version of the world. The reformist utopias capture this balance between substantial improvement and careful revisions that maintain some of the old with the new. Within reformist utopias, the depicted society often includes positive changes that start in the protagonist's own life and spread out into the community. These changes typically emerge from the authors' own positionalities, addressing the hardships or oppressions they experienced. At the end of the authors' narratives, the societies seem perfect, as readers expect in utopian fiction. From a twenty-first century perspective, their new societies still contain limitations; even as the protagonists seek reform, they retain many of the systems and structures from the author's own period and place in their utopian society. For example, even though many of the women enter the workforce, the societies often still have essentialist ideas that limit the type, duration, or skill of women's work. Similarly, the societies rarely envision

alternatives to the capitalist system that often created poor working conditions and low wages, especially for working class women and people of color.⁵ Perhaps most problematically, many of the novels retain racist practices or perspectives even in their supposedly improved worlds. However, the novels' limited revisions may be rhetorically effective for Progressive Era readers because they align with a timely reformist approach. This fiction emphasizes how significantly and positively a change such as women's participation in the workforce can impact a community, thus encouraging readers to consider the proposed ideas more. The imagined society takes a step, or a few steps, forward, allowing women readers to see improvements without sensing that they must totally revolutionize their current culture to gain more autonomy and satisfaction.

The genres of reform and utopia, especially when combined, lend themselves to depictions of New Women transforming their communities because of the genres' inherent connections to society. The reformist utopian texts bring together the individual woman and her surrounding culture and explore ways to improve both. The narratives end on a happy, utopian note which is unique for New Woman literature. Maureen Honey suggests that the New Woman character before World War I "tended to conclude in

⁵ In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels explain their concept of conservative, or bourgeois, socialism that connects to the reformist utopian novel's maintenance of capitalistic societies. Marx and Engel explain, "A part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society. To this section belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind" (98). Reformers of the Progressive Era clearly fit into this section of the bourgeoisie as they attempted to uplift the working class rather than abolish the class system. This approach maintained the capitalist system, which in turn secures the bourgeoisie's own socioeconomic position. The reformist utopian novels advocate for revisions rather than revolutions in society, aligning them with Marx and Engel's bourgeoisie socialism.

failure or serious compromise of her desire to live in the world on her own terms” (Honey 10). The idea of accomplishing goals “on [their] own terms” reflects New Women’s desire for increased autonomy. In non-utopian stories about New Women, female protagonists must sometimes choose between a successful career and marriage. In contrast, most women in reformist utopias have everything that they desire. To achieve this happy conclusion, the women often transform their communities to make a path to accomplish their personal goals. The genre of utopia allows women authors and readers to experiment with and envision distinct types of societies that could better support both men and women, even more extensively on their “own terms.” In reformist utopias, the women authors imagine how individual women can create that world.

New Woman Heroines

Reformist and revolutionary utopias present radically different protagonists because of their distinct plot structures. Revolutionary utopias typically present passive protagonists who move from the author’s present time and location to the imagined utopia. A guide typically leads the traveler through the alternative world, aligning them with the reader who discovers features of the society alongside the protagonist. The revolutionary utopias describe fascinating worlds, but they often lack plot and character development that provide conceptualizations of the New Woman. In contrast, reformist utopias contain heroes who actively seek change in their society. In Kenneth M. Roemer’s collection *America as Utopia*, Arthur O. Lewis depicts a similar breakdown of protagonists in utopian fiction but contends that both types are heroes. Lewis’ “agent

hero” generally “carries out the plan of action the author would use to achieve utopia if he had the power” (145). Lewis frames the “observer hero” as “the author’s means for showing the superiority of the proposed utopia over his own contemporary society” (145). In my mind, the “observer hero” lacks the qualities of a hero; though they journey to the utopia, they passively receive information and do not create or contribute to the utopia. My project focuses on heroines in reformist utopias who actively change their own lives as well as their communities. Unlike revolutionary utopias, reformist utopias are rooted in the author’s historical time and location, offering tangible and often realizable visions of individual women transforming their personal and communal worlds.

I contend that the female protagonists in the reformist utopias are heroic New Women because they seek to better not only their own lives, but also the lives of other women, men, and children. I define heroes and heroines as individuals who overcome obstacles to achieve goals that benefit more than themselves. In Progressive Era utopian fiction, the female protagonists heroically journey into the world where they must overcome gendered obstacles to reach their goal of increased equality, happiness, and sometimes, romantic love. Because the utopian genre depicts good places, not just individual good lives, it lends itself to this heroic narrative as the women push for improvements beyond themselves. In *A Quest of Her Own*, Lori Campbell claims that “although examples of female empowerment are visible in literature across the centuries, the female hero does not exist in any distinctive way until well into the second half of the twentieth century” (7). Campbell’s discussion focuses on the female hero’s previous

association with sexuality and beauty, but it is unclear what exactly she means by “distinctive.” The utopian texts depicting New Women challenge Campbell’s assertion, and I would contend that the female hero exists even long before this time. The Progressive Era utopian texts present heroic women who are defined not by their physical qualities, but through their actions. Lori Campbell builds from Joseph Campbell’s definition of a hero as someone who “has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience. A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself” (*Power of Myth* 123). Female protagonists in reformist utopias join the public work force and contribute to projects that benefit more than themselves.

Not only do these protagonists highlight examples of early twentieth-century heroines, but they also offer depictions of protagonists who differ radically from a stereotypical [male] hero. Nadya Aisenberg, in *Ordinary Heroines: Transforming the Male Myth*, argues, “Examining the hero, we discover his essential narrowness which neglects concerns with community, negotiation, nature, human relations, and the enablement of individual destinies to flourish in their differentness” (Aisenberg 12). Aisenberg highlights male heroes’ frequently limited and inward focus that prevents their real engagement with broader society. She contrasts this figure with the “heroine” who is “deeply committed to a more humane society” (Aisenberg 13). Though certainly some male heroes share this priority, these reformist utopias highlight the heroine’s common commitment by demonstrating how she improves her society. Often in this process, she must overcome “those dragons that are the result of patriarchal myths and institutions that

oppress women” (Pearson and Pope viii). The reformist utopias depict the *process* of becoming a utopia, so obstacles including societal perceptions, parental expectations, and a desire for love and marriage can impede the woman’s progress toward her goals. However, the New Woman heroine finds ways to overcome these difficulties through persistence or collaboration. These utopian texts can not only broaden understandings of heroines, but also build from the turn-of-the-century concept of the New Woman to highlight the transformative power in women’s actions.

Why Read These Books?

The reformist utopian novels provide historical and literary payoffs. Outside of the suffrage movement, there remain many areas of women’s history in this era in which scholars must do necessary recovery work. Studying the reformist utopian novels broadens our understanding of women’s concerns, including labor conditions, economic structures, marital relationships, and domestic work. Fiction provided women a means to speak even without the vote, and these narratives exemplify women transforming their worlds without this political power. Because many women viewed their fiction as an extension of their political work, it is imperative to read their literary productions to fully understand the breadth of their reformist aims. Women’s reformist utopian novels channel the hope and progress of the era, highlighting women’s ability to create the changes they desire in their own lives and communities. By blending the literary genres of reform and utopia, the women authors target and empower their progressive readers, encouraging them to act. As such, the understudied texts I explore in this project provide

critical insights into women's literary production and political visions within an important historical moment.

The reformist utopias combine and resist genre expectations; they carefully navigate conventions of New Woman fiction by finding a balance between conservatism and radicalism. By tempering revolutionary ideas, these writers combat the immediate rejection that novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* faced upon publication. However, the novels offer alternative trajectories for women's lives, depicting female protagonists who often maintain their autonomy and their work even after marriage. Thus, these women writers are distinct from authors like William Dean Howells, Jack London, and Henry James, who portrayed the New Woman "as an upstart rebel who would be brought to heel by male authority and by her own susceptibility to fashion, frippery, and above all, social convention" (Tichi 593). Unlike these characters, the female protagonists of reformist utopias better their communities and marry men who support their work in the public sphere. While utopian through their pursuit of a much-improved society, these novels also resist genre conventions of utopian fiction because they depict New Women who are actively creating their desired community rather than observing an alternative world. The reformist utopias uniquely describe not only the development of the society but also the actualization of the female protagonist. Thus, the reformist utopias highlight examples of empowered women whom female social reformers could model. Unlike most utopian fiction, these novels feature individual heroines who create the change they desire rather than just encountering a world distinct from (and better than) their own.

These authors offered their contemporary readers models for New Womanhood, not only within their narratives but also through their own lives. For current readers, these novels provide multiple examples—both from the authors and the protagonists—of the understudied New Woman (especially in American literature) in her own time. Though nearly all the authors that I discuss are unknown today, their popularity and access to prominent social and literary circles in the Progressive Era varied widely. For instance, Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin was well-connected; she joined the feminist club Heterodoxy and participated in national reform movements, even writing the biography for the National Women’s Party. However, Lena Jane Fry was on the opposite end of the spectrum. There is no evidence that she knew other writers or reformers and she self-published her novel. Most of the women authors I discuss in this project were engaged in reform work and, as discussed previously, saw their fictional publications as an additional means of persuading others⁶ and bringing about their desired changes. Carol J. Batker explains that “literary women are not often read as activists or reformers. Their political contributions are generally underestimated or subsumed under aesthetic or literary concerns” (Batker 3).⁷ While it is important to explore these novels as literary texts, it is

⁶ The argument about the persuasiveness of utopian narratives has a long history. In his 1595 *Defence of Poesie*, Sir Philip Sidney “coupled utopia with poetry and ranked them both above philosophy and history as more persuasive in leading men to virtue than a weighty philosophical argument” (Manuel and Manuel 2). Though utopia has taken on many forms over the centuries, the portrayal of a much-improved society has consistently encouraged readers to change their beliefs or take action.

⁷ Batker’s *Reforming Fictions* focuses on Progressive Era Native American, African American, and Jewish American Women’s literary and journalistic writing. Batker further elaborates, “While critics such as Hazel Carby, Carla L. Peterson, Claudia Tate, Diane Lichtenstein, and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff have foregrounded the political activism of nineteenth- or turn-of-the-century works, the political writing and art of early twentieth-century women has been neglected” (3). Thus, though scholars have explored the political work of literary women before and after the Progressive Era, many writers within the period could be lauded more for their political activism within their fiction.

also imperative to interpret the writing about desired societal changes—even when told through narrative—as activism. Thus, reading and studying these novels can expand our understanding of women’s activism at the turn of the century. Even through creating and sharing their novels, these women authors model New Womanhood for readers. The authors’ varied social positions only enhance the novels’ claims that individual women—regardless of status—can make changes that improve their own lives and their communities.

In addition to the writers themselves, the authors’ female protagonists offer examples of New Womanhood. All the women share a desire to transform their own lives through pursuing personally and economically satisfying work while improving the economic and/or social wellbeing of other community members. Like the authors, the female protagonists come from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds that help or hinder their work towards these goals. For example, in Helen Maria Winslow’s *Salome Shepard, Reformer*, Salome is a wealthy young woman who inherited the Shawsheen Mills. Though she must overcome gendered conventions that would deter her leadership role in the mills, she already has access and authority in that space. In contrast, Grace Noble in Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* is a black teacher in the South without any remaining family. Though the racist and sexist ideologies of the Progressive Era increase the obstacles that Grace must face, she becomes a self-supporting writer with the help of her collegiate female friends. The protagonists demonstrate that despite one’s positionality, a woman—such as the reader—can make substantial changes in her town or region, as well as in her own life.

Many of these heroic New Women protagonists engage with issues relevant during the Progressive Era, but one of the most dominant movements—suffrage—is surprisingly absent from the utopian novels.⁸ By addressing other issues like antitrust and labor reforms, these novels expand our understandings of Progressive Era women’s concerns. Their neglect of this issue likely results from women’s increasing agreement regarding suffrage. Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider assert that “despite the female antisuffragists, women were more united in the suffrage movement than at any other time in American history[,]” especially in the second decade of the twentieth century (244). Rather than reiterating largely agreed-upon issues, the women utopian authors may address other concerns to persuade and inspire their female readers to actively pursue change in their own communities. As the authors wrote the novels before the nineteenth amendment, the reformist utopias suggest that women do not need voting rights to make changes in their town or region, empowering the ordinary woman in her local community.

Organization and Methodology

I have selected these particular texts for this project because, of the utopian novels written by American women in the Progressive Era,⁹ they best fit the narrative pattern of

⁸ Some earlier texts did address the question of women voting. For instance, Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights; or, How Would You Like it?* (1870) makes an argument for suffrage by switching the roles of men and women in a dream world, highlighting the absurdity of the restrictions placed on women in nineteenth-century America.

⁹ In *Daring to Dream*, Carol Farley Kessler identifies sixty-six utopian novels and short stories published by American women between 1890 and 1920. While other utopian texts may exist, Kessler’s list encompasses all the Progressive Era utopian texts by women that I have encountered thus far in my study of the period. Stories that similarly reform the author’s here-and-now include Eva Wilder McGlasson’s

reformist utopias and highlight the unique topics explored within each chapter (i.e. work, romance, race, and domesticity/childcare). The common narrative amongst these texts involves a woman finding economically profitable and satisfying work that benefits the community, while also pursuing a romantic relationship that leads to marriage and motherhood. While there are some variations in these details, the texts discussed in the chapters two, three, and four align overall with this storyline. To fully explain the two major facets of this narrative pattern, the second chapter discusses work and the third chapter analyzes romantic relationships in reformist utopias. The fourth and fifth chapters discuss complications to these most straightforward iterations of the narrative trajectory. The fourth chapter highlights texts about black women who must confront pervasive and institutionalized racism in their pursuit of work, service, and love. In the fifth chapter, I consider novels that focus less on individual women and differ more from the author's historical moment, moving them toward revolutionary utopias on the spectrum of reformist to revolutionary.

Brodhead's *Diana's Livery* (1891), Mary Agnes Tincker's *San Salvador* (1892), Adeline Knapp's "One Thousand Dollars A Day: A Financial Experiment" (1894), Rosa Graul's *Hilda's Home: A Story of Woman's Emancipation* (1897), Frances H. Clarke's *The Co-opolitan; A Story of the Co-operative Commonwealth of Idaho* (1898), Caroline Atwater Mason's *A Woman of Yesterday* (1900), Mrs. May Anderson Hawkin's *A Wee Lassie; or, A Unique Republic* (1902), Mary Ann Fisher's *Among the Immortals: In the Land of Desire* (1916), and Anne Ratner's *The Birth of Universal Brotherhood* (1916). Not all these reformist utopias feature New Women; some contain male protagonists and others include more conservative women uninterested in challenging typical domestic roles. Reformist utopian texts that contain New Women figures include Alice Elinor Bowen's *A New Aristocracy* (1891), Lizzie Boynton Harbert's "Amore" (1892), and Kate Douglass Wiggin's *Susanna and Sue* (1909). Many of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's works fall into these categories: "A Woman's Utopia" (1907), "Aunt Mary's Pie Plant" (1908), "A Garden of Babies" (1909), "Her Housekeeper" (1910), "Martha's Mother" (1910), *Moving the Mountain* (1911), "Maidstone Comfort" (1912), "Bee Wise" (1913), and "Mrs. Hines' Money" (1913) all contain arguably New Woman characters who change their surrounding culture.

In the following chapter, “‘I Propose to Be My Own Agent’: Stepping out into Economically and Socially Profitable Work,” I explore the female protagonists’ interests in work that is personally satisfying, economically profitable, and communally beneficial. While middle and upper-class women increasingly volunteered in the public sphere in the Progressive Era, these protagonists express an interest in work that creates or increases their income. For example, Salome Shepard of Helen Maria Winslow’s *Salome Shepard, Reformer* (1893) assumes control of the mills she has inherited, creating a sense of purpose in her life. Furthermore, she enhances the wellbeing of the workers by improving their working and living conditions and offering new educational and social opportunities. Through her increased involvement in the mill’s affairs, she meets Villard, a superintendent and former mill worker; they eventually get married and he supports her continued leadership in the mill. Diantha’s fiancé and eventual husband in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *What Diantha Did* (1910) requires more convincing, but he ultimately supports her work. Diantha employs her knowledge about efficient domestic labor to develop an economically profitable business that improves the lives of domestic workers and mistresses. Both Diantha and Salome offer examples of self-motivated, community-minded individuals who successfully obtain satisfying and economically profitable work.

Though Diantha and Salome successfully find supportive romantic partners, the unconventional nature of middle and upper-class women participating in wage-earning labor in the public sphere could make this a difficult pursuit. I explore this topic in the third chapter, “‘If You Think We Could Do It Together’: Working to Ensure Equal Footing in Marriage.” In the Progressive Era, some women married out of necessity and

others married to obtain or maintain a certain social standing. However, women increasingly sought companionate partners who supported them personally and professionally. The female protagonists in the reformist utopias demonstrate this interest. For example, Dorothy in Adeline Trafton Knox's *Dorothy's Experience* (1890) works as a teacher while improving the economic, social, and spiritual wellbeing of working class women in her community. Much like Salome Shepard who works with Villard, Dorothy collaborates with a local preacher named Edes Hindlay. He encourages Dorothy's work, and true to the narrative trajectory of these reformist utopias, Edes and Dorothy eventually marry. Martha Bensley Bruère's *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* (1919) depicts a protagonist who similarly connects to women outside her normal social circles during her government-mandated year in the Service. Inspired by the experience, Mildred continues her work related to food production even after this mandatory year. The novel explores her navigation of multiple suitors, most importantly her [one-time] fiancé Nick, who represents her former life confined by restricted gender expectations, and John, who signifies the value of work for the nation. Nick's time in the Service also transforms his perspectives, and Mildred is surprised to discover a supportive, companionate relationship with her former fiancé. Both novels depict women who seek and find romantic partners who encourage their work outside of the domestic sphere.

All the protagonists in the first four novels are white, aligning with a stereotypical understanding of the New Woman. However, some reformist utopias depict African American New Women invested in personal fulfillment and community betterment. The particularly volatile and even deadly manifestations of racism in the Progressive Era

compounded the difficulties that these women faced, but the female protagonists persistently pursue better lives for themselves and for their communities. In the fourth chapter, “‘She Has Done What She Could’: Creating Utopia for African Americans in the Progressive Era,” I analyze two novels that depict localized utopias, or prospering, fulfilling, and isolated communities for African Americans. In Frances E. W. Harper’s *Iola Leroy; Or, Shadows Uplifted* (1893), Iola reconnects with her family after the Civil War, a truly utopian reunion given how infrequently this occurred historically. Throughout the novel, Iola works various jobs such as teaching and nursing and, in the end, focuses her attention on communally beneficial projects through her church in North Carolina. Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916) describes a woman named Grace Noble who becomes a writer to persuade African Americans that migrating to the African continent would improve their lives. Ironically, though her friend Violet Gray moves to Africa to become a missionary and initiate this society for African Americans, Grace Noble remains in Texas. However, she cultivates her own localized utopia by continuing her writing, becoming a wife and mother, and separating herself from the country’s institutionalized racism. Harper and Jones Horace surprisingly do not describe futuristic or far-removed revolutionary utopias free from lynchings, racism, discrimination, and segregation. However, their localized utopias encourage African American readers to envision possibilities for improving their own lives and communities even if those in power rejected their value.

In the fifth chapter, “‘There is Only One Duty Before Us’: Revising Systems of Domesticity and Childcare,” I discuss two novels that address these topics in imagined

worlds outside of the United States. While both societies mimic American culture, I argue that their removal from the country proper suggests that changes to domestic labor and childcare may have been particularly challenging for Progressive Era women to imagine. Though some of the protagonists in reformist utopias have children, the authors frequently include only a brief mention of this fact. The authors do not typically address how women can manage their home and children in addition to their wage-earning work. Lena Jane Fry's *Other Worlds* (1905) offers suggestions by describing a more revolutionary Wealth Producing and Distributing Society on the planet Herschel that employs trained and passionate individuals to care for the community's children full-time. Families also have options for their domestic arrangements; they can select homes with kitchens or hotel-style accommodations with room service. Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island* (1914) also takes place outside of the United States, in this case on a remote island where five shipwrecked American men encounter five flying women. The women's wings symbolize their freedom and ability, but the men trap the women and forcibly remove their wings, signifying the women's forced assimilation to American ideals of domestic womanhood. The novel implies that women must take small steps toward actualizing their potential that is already within them, but that men have constricted. Eventually, Julia leads the other women in resisting the men, advocating for their rights to choose their roles on the island, whether they be mother and homemaker or leader and architect. Both novels resist the notion that women should remain in the domestic sphere caring for children and describe, in vastly different ways, visions of societies that allow for women's increased involvement in work outside the home.

Taken together, the reformist utopias communicate the authors' tangible and practical ideas for improving women's status and society more broadly. This project argues that the authors published reformist utopias as a form of activism. The protagonists' narrative trajectories offer models for real women who could change their local communities. For instance, in Helen Maria Winslow's novel, *Salome* has an "awakening desire to help" as she increasingly understands the poor conditions in the mills and explores how she can make improvements (52). This concept of protagonists waking up to their own interests and abilities, and in turn inspiring the women around them, pervades utopian novels written by American women in the Progressive Era. The novels similarly attempt to awaken readers to their own power and potential. By depicting women from a range of backgrounds and identities, the reformist utopias collectively suggest that many varieties of women can be New Women who change their lives and communities, despite the sometimes-limited conceptualizations of the figure in Progressive Era popular media. I contend that these works broaden our understandings of Progressive Era women's concerns beyond suffrage, demonstrating women's investment in diverse issues including working conditions, domestic systems, moral reform, gendered labor, racist ideologies, and childcare. Additionally, these novels challenge standard genre conventions by blending reformist and utopian literature. The women author's depictions of an improved future blend old and new ideas to persuade a broader range of readers to alter their personal lives and broader societal constructions. Such an understanding illuminates the reformist nature of the Progressive Era and its fiction more

generally. But first, I explore what motivates many New Women to change their lives and communities: an increased desire to participate in wage-earning work.

CHAPTER II

“I PROPOSE TO BE MY OWN AGENT”: STEPPING OUT INTO ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY PROFITABLE WORK

Middle and upper-class women who wanted to work in the Progressive Era faced several arguments opposed to that pursuit. The government, businesses, churches, and even families often argued that marriage and work were incongruous for women, or that it would be difficult for working women to find a romantic partner. Societal pressures also discouraged many women from wage-earning labor because it could reduce the opportunities or pay for women whose economic positions required earning wages. A 1900 article published in *Harper's Bazaar* states that even though “85 per cent of women who enter industrial and professional fields are not dependent on their earnings for support[,]” women should not “accept less pay for given work than the work is worth” because this could cause “vital injury to women who work for a living” (“The Rich Woman's Duty” 770). Middle and upper-class women often participated in charitable work, and many citizens feared that wage-earning work would detract from this perceived moral obligation to the community and nation. “The Rich Woman's Duty” asks,

But is not the moral duty of the woman of wealth rather to work for the good of humanity than to engage in some trifling matter of industry, which profits no one anything, which, furthermore, lessens by one the chance of the needy woman to obtain employment, and which occupies the time and energy of the woman of wealth to the exclusion of her ability to properly discharge the duty of stewardship which she sustains in her possessions? (770)

These views of wage-earning labor “profit[ing] no one anything” and charitable work as financially stable women’s “moral duty” or “duty of stewardship” establish rigid dichotomies between good and bad labor, deeming one selfish and the other selfless. These perspectives on women’s labor are loosely associated with the New Woman and True Woman, respectively. In *Our Sisters’ Keepers*, Jill Bergman and Debra Bernardi explain that throughout the nineteenth century, “charity work was often articulated in terms of women’s roles as the nation’s civic stewards” (7). Maternal nurturers applied their care to broader society, extending their domestic role to the public sphere. Governmental, societal, and religious leaders asked women to offer their time and effort without any compensation. In contrast, women who earned wages were sometimes viewed as New Women with too much “egotism, selfishness, self-assertion, and ‘too much dirty, nasty independence’” (Schneider and Schneider 17). A middle or upper-class woman pursuing wage-earning labor had to navigate these debates about selfish and selfless work.

Many women, though, were excited about entering the wage-earning labor forces, and female Progressive Era utopian writers often depicted women taking on leadership roles in business or joining an existing industry. Navigating this tension between charitable work and the selfish pursuit of labor, the authors emphasize that even profitable work can be beneficial for the community. This dual purpose of work establishes the foundation for the utopia; the women can pursue fulfilling work while positively changing their communities. However, the women face resistance from numerous family members and friends. For example, in Helen Maria Winslow’s *Salome*

Shepard, Reformer (1893), Salome takes charge of the mill she inherits when the workers strike and much to the agent's and her aunt's dismay, she substantially improves the mill, the workers' homes, and the workers' educational opportunities. She also proposes a profit-sharing system for the mill that encourages workers' dedication and focus because they would also benefit from higher profit. This labor transforms Salome by giving her days purpose; she develops relationships with the mill workers and learns more about the business world. *Salome Shepard, Reformer* aligns with Edward Bellamy's view that the elite class should transform society to benefit everyone, as Salome is an heiress working to improve the livelihood of low-income mill workers. However, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did* (1910), Diantha, a middle-class woman, develops and executes a new domestic service system in which professionals clean and cater for middle and upper-class families. This system not only benefits middle and upper-class women's home management, but also Diantha and her employees' economic positions and the quality of their lives. Diantha's system reflects the rising professionalization and emphasis on scientific management in the Progressive Era. Both utopian texts describe women who do not simply enter the existing workforce but change the systems and structures of labor. Diantha's and Salome's work produces economic, personal, and communal benefits; because the impact extends beyond their own lives, these protagonists are heroic New Women. Overcoming naysayers, Salome and Diantha both accomplish their utopian dreams that better themselves and their surrounding communities, serving as models for middle and upper-class Progressive Era women navigating the debate of selfish and selfless work. In *Salome Shepard, Reformer* and

What Diantha Did, the fictional New Women heroines encourage middle and upper-class contemporary readers to pursue wage-earning labor, highlighting its advantages for self, family, and community.

Though work and labor can be difficult to define in absolute terms, throughout this project I use labor as the more general term for any extended effort, while work refers to profit-earning tasks in the public sphere. More specifically, labor entails any extended effort in the public or private sphere in an attempt to move toward accomplishing a task, regardless of economical profitability. Charitable action, then, would fall into this category. Though conceptualizations of labor often involve manual or strenuous physical exertion, I use the term more broadly to include physical, mental, and emotional effort. In contrast, work is an action in the public sphere intended for economic gain, either through an official job or an entrepreneurial venture. While the term work often describes household tasks, I use labor as the more general term applicable in the domestic sphere. Thus, while all work is labor, not all labor is work because some labor does not earn a profit. The novels that I discuss in this chapter illustrate these ideas surrounding work: Salome works as a manager in the mills and Diantha works to develop and manage a business while also laboring in her marital home. The New Women protagonists' work allows their self-efficacy to develop and provides the ability to support themselves financially; therefore, these New Women gain a greater ability to choose a desirable marriage partner.

This chapter of the project discusses labor because profitable work is the foundation for these heroic New Women. Their desire for work motivates their

movement into the public sphere, which can complicate their development of romantic relationships, as I assert in the following chapter. Additionally, if they work outside their homes, they must ascertain whether and how they conduct housework and childcare, which I examine in the fifth chapter. Wage-earning work, however, often creates these gendered complications, thus making this factor of economic pursuit imperative to examine at the outset. This chapter begins with historical context regarding the 1890's labor landscape that sheds light on the conversations that Winslow enters in *Salome Shepard, Reformer*. I then address Salome's awakening, overcoming of naysayers, work with the mills, newfound life satisfaction, and improvements to the workers' wellbeing. Next, I concentrate on Winslow's audience and the novel's reviews, followed by a discussion of the authors Winslow and Gilman themselves. The chapter's second half focuses on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did* and underscores its historical context and racist rhetoric, followed by a discussion of Diantha overcoming critics and convincing her husband Ross that her work is valuable. Through these discussions, I contend that Salome and Diantha are heroic New Women who overcome various forms of resistance, find personal satisfaction and economic profit, and enhance their communities. The New Women heroines model for readers how wage-earning work and community engagement can be inwardly and outwardly beneficial. Both novels offer revisions—not overly radical changes—to capitalistic, patriarchal society, declaring that even small changes in life and community can substantially impact overall satisfaction, especially for middle and upper-class white women.

Historical Context for Winslow's Novel

Countless factors influenced women's evolving role in the workforce prior to the 1893 publication of Winslow's *Salome Shepard, Reformer*. The Civil War allowed and necessitated that women work, rising industry created more low-skill positions, and growing cities formed hubs with jobs in various sectors. In 1890, 19 percent of women over the age of sixteen earned wages, compared to 90.5 percent of men the same age¹⁰ ("Comparative Occupation Statistics" 92). Though the disparity is quite significant, the percent of women earning wages had increased by more than four percent since 1870. These statistics do not include the vast number of women working outside wage-earning positions, predominantly in their private homes or on their farms. Regional availability, along with women's class status and racial background, often determined women's options for wage-earning work. For instance, many domestic workers in the Northeast were black women; though this field often entailed better working conditions than factories, most white immigrant women preferred the latter because factory jobs could provide more dignity and freedom. Industrial employers frequently hired women because they received lower wages than male workers, making them an economically preferable pool of employees. Thus, many working-class women were able to obtain jobs in newly created industrial sectors, though the labor conditions were often abysmal. Middle-class women started entering the business world as clerks, while upper-class women usually did not become wage earners at all. In addition to race and class, marital status and age

¹⁰ In the 1890 count, 1,047,968 women reportedly worked in manufacturing and mechanical industries (compared to nearly 4.5 million men), and 1,610,068 women worked in domestic and personal service (compared to 623,890 men) ("Comparative Occupation Statistics" 100).

significantly impacted job possibilities. In 1890, more than 90 percent of women over thirty-five years old were married (Kessler-Harris 109), and “at the turn of the century, 87 percent of female workers were unmarried and nearly half were under twenty-five” (Kessler-Harris 153). Societal conventions encouraged women to work only if economically necessary, especially after marriage. If a married woman defied statistical norms and worked after marriage, “the assumption [was] that a husband owned his wife’s labor” and therefore her wages (Cott 168). Familial and societal expectations hindered women’s ability to independently decide whether they would work, and how they would spend their money if they did earn wages. This cultural landscape often stripped women of their professional and economic autonomy. Slowly but surely more women entered the wage-earning workforce, but most employed women were single, young, and from the working class. However, middle and upper-class New Women in the Progressive Era often asserted their desire and right to work.

Reformers, unions, and governmental officials debated suitable forms and conditions of women’s work, which sometimes caused legislative changes. Even considering Massachusetts alone (significant as the setting of *Salome Shepard, Reformer* and the location of the iconic Lowell mills), the landscape of labor was active and changing. For instance, earlier in the 1840s, “thousands of mostly female textile workers” in Massachusetts signed a petition for a law prohibiting workers from laboring more than ten hours a day (Kessler-Harris 182). The petition argued that the grueling schedule worked against “the great principles of equality and republicanism...so essential to...the existence of a free and virtuous people” and proposed that shorter hours would allow

more time “for general reading and information” (qtd. in Kessler-Harris 182). The state also passed a law in 1874 that prohibited women from working more than fifty-eight hours a week (“Protective Legislation”). A similar 1890 Massachusetts law prevented women from working after 6:00 p.m. (Kessler-Harris 191). Citizens and lawmakers heavily debated this type of legislation; some suggested that restrictions should protect both male and female workers, while others asserted that women were more fragile and thus required stronger regulations to safeguard their wellbeing. This latter argument reinforced essentialist notions of women’s weaker nature that limited their opportunities for gainful employment. Despite the legislative protections for women, unions often prohibited female members, especially at the national level.¹¹ Male-dominated unions like the American Federation of Labor sometimes pushed for equal rights or protections for women, but often so that women workers would lose their appeal to employers. Though many unions and lawmakers professed to be concerned for women’s best interest, women remained distanced from the center of the working world.

Salome’s Awakening

Salome Shepard is not a working-class laborer impacted by these conversations and legislations; rather, as an owner, she could either perpetuate or improve the conditions of the mill workers. She lives with her aunt, Mrs. Soule, in a large mansion overlooking the Shawsheen Mills, which Mr. Otis Greenough (her late father’s appointee) managed. Burnham and Villard are both superintendents at the mills, Villard

¹¹ The American Federation of Labor that had “surged to the forefront of union leadership” did not permit women to join (241). However, The Knights of Labor obtained 50,000 female members once they allowed women to join the national organization in 1881 (Woloch 241).

being the younger of the two who had previously worked in the mills. When the mill workers strike, Salome consciously gets involved, but must overcome those who dismiss her abilities. She is frustrated with her currently dull life and recognizes her privileged position as well as her lack of knowledge regarding mill operations. Eventually, her plans for the mills improve her own life by giving it purpose and increasing the mills' (and therefore her own) profits, but they also benefit her community and the workers by improving their living conditions, morale, and income.

Though Salome Shepard lives a privileged life as the Shawsheen Mills heiress,¹² Winslow emphasizes Salome's lack of fulfillment and hesitation to leave her protected, comfortable space. Winslow writes, "Salome Shepard passed a dull afternoon. Although a young woman of resources she found herself in no mood to enjoy any of them after lunch. The newest volume of essays seemed insufferably dull..." (26). She is young and rich, but her life lacks fervor. Both her reading and her afternoon are strikingly monotonous. Winslow does not depict the inner workings of Salome's life, partially because the text suggests it lacks excitement, but also because the workers' strike causes a break in her routine and initiates the novel's narrative. At first, the strike is just a curiosity, or even an annoyance, as she says to herself, "Dear me! What nuisance these work-people are. Why can't they be sensible, and when they are earning a living, be content?" (8). By calling them "these work-people," Salome defines the mill employees

¹² As a single woman, Salome could inherit property and maintain control over a business like the Shawsheen Mills. Though earlier in the century there were more limitations for married women, by the 1890s "there was a general acceptance in all areas of the country, in both community-property and common-law jurisdictions, that married women should have the power to devise and bequeath property they inherited" (Acosta).

by their work. Additionally, she emphasizes their distinction from herself because she has never participated in wage-earning labor, or it would seem, labor of any kind. She insists that workers should be satisfied and happy with what they have, even though Salome herself “knew perfectly well that she could not do without the luxuries to which she had always been accustomed” and for which she has never worked (8). Salome leads a privileged but dull life and is unable to understand the plight of the mill workers because their experiences are so distinct from her own.

Though Salome experiences an awakened desire to mediate the situation, she tells herself, “Let things alone, keep to your sphere, young woman,—the proper, well-regulated, protected and chaperoned sphere of a delicate young lady, and let the world right its own wrongs” (9). Salome invokes the discourse of spheres, Salome’s separation results primarily from her class status. “[L]ady” is both a gendered and classed term, and Salome’s reflection suggests that upper-class women should remain distinct from the world’s affairs. Salome struggles to imagine herself improving the mills because she associates that work with reformers, not “delicate young lad[ies]” like herself. She does not envision herself “in a bloomer costume and black bombazine bonnet” (9). Nevertheless, the strike has broken up her dull routine and made her question how she should and will respond to the situation, if at all.

Despite her initial hesitation, Salome slowly convinces herself that she has the position and power—if not the responsibility—to intervene in the Shawsheen Mills strike. At first, “something,” presumably her conscience, whispers to her, “If any human being has the power of making over the world in any smallest degree . . . that person must

be a young, attractive woman, with a vast property and absolute control of several hundred people, besides two millions of dollars in her own right” (9). This voice’s description of who can enact change curiously aligns precisely with Salome herself. While the voice emphasizes the “absolute control” that such a young lady would have, it also suggests that even such a person with so much property, power, and money might only be able to change the world in the “smallest degree” (9). In other words, Salome’s inner voice demonstrates awareness of her privilege and the accompanying responsibility, but also recognizes that though her power is great in this small section of civilization, she may not be able to change the entire world. This framing aligns with the Progressive Era emphasis on reform rather than revolution; Salome does not pursue an overthrow of the United States’ capitalist systems. Instead, she wants to change structures within her individual mill that enhances the workers’ lives but maintains the overall social hierarchies, and she hopes that other mill owners will emulate her system.

Salome’s desire to increase her involvement in the mill emerges from the obligation and opportunity she sees to better the company and the workers’ lives.

Eventually, she vocalizes her thoughts to her aunt:

But sometimes, lately, aunty, it has occurred to me that a young woman of average talent, with a great business on her hands which employs two thousand people, may have something to do in life more than to seek her own selfish enjoyment—a pursuit which, after all, is not elevating and leaves but a restless, unsatisfied spirit in its wake. (29-30)

Salome explains to her aunt that her life leaves her with an “unsatisfied spirit” and that she is ready to do something more. She also indicates that her opportunity comes not

from superb skills but from her socioeconomic status—the money that she has and the family she was born into— which granted her ownership of the mills. The strike initiates a transformation in Salome, as she begins to see that she has “plenty of money and an awakening desire to help” (52). Salome aligns with the “noblesse oblige”; Kathleen D. McCarthy describes the figure in Progressive Era Chicago “reach[ing] into the city’s neighborhoods, studying the needs of those they sought to aid” (122). As a “noblesse oblige,” or a “richesse oblige,” Salome is motivated by the “duties of the rich to the society that has enriched them” (McCarthy ix). Salome aids the mill workers who have produced the items that, once sold, sustained Salome’s social and economic position. But before she can act on this new desire arising from her consciousness waking up, she must overcome ideologies that discourage women from associating with business matters.

Salome Overcoming Naysayers

Despite her new recognition of her privileged position and her awakened impulse to help, Salome faces critics who try to keep her in the “proper, well-regulated, protected and chaperoned sphere” (9). Mrs. Soule, Salome’s aunt, asserts that upper-class women should act like proper ladies, and Greenough suggests that women should not be involved in business affairs. Mrs. Soule emphasizes her niece’s distinct position from the mill workers when she calls them the “ignorant laboring class” (29) and a “lower order of beings” (32). She indicates that getting entangled “in such common things” (28) like strikes is “vulgar” (29) and “not ladylike” (31): “Any woman, young or old, brought up as delicately and carefully as you have been, demeans herself by connection with such things. You have an agent—a manly and capable one; leave the settlement of such things

to him” (29). Though Mrs. Soule suggests that age is irrelevant, the expectations for Salome’s gender and class status encourage her detachment from the mill workers and operations. Mrs. Soule’s comment also highlights the turn-of-the century view that women could sometimes own property and companies but could not manage them. Though Salome’s parents are deceased, her aunt stands in as a parental figure, a representative of her family and their status, and begs Salome to remember who her parents were. Mrs. Soule hopes that such a reminder will encourage Salome to remain apart, rather than engaging with the lowly mill workers.

Greenough also discourages and patronizes Salome’s attempts to discuss and resolve the strike. Appointed by Salome’s deceased father Floyd, Greenough represents a traditional view that men are exclusively capable of holding leadership positions in the working world. When Salome tells Greenough that she thinks that it would be fair to raise wages because the mills are making more money, Greenough says, “Much you know about it, little girl...Much any young lady of the world can know of such matters” (35). Greenough infantilizes Salome, using her age and gender to dismiss her; he implies that these qualities make her unaware and unknowledgeable about mill operations. In part, this criticism is true. Salome does lack understanding of business affairs, but she acknowledges her ignorance and wants to remedy it. He dismisses her, though, calling her a “little girl” even though she is now a young woman. In an even more pointed, patronizing remark when Salome asks Greenough whether he raises wages when profits are higher, he says, ““My dear young lady...don’t bother your brains with such things. You cannot understand them. Why try?”” (39). Greenough again emphasizes that her

youth and gender limit her interest and ability to understand the mill affairs. Greenough's view stems from Progressive Era conversations regarding women's biologically inferior position.¹³ As U.S. women's and gender history scholar Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains,

Gender distinctions were rooted in biology, and so, therefore, was the patriarchal world order. For either women or men to question conventional gender distinctions—for women to grasp power, for men to relinquish it—would violate nature. Disease and death, social disarray, all would result within the elaborate physiological system men had created. (47)

Many Progressive Era citizens thought that biology determined men's and women's abilities, and that disturbing typical gender roles could disrupt the social order.

Greenough's assertion that Salome cannot comprehend profits and wages emerges from the Progressive Era emphasis on gendered biological distinctions.

Beyond Greenough's dismissal of Salome because of her age and gender, he also exhibits skepticism regarding women's involvement in social improvement. He disdains reformers, and given the novel's title, Winslow clearly wants readers to identify her within that group. When she is just beginning her journey into the business world, Greenough tells Salome, "We would not have you turn from being your own charming self, and become a learned blue-stocking, or bloomed reformer" (35). Greenough

¹³ In *The Mismeasure of Man*, Stephen Jay Gould challenges the objectivity of science, especially when it comes to matters of biological determinism, which he says "holds that shared behavioral norms, and the social and economic differences between human groups—primarily races, classes, and sexes—arise from inherited, inborn distinctions and that society, in this sense, is an accurate reflection of biology" (52). This scientific basis reinforced established social hierarchies; thus, Greenough saw himself as biologically more adept at business ventures than Salome.

condescends to women involved in reform or pursuing an education. Additionally, he proposes that Salome is charming, and that participation in these perceived unladylike endeavors will diminish that appeal. Similarly, when Salome calls a meeting with the mill managers and superintendents to discuss the strike, Mr. Greenough says, "Getting strong-minded, eh? Well, go on. I suppose you want to practice on us before taking a larger field. Going to take the suffrage platform? Or build school-houses for the niggers? Or do you aspire to the bureau of Indian affairs? Which is it?" (75). While the novel is not directly concerned with racial affairs, Greenough points to contemporary reform efforts related to the topic and questions whether Salome's increased participation in the mill is simply practice experience before she joins a larger progressive movement spearheaded by women. He does not anticipate that she will transition into a management role that would increase her own profits and better the workers' conditions and lives. Salome's desire to improve the employees' working and domestic conditions aligns with progressive labor perspectives. However, she becomes more active in the mills because she feels an obligation as the owner and her grandfather Newbern's vision left in his personal manuscripts inspires her, not because she wants to join what Greenough deems the trendy movement of reform.

Greenough's character represents traditional perspectives that encouraged affluent women to remain idle and uninvolved in social and business matters, but his death signifies a movement away from these views. During a meeting at Salome's home, Greenough tells Villard, Burnham, and Salome:

I must confess...that I cannot, after a life-long devotion to old-fashioned ideas, take any stock in these new-fangled, impracticable ones. I cannot, at my time of life, change my ideas...Mills are run to make money. So long as I hold the position imposed upon me by the late Floyd Shepard, so long shall I refuse to countenance extravagance and quixotism. But I am an old man. No one cares any longer what I think. It is the young people with experience whose opinions count nowadays. (79-80)

Greenough aligns himself with an older perspective that prioritizes economic success, while also acknowledging that a new wave of youthful thought is taking control.

Greenough's anxiety builds as the mill workers approach and yell at Greenough to give them "fair play and fair wages" (81). His distress is evident through his purple face and his reference to the mill workers' "wretched, polluting presence" (82). Though Salome critiques the crowd for their treatment of a man who has been working for them so long, her defense only adds to Greenough's despair because a young, reforming woman speaks in his defense. He falls "suddenly at the feet of the woman who stood there boldly championing him and her sense of right" (84). In Salome's public rise into leadership, Greenough collapses and dies, signifying a passing of ideas that limit women and progressive business practices.

Salome's Labor in its Cultural Context

Though Salome is enthusiastic about her plans for the mill, she is also aware that she has much to learn. This cognizance demonstrates maturity and reasonableness respected by the other leaders. She tells Villard and Burnham that she has "read everything [she] could think or hear of, on subjects bearing on this case" (126). Salome actively seeks knowledge related to the mills, strikes, etc. through reading. However, she

claims that her perspectives stem from her grandfather Newbern Shepard's notes. Though this revelation could seemingly diminish the significance of a young woman assuming a leadership role because her grandfather had laid out the plan, Salome must execute it. Additionally, while Newbern proposes the overarching ideas, Salome must appraise the current situation and make countless decisions about the construction of the new homes, improvements to the mill, and the systems of labor and pay. Through this process she does not rely on her own intuition but collaborates with more experienced leaders and workers. She says, "I shall come to the office every day and, with your co-operation and kind help, shall learn the business" (98). She explains that her plans for the mill and its workers are too great to "trust the mills in the hands of a stranger" (98). Salome states, "I propose to be my own agent" (98). Her declaration recognizes the knowledge she can gain from veterans of the business, while also acknowledging her own "schemes" that she will implement as her "own agent" (98). Salome's consideration of men's ideas and knowledge should not be disheartening; she responsibly learns about previous modes of operation before implementing her own. She approaches the task of becoming an agent with an enthusiastic and inquisitive demeanor, which allows her to understand the current systems and consider how to revise them.

Salome fully immerses herself in work, which not only improves the Shawsheen Mill Workers' conditions, but also offers an example for other mills and factories. Her work is distinct from many Progressive Era New Women's labor because she does not seek employment or develop a company, but rather steps into leadership in her own family's business. She builds new quarters for single male and female workers that are

light, airy, comfortable, and beautifully (though affordably) decorated. In the hall, Salome develops and offers activities for the workers, including classes that teach new skills and dances to provide a safe, moral space for entertainment. She also builds homes that families can live in, renovates the mills to be “lighted, aired and drained[,]” and adds updated machinery (114). She states, “Nothing but the best of goods, made after the most approved modern methods, must go out from us. Otherwise the world will say we are visionary and lack good business sense” (115). Though Salome primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the workers, she also emphasizes that the mill must produce quality goods and be lucrative. Though she will profit financially if her plan is successful, she is more invested in the scheme’s profitability so that other mill owners will consider implementing similar strategies. Thus, while she does feel that she can only change the world in the “smallest degree” (9), she hopes to model responsible mill management so that the changes in her community will become standard on a larger scale.

Though Salome takes a progressive approach to mill management, many of her ideas recall the Lowell Mills. This positioning blends conservatism and progressivism; Salome combines her grandfather’s emphasis on the wellbeing of workers with her own ideas for a profit-sharing system. Winslow describes the beginnings of the Shawsheen Mills, explaining that “blooming girls...came with earnest purpose to make this new life and its outcomes subservient to a better future” (11) and “[a] mutual goodfellowship had existed, then, between employer and employed” (12). Salome admires the working girls described in her grandfather’s manuscripts who read, write, study, engage in politics, and are “noble, self-sacrificing, helpful women” (30). If Salome could replicate this positive

environment, she could cultivate a community-wide charitable spirit that would accomplish much more than herself alone. Newbern Shepard's happy era of the Shawsheen Mills aligns with the celebrated Lowell Mills. Numerous sources praise the Lowell mill girls, stating that they "evinced so much sagacity and intelligence and strong traits ("Lowell Mill Girls" 338) and that they "were all well dressed, ...healthy in appearance, ...and had the manners and deportment of young women" ("The Lowell Factory Girls" 8). Lucy Larcom, a mill worker and writer, emphasizes the women's labor and productive leisure activities, much like Winslow: "They made and mended their own clothing, often doing a good deal of unnecessary fancy work besides. They subscribed for periodicals; took books from the libraries; went to singing schools, conference meetings, concerts and lectures" ("The Lowell Mill Girls" 482). Female mill workers can only participate in these endeavors, though, with infrastructure that offers a library, lessons, and space for meetings and activities. Under Salome's father's leadership, the mill focused solely on profits rather than on mutually respectful and beneficial relationships. Thus, while Salome is looking forward to implementing improvements in the mills, she is also looking backward—before her father's management—to reinstate her grandfather's positive, nurturing mill environment. Salome's vision often aligns with the historical Lowell Mills, especially through its dedication to enhancing the employees' lives and work. However, Salome's plan incorporates an additional element of profit-sharing that could economically benefit both the mill and the workers.

The mutually beneficial approach to the mills effectively reestablishes better conditions for the mill workers. Salome implements three beneficial changes: increased

pay through the profit-sharing system, better living and working conditions, and opportunities for learning and activities. The profit-sharing¹⁴ encourages the mill workers to work efficiently and use resources effectively. After the first year, the workers' increased productivity created a "surplus which gave a dividend of four and a half percent" divided between the workers (207). Salome also builds a hall for single men and women and tenement houses that families could rent or purchase, which "dignif[ied] the laborer by the tangible proof of his own value" (209). Lastly, she provides ample classes and activities in the hall, learning and living in a clean environment transforms the workers' demeanors. The narrator explains:

Young men had become self-respecting and carried themselves with increased dignity. Young women gradually grew less frivolous and more earnest. Thrown together under so much better conditions than formerly, both sexes emulated the politeness which they were quick to notice before Villard and Salome. They became more quiet and decorous; they read a better class of books. (218-219)

The Shawsheen Mill workers' character and behavior improved, according to the narrator. The cause-and-effect relationship is clear: the "better conditions" produce better workers who are gentle, respectful, and learned. All these changes, Winslow argues, lead to the mill workers' improved behavior, which in turn means a better community.

¹⁴ Profit-sharing was an emerging idea in Progressive Era America, but quickly become a popular business practice. In the *Historical Encyclopedia of American Labor*, Joseph F. Rodgers explains, "By the late 1920s, over a million workers were enrolled in profit-sharing plans, though many of those systems collapsed during the Great Depression." Though the concept of profit-sharing circulated in other countries, beginning in France, in the early nineteenth century, it was a new and progressive strategy in America at the time of Winslow's publication in 1893.

Through this process of transforming the mills, Salome overcomes critics who challenge her abilities and demean the mill workers by depicting them as unintelligent and ungrateful. For instance, Greenough says to Villard, “They would not know what to do with a better chance for life, as you call it, if they had it” (37). Similarly, after a mother gives Salome’s charitable gift to her alcoholic son, Greenough tells Salome that she should not give money to the townspeople because they would use her resources to “drag themselves down to a lower depth of degradation” (52). Greenough has convinced himself that charitable works are not productive or could even damage the wellbeing of the workers. Similarly, Burnham tells Salome that the mill workers are “fairly steeped in ignorance” and that they will likely doubt any steps she takes toward improvement (123). Burnham and Greenough position themselves above the mill workers and try to persuade Salome that the mill workers do not deserve kindness or charity. Salome must not only demonstrate that upper-class women can do economically profitable work, but also that a charitable spirit is productive.

Salome patronizes the mill workers much less than Burnham and Greenough; however, the relationship between the employer and employee enforces hierarchy and ascribes to the notion of cultural uplift. She treats the mill workers respectfully, demonstrated when she approached a woman with the same “tone and manner...she would have used to any of her aunt’s friends. It did not occur to her to be patronizing or condescending” (49). Though she is friendly and well-meaning, Salome degrades the workers and reinforces her self-perceived superior position: “Look at the girls in this mill—in my grandfather’s mill to-day—in my mill...Beings of bangs and bangles and

cheap jewelry, of low aspirations, and correspondingly low morals!” (31). Though she critiques their current attitudes and behaviors, she takes some ownership when she states that they “know no better” (31). She says, “I tell you, I feel that I am, somehow, responsible for them” (31). Like Greenough and Burnham, Salome feels that the mill workers are socially and morally beneath her. However, unlike the male leaders, she hopes that their circumstances and thus the workers can change. She thinks that her plans for improved conditions and programs will uplift the workers. She explains,

...if we begin with something light and amusing, and not too far above their level, and gradually raise the tone of the entertainments, they’ll find themselves attending lectures and other sugar-coated forms of intellectual betterment, and like them; and never mistrust that I am working out a mission on their unsuspecting heads. (144-145)

Not only does this comment suggest that Salome thinks she knows what is best for the workers, but also that they are so unaware that she can trick them into learning. Similarly, she explains to her aunt that the hall will host dances that will “lift them above wanting a low entertainment of any kind, and teach them how such things are carried on by better people,—by us, for example” (143). Salome’s use of “better” reinforces her family’s superior position to the mill workers and naturalizes the hierarchies themselves. Though more friendly and hopeful than her male counterparts, Salome positions herself above the workers and undermines their potential to better their own circumstances.

Salome’s mission to improve the workers’ morality coincides with Progressive Era discourse regarding the social uplift of the working class. Many of the women’s clubs and social movements demonstrate this impulse for uplift that allowed middle and upper-

class women to extend their domestic skills and housecleaning techniques to the nation itself. Thus, even as she is showing that women's work can both benefit the community and offer economic profit, she is pulling from the discourses surrounding women's charitable work. Humanitarian middle and upper-class women invested in Working Girls' Clubs often interacted with working class women in these spaces. Grace H. Dodge, president of the Working Girls Society, explains that the club rooms would often contain "books, pictures, comfortable chairs, [a] piano, etc." (8). Much Like Salome's halls, these club rooms offer "classes, music, laughter, books and companionship, as well as thorough co-operative sympathy" (Dodge 8). One working girl explains that in the club room, they "get new ideas, join in pleasant and instructive talk, and feel that [they] are worth something" (Dodge 8). Reformers argued that club rooms provided a necessary alternative to questionable establishments like saloons. An 1890 *New York Times* article asserts, "After a day of monotonous labor the craving for something more cheering and exciting is as strong in one sex as in the other, and if it be not supplied in an innocent fashion there is danger that it will find more questionable forms of satisfaction" ("Working Girls' Clubs" 4). Like the ideologies surrounding the noblesse oblige, this article implies that the wealthier classes should provide safe, moral locations with wholesome activities for working class individuals. These organizations can make their lives "more attractive and more human" ("Working Girls' Clubs" 4); in other words, club rooms and halls at mills can provide space for workers' education and entertainment that will encourage the acquisition of middle and upper-class behavioral norms. Though well-

intentioned, this stance reinforces social hierarchies by deeming working-class individuals immoral and unable to direct and manage their own lives.

Improvements to Salome's Life through her Labor

In addition to improving the workers' conditions, Salome's work as an agent improves her life by providing satisfaction, purpose, and even romantic love. Salome remarks that she was "never so happy as [she's] been" since she started working in the mills (148). Her work also increased the mill's profitability: "Never had the Shawsheen Mills been more prosperous...or their future looked brighter" (181). Through her own actions, she assuages her initial complaints about idleness and boredom by the novel's end. These benefits mimic Jane Addams' descriptions regarding the opportunities settlement houses offer for skilled young people looking for productive work: "...in America a fast-growing number of cultivated young people...have no recognized outlet for their active faculties. They hear constantly of the great social mal-adjustment, but no way is provided for them to change it and their uselessness hangs about them heavily" (352). Though Salome Shepard did not attend college like Addams and many other settlement house workers, she has much in common with them—she is wealthy, cultured, and bored. According to Addams, settlement house work can provide young people like Salome a place to devote their energy and abilities. Addams sees directionless wealthy youth as "pitiful as the other great mass of destitute lives" (353). Rather than working in a settlement house, Salome devotes her energy to her family's mill which benefits everyone involved. Additionally, rather than paying room and board to a settlement house, she assumes a leadership role in the company that contributes to her economic

prosperity. Salome models civic engagement while finding satisfying labor and profiting financially.

Salome's work provides opportunities to cultivate a relationship with Villard, whom she eventually marries because of their shared values and goals. He tells Greenough that they should tell Salome about the strike because "if [he] were a young woman, with unlimited leisure and wealth, [he] should care to know something of so tremendous an interest as the Shawsheen Mills represent—that is, if [he] owned them" (24). Unbeknownst to Villard, Salome is developing this desire for increased participation in mill affairs. Unlike Greenough, Villard always supported, even encouraged, women's involvement in business matters. Together Salome and Villard improve the mill and the lives of its workers, and this shared work draws them closer. She recognizes that the improvements have been a collaborative effort; "without him she could have done little, and would have made many mistakes" (234). Villard and Salome marry, and Salome relinquishes her management of the mills to Villard. Though literary scholar Carol A. Kolmerten argues that Salome "give[s] up [her] meaningful work for marriage," Salome explains that she has many more schemes for improving the mills (118). Salome does not relinquish her work but hopes that the transfer of ownership will eliminate any class boundaries between the newly married couple. Salome and Villard's mutually supportive marriage signifies an additional positive outcome of her work with the Shawsheen Mills.

Winslow's Audience and the Possibility of the Utopian Vision

Salome Shepard, Reformer is a utopian novel because the society becomes a perfectly-functioning system, and everyone involved is happy and satisfied. This unrealistically perfect conclusion may frustrate modern readers, but it presents an argument to a Progressive Era audience about the utopian possibilities of an individual woman's actions. Utopia is commonly viewed as impossible because societal perfection is subjective and thus unattainable. However, reviewers of Winslow's text did point out that Salome's ideas were practical and possible. For instance, Carroll D. Wright, the Chief of the National Bureau of Statistics, writes,

The ideal set up for a factory village...is not, on the whole an impossible one. Many of the things done at the Shawsheen Mills by the heroine have been done in practical life by men who had the welfare of their kind at heart. These things are being accomplished every day in different parts of the world. (1)

Wright argues that these improvements can be made, and in some places have already been implemented, by *men*. Though he does not directly address the fact that a woman leads these changes in the novel, Wright implies that "the ideal set up" is possible if a man is in charge. Robert S. Howard, a Massachusetts State Senator, also highlights the novel's practicality, pointing to real-world changes like mills shortening working hours. He suggests that "such a course of humane treatment of operatives as is outlined in 'Salome Shepard, Reformer,' may yet be a possible and practical thing" (3). In fact, he thinks that employer/employee relations would be greatly improved if Winslow's ideas were executed: "If such an experiment could be tried in one of the large manufacturing

cities, as Salome Shepard tried in her native village, it would be the best example and the best lesson that could be set in this country” (3). Salome’s hope that her mill will become an example in her fictional world bleeds into our reality; Howard proposes that this fictional example could influence the operations of actual mills. Harris and Wright both discuss labor on an international level:¹⁵ Howard proposes that the United States should adopt more of England’s practices, and Wright argues that mills around the world employ progressive strategies like Salome’s. Wright and Howard emphasize the connections between fiction and reality and the usefulness of Salome’s ideas for actual mills and factories.

Some reviewers discuss the function of *Salome Shepard, Reformer* for its potential audiences. Unlike Carroll Wright, reviewer Annie Fields,¹⁶ presumably the wife of James Fields of famous publishing company Ticknor and Fields, addresses the protagonist’s womanhood: “The book is sincerely and thoroughly a part of our modern life and ideals. The reason for its existence rests on the fact that every-day girls...are often far from carrying out the natural promptings well described in the story” (1).

Salome represents an active woman, uncommon amongst many girls who focus more on

¹⁵ In “Texts and Contexts: American Women Envision Utopia, 1890-1920,” Carol A. Kolmerten points out that Salome “works hard in the tradition of Robert Owen to reform the conditions of the factory workers at her mills” (115). Wright and Harris likely also had the British social reformer in mind, especially his work at the large textile mill in New Lanark, Scotland.

¹⁶ Helen Maria Winslow writes about Annie Fields in *Literary Boston of To-day*: “there is no power in Boston to-day like that of Mrs. Fields; for influence is still not altogether a matter of shouting, or of fonts of type, but goes out with a power to leaven all things, which will not be understood until, from the other side of the warp and woof, the pattern woven into the life fabric is seen” (59). Annie Fields was a major player in the literary world. Speaking of Fields’ relationship with Sarah Orne Jewett, Winslow writes, “to be the favoured guest of a woman like Mrs. Fields is a privilege that can be accorded but to a few” (65).

“entertainment” and “tours of enjoyment” than active engagement in their immediate community (Fields 1). Fields emphasizes the text’s potential impact on young women, arguing that it “would be well if every girl—those who ‘work’ and those who do not—should read *Salome Shepard*, as a source of stimulus and practical inspiration” (2). Fields hopes that Salome’s example can inspire other women to transform their lives and communities. By mentioning both wage-earners and non-wage-earners, Fields contends that the book could benefit factory and mill workers as well as wealthy individuals with access to lead and change industries. Robert S. Howard asserts that the novel can cross gendered boundaries as it contains “a lesson for the rich manufacturer and the woman of leisure and opportunity” (4). Howard explains the novel’s usefulness for workers and business owners:

The main idea for the book is that the interests of capital and labor are neither identical nor incompatible; they are reciprocal. When the world realizes this, and such mutual advance steps are taken as are indicated in ‘*Salome Shepard, Reformer*,’ both employers and employees will find themselves under improved conditions. (4)

Howard argues that Winslow’s revised systems of labor and capital will benefit everyone.

Though these reviews are positive, their publication in *The Arena* suggests a bias for Winslow’s book. Benjamin Orange Flowers owned the journal and founded The Arena Publishing Company that published Winslow’s *Salome Shepard, Reformer* in novel form. The arguments about the novel’s practicality and appeal emerge from critics who likely agree ideologically with Winslow. Additionally, the journal could profit from additional sales of *Salome Shepard, Reformer*, potentially motivating them to solicit

reviews that praise the text. Roger E. Stoddard explained that *The Arena* “was a major journal of social reform during the twenty years of its financially troubled life” (273).

The publication aimed, as its founder-editor Benjamin Orange Flower explains, to appeal “to the thought-moulders of the nation in all avenues of moral and intellectual activity” (qtd. in Stoddard 273-274). While loyal readers of *The Arena* would probably agree with the ideas set forth about mill reform, many outside this readership would likely see Winslow’s theories as too progressive (or quixotic, as Greenough suggests), necessitating the reviews’ emphasis on Salome’s plan’s practicality. Stoddard explains that the “new, unconventional, and controversial ideas developed in its pages by such strong-minded reformers guaranteed that

The Arena would never become popular” (274-275). Though the journal had a limited readership because it emphasized reform, it still obtained a circulation of 30,000 (Stoddard 275). While Stoddard does not list the specific data for Winslow’s text, most of the publisher’s books sold around 2,000 copies (Stoddard 279). The fact that *The Arena* published Winslow’s novel demonstrates that there was a community of writers and readers who wanted to explore these “contemporary social, political, and economic problems” (Stoddard 280). Like many texts published by Flowers, *Salome* attempts to

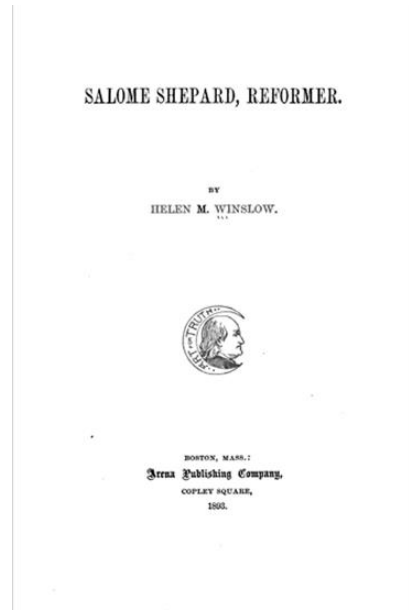


Figure 2. Helen M. Winslow, *Salome Shepard, Reformer*, 1893. Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salome_Shepard_\(1893\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salome_Shepard_(1893).png).

“offer solutions or expose problems” to a relatively small but supportive audience (Stoddard 280).

Winslow and Gilman

Salome's publication through The Arena, a progressive publishing company, comes as no surprise because the author was an active member of reformist organizations. Helen Maria Winslow participated in a variety of wage-earning and service-oriented labor through teaching, journalism, and club work, and her fiction reflects her position on the importance of such labor. Born in Vermont in 1851, Winslow was in the “ninth generation of descent from Kenelm Winslow, a brother of Governor



Figure 3. Helen M. Winslow. Wikimedia Commons.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Helen_M._Winslow.png.

Winslow, of the Plymouth Colony. Her great-grandmother Winslow was Abigail Adams” (Willard and Livermore 791). According to Willard and Livermore, Helen Maria Winslow “was educated in the Vermont schools and finished the normal course” (791-792). After her mother died and her father remarried, she moved to Boston, lived with her three sisters, taught for several years, and continued her writing (Willard and Livermore 792). She worked for

several newspapers including *Boston Transcript*, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and *Saturday Evening Gazette* (Willard and Livermore 792). Winslow formed multiple organizations for women writers, including the New England Woman’s Press Association and the Boston Author’s Club. In the 1890s, she became the assistant editor of the *General*

Federation of Women's Clubs' journal, the *Club Woman*. She wrote numerous articles "celebrating club women and their work in journals such as the *Arena*, the *Critic*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*" (Hill 442). In fact, her obituary says that she was "famous for her club activities and affiliations" ("Helen M. Winslow Dead at Shirley" 13). Her other fictional works addresses topics relevant to Progressive Era women. For instance, *The President of Quex* (1906) depicts club women working on municipal reform and *A Woman for Mayor* (1909) considers "municipal-housekeeping" and suffrage (Hill 443). Like her protagonists, Winslow promoted reform; she worked toward progressive change through her fiction and club participation. Winslow also worked toward legislative changes; "By her extensive lecturing she helped materially in the passage of the mothers' pension bill in New York State" ("Helen M. Winslow Dead at Shirley" 13)¹⁷. Winslow's work and fiction consistently advocate for women's improved status.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was much more well-known than Helen Maria Winslow in their time, and Gilman remains an important figure, especially regarding women's rights. In fact, Nancy Woloch calls her "the most influential feminist of the



Figure 4. Hollinger. "Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman." *The Critic*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 196. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015024305107;view=1up;seq=197;size=150>

¹⁷ Historian Abe Bortz explains that mothers' pensions were "cash payments to widows with young children to enable them to care for their children in their own homes."

Progressive Era” (343). Growing up with her single mother made Gilman acutely aware of women’s difficulties in late nineteenth century New England. She started writing poems on this topic and became famous in the 1890s when the *Nationalist* published some selections (Pringle 131). She joined the Nationalist movement for a brief period, started lecturing on diverse topics, and edited the San Francisco *Impress* for twenty weeks. She also participated in the California National Women’s Congresses and stayed periodically at Hull House. Gilman published *Women and Economics* in 1898 and the following year she attended the Quinquennial Congress of the International Council of Women in Europe (Kessler, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* 32). The following decade, she published many more books related to children, the home, and labor, consistently advocating for women’s increased autonomy. Gilman also joined the Heterodoxy Club that began in 1912 in New York City. Mabel Dodge Luhan describes the organization as a club “for unorthodox women...women who did things and did them openly” (qtd. in Schwarz 1). Though Gilman did not champion some women’s club movements of the day—namely temperance and suffrage—she advocated economic independence for women through her essays, lectures, and fiction.

One of Gilman’s greatest achievements was the publication of her own journal, *The Forerunner*, from November 1909 to December 1916. Judith Schwarz explains, “Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ideas were so advanced for her time that few of her articles on socialism and feminism were accepted for publication” (61). Numerous publishers rejected Gilman, prompting her to create her own journal that she wrote in its entirety, even including the advertisements. *The Forerunner* uniquely advocated for both women’s

rights and socialism, which appealed to only a small audience. Gilman “wished to point out the expanding implications of the notion that women were people...*The Forerunner*, therefore, was less a suffrage paper than a woman’s paper, and less a woman’s paper than a paper passionately interested in humanity” (Stern). Within its own pages, the journal explains its purpose: “to stimulate thought; to arouse hope, courage and impatience; to offer practical suggestions and solutions, to voice the strong assurance of better living, here, now in our own hands to make” (Gilman, “The Forerunner” 32). Gilman stresses the immediate and the practical, and because *What Diantha Did* was the first serialized novel in the magazine, these goals were likely foremost in her mind. The magazine had a small number of subscribers and never reached the 3,000 needed to cover running expenses. As Stern explains, “Only half its cost of production (\$3,000 a year) would be met by its income; the other half Mrs. Gilman would meet by additional writing and lecturing” (Stern). The magazine’s persistence demonstrates Gilman’s commitment to dispersing her ideas, even though she had to self-fund the project. Despite its sparse number of subscribers, Stern asserts that the magazine likely reached “some five to seven thousand readers, a figure obtained by the editorial arithmetic of multiplying the number of subscribers by five to estimate the number of readers.” Even including these potential readers, the magazine only reached a small portion of the population, but it has received more attention over the last century because of Gilman’s lasting legacy.

Racist Rhetoric in Gilman’s Novel

What Diantha Did is a product of its era, including its denigration of people of color and recent immigrants, which alters the novel’s depiction of who should and will

thrive in the described utopia. Diantha's plan benefits many people, but the racist rhetoric, from a twenty-first century perspective, undermines the novel's feminist ideals. In 1900, "black women comprised roughly one-fourth of domestic workers," and this rate increased so that by 1930, they made up "nearly one-half of the servant population" (Piott 60). Gilman's text describes an individual employee in her kitchen named "Julianna, a 'person of color'" who is contrasted with other black women; she was "not the jovial and sloppy personage usually figuring this character, but a tall, angular and somewhat cynical woman, a misanthrope in fact, with a small son" (*WDD*, 1, 10, 13). Julianna is distinct from other black women, according to Gilman's description, because she is more composed and less visibly happy. The term "sloppy" particularly demeans "personage[s] usually figuring this character" and promotes a stereotype of unkempt black women (*WDD*, 1, 10, 13). Similarly, when Diantha and her mother discuss potential new clubs for working women, Diantha says that a club's matron could be one of the working girls' mothers or aunts. Her mother responds, "Do you really imagine, Diantha, that Mrs. O'Shaughnessy or Mrs. Yon Yonson can manage a house like this as you can?" (*WDD*, 1, 11, 12). Diantha flushes and says, "No, mother, of course not" (*WDD*, 1, 11, 12). These names intentionally reference Irish and Scandinavian women, nationalities that Diantha and her mother, along with other white citizens¹⁸ in the Progressive Era, viewed as less

¹⁸ Irish and Scandinavian people were typically not considered white in the Progressive Era. In *Unprotected Labor*, Vanessa H. May writes that the Irish were seen as "a race unto themselves and were inherently and biologically different from the Anglo-Saxon, or British race, from which native-born Americans imagined they descended. Not only were the Irish different in many native-born Americans' estimation, but they were also inferior" (7). At the turn of the century, whiteness was a much narrower identity construction, including individuals like Diantha but excluding the O'Shaughnessys.

capable. Later in the novel, Mr. Thaddler asks Ross about the ranch, “Them Chinks pay up promptly?” (*WDD*, 1, 13, 15). While Ross responds that they do, the identification by race implies that Chinese people may be inherently less likely to pay promptly.

These examples of racial bias, exhibited both in the narrator’s speech and in various characters’ dialogue, are not surprising given Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s own racist ideologies. While Judith Allen contends that Gilman was not overly racist compared to her contemporaries and that discussions of race make up a very small portion of her overall work (335-342), Carol Farley Kessler points out that Gilman “believed in racial evolution, a feature of Social Darwinism”: “Her views on race... reveal ethnocentrism” and on the issue of race, unlike women’s rights, Gilman “was unable to think beyond her era” (*Charlotte Perkins Gilman* 47). Although Gilman’s racist rhetoric limits the utopian potential of *What Diantha Did* from a twenty-first century vantage, the novel aligns with mainstream white Progressive Era thought. A reviewer of the 2005 edition produced by Duke University Press argues that the novel “exhibits both the strengths and weaknesses of her ideology: an unbridled utopian optimism tinged by a disturbing ethnocentrism” (“Brief Reviews” 94). Ironically, Gilman addresses domestic servanthood—a highly racialized topic—but evades direct conversation about the ways her new system maintains or revises the racial make-up of the workforce. *What Diantha Did* “offer[s] an answer to the servant question, one that optimistically gives her female laborers greater agency and protection than other domestics but tends to efface the racial and ethnic realities of household labor” (Rich, Introduction 3). The novel does not fully grapple with the realities of racial division within this field of labor but given Gilman’s

beliefs she seemingly prioritizes white women in portraying Diantha's developing business. Though not exceptional for the era, *What Diantha Did* conveys how white women authors frequently privileged in their articulations of utopia.

Historical Context for Gilman's Novel and Diantha's Plan

Between the publications of *Salome Shepard, Reformer* and *What Diantha Did*, the number of women wage earners rose. The percentage of women over the age of sixteen listed in gainful employment on the "Comparative Occupation Statistics: 1870-1930" grew from 19 percent in 1890 to 24 percent in 1910. This statistic does not account for the numerous women performing non-wage earning domestic labor, but including the 24 million women working as homemakers in 1930, 72.2 percent of women would qualify as doing gainful work, as compared to 76.2 percent of men (90). Women's occupations varied widely; by 1920, "of the gainfully employed distinguished 572 occupations or occupational titles...there are only 35 in which women are not represented" (46). Throughout the Progressive Era, more women became involved in wage-earning labor. Women appeared in almost every industry, and when including homemakers, the percent of male and female laborers was nearly equal.

Unlike Salome, Diantha of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did* (1909-1910) does not inherit a large business; rather, she must create her own using her available skills and knowledge. Diantha was the eldest daughter in a family with little financial means; she "early developed such competence in the various arts of house work as filled her mother with fond pride, and even wrung from her father some grudging

recognition” (Gilman, *What Diantha Did*, *Forerunner* vol. 1, no. 2, 15).¹⁹ Out of necessity, she learns “the various arts of house work[,]” which she argues is a learned skill set despite her father’s belief that it was women’s “natural field of ability” (*WDD*, 1, 2, 15).²⁰ Diantha outlines her domestic labor’s economic value, conservatively estimating \$2,048.50 over her lifetime. This calculation demonstrates Diantha’s connection between household labor and economic value, even though her work was unpaid. Diantha’s demonstration of her domestic economy skills lays the foundation for her plans to develop a profitable business.

Diantha reveals her plans slowly throughout the novel, but from the start she demonstrates her passionate belief in her scheme’s ability to improve many lives. She is engaged to Ross Warden, who is overwhelmed by managing a store and caring for his mother and four sisters after his father’s death. Unlike Salome who has only her aunt, Diantha must consider many family members, including her fiancé’s mother and sisters, when imagining her future. She explains to Ross, “I have plans that will be of real benefit to all of us, something worth while to do—and not only for us but for everybody—a real piece of progress—and I’m going to leave my people—and even you!—for a little while—to make us all happier later on” (*WDD*, 1, 3, 21). Though she excludes details,

¹⁹ For the sake of conciseness, I will abbreviate the subsequent citations as (*WDD*, 1, 2, 15) to indicate the text, as well as the volume number, issue number, and page number of the quotation in the original publication of the *Forerunner*.

²⁰ This understanding of domestic labor is a core belief of Gilman’s, and one that is supported in her non-fiction such as *Women and Economics*. While many of her ideas are relevant to her points made in *What Diantha Did*, because other scholarship has considered these connections between *Women and Economics* and her fiction, I am more interested in removing the text from its Gilman-centric study and exploring it in relation to its historical context and contemporary texts describing heroic New Women.

Diantha argues that her progressive ideas will have widespread benefits. Diantha eventually explains that she will become a house-maid to demonstrate how effectively, efficiently, and economically she can manage a home's cleaning and cooking. She is industrious and resourceful, evaluating her own skill set to determine how to create a successful, beneficial business. As Sheth and Prasch suggest, Diantha "uses her knowledge to create and service a market where none existed before" (332). She will eventually train other women to execute the same effective household management, which she perceives will better the lives of workers and employers; additionally, Diantha believes her new business will bolster her life and those of her family and friends.

Progressive Era understandings of scientific management in the domestic sphere influenced Gilman's articulation of Diantha's plans. Though this idea emerged much earlier in the nineteenth century with texts like Catharine Beecher's *Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1842), as well as *American Woman's Home* (1869) that she co-authored with her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, the topic received more widespread, national attention in the Progressive Era. The newly established American Home Economics Association developed a new academic discipline, a scholarly journal, and educational curriculum. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 developed outreach programs through land-grant universities to educate rural communities about agricultural and domestic science. An article published in *Current Opinion* that same year, though, argues that the home was "the last of the great industries remaining without scientific organization" ("Scientific Management in the Home" 310). Despite its growing popularity, many women had not implemented the theory in their domestic work. The writer of "Scientific Management in

the Home” communicates that only eight percent of families have servants, meaning that most women do their own housework and could benefit from scientific domesticity (“Scientific Management in the Home” 310). John B. Guernsey explains that scientific management is “a science based on definite principles, and these principles can be applied as well to the management of the home as to the management of business enterprises” (Guernsey 821). He

elaborates on the principles of scientific household management, describing the first as the “[r]ealization of the essential operations involved in household management, and the elimination of non-essentials; and the development, from the laws governing the above, of a true science” (821). Many discussions of scientific management include identifying and distributing tasks, maximizing efficiency, and minimizing costs. For instance, Mrs. Christine Frederick’s *Household Engineering, Scientific Management in the Home*

explains that the “correct grouping of equipment” can reduce the potato-peeling process by three minutes (see fig. 5). As the field continued to expand, turn-of-the century

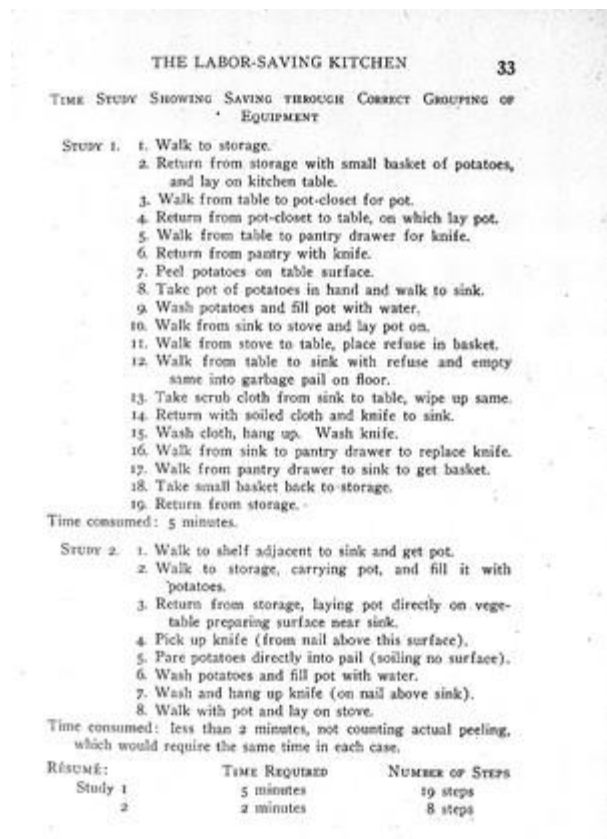


Figure 5. Christine Frederick. *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*. American School of Home Economics, 1919. <http://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/record=b1292995>

proponents of domestic science studied and taught methods to improve the efficiency and economics of American homes.

Closely tied to scientific household management is the professionalization of domestic work, another goal of Diantha's (and of Gilman's). In her article "The Science of Home Management," Mary Clark Barnes asks, "'Would adequate training, and formal recognition of the value of the training, do for domestic service what it has done for the art of nursing—lift it from the rank of labor to the rank of a profession, and so remove the 'social stigma'?" (637). Though she does not answer her inquiry, she implies that effective training would better the domestic workers' status and their work's quality. An introduction to an *Outlook* series entitled "Home Making the Woman's Profession" similarly advocates "careful technical education" for "the vocation of housewife" because "the management of the house requires as much ingenuity and capacity as the management of the factory or a clerical force" (909). This writer contends that "modern science can be harnessed to the use of the household just as it has been harnessed to the use of a steel works..." (909). The *Outlook* series advocates domestic education comparable to the fields of medicine, management, and clerical work, suggesting that it requires a level of skill equivalent to these other occupations. The article emphasizes that the work is challenging; thus, increased awareness and implementation of scientific management skills can aid the efficiency and effectiveness of women's domestic labor.

Diantha incorporates theories of scientific management and the professionalization of domestic work into her business plan. Jill Bergman asserts that, in *What Diantha Did*, "the sentiment attached to the ideal" of the domestic space prevented

the application of “industrial age principles of waste and efficiency” (89). Diantha, however, approaches the home as a business rather than a nostalgic entity. The Warden women’s behavior contrasts sharply with Diantha’s scientific perspective on household management:

To [Diantha’s] mind, trained in all the minutiae of domestic economy, the Warden family lived in careless wastefulness. That five women—for Dora was older than she had been when she began to do housework—should require servants, seemed to this New England-born girl mere laziness and pride. (*WDD*, 1, 1, 18)

This allusion to New England is no surprise; many of the biggest advocates of domestic science (such as Ellen Swallow Richards) resided in this region and the American Home Economics Association first met in New York. Diantha vocalizes her disgust to her mother, explaining that Ross will never be ready to marry, when she says, “Look at that family! And the way they live! And those mortgages!” (*WDD*, 1, 3, 19). A reviewer of Gilman’s text similarly describes Ross’ family as “five able-bodied women who could very well earn their own living” (A. S. B.), and Sharon Rambo calls them “four ‘true womanhood’ sisters” (152). Unlike these idle women who rely on their household’s masculine leader, Ross, to support them, Diantha cares for herself and her closest loved ones. Because her father cannot stabilize the family’s financial status, Diantha learns to successfully manage a home with relatively few resources. She meticulously measures expenses—even down to three school slates costing \$1.50 each—when she evaluates how much she had cost her family over her lifetime. She applies this same detail-oriented approach to the contract for her new position in the Porne household, including a “clear

statement of the hours of labor required in the position” and outlining “the quality and amount of the different kind of work” (*WDD*, 1, 5, 15). Her analytical and methodical approach transforms perspectives of the field; for example, Diantha “made Mr. Porne open his eyes” to the advantages of effective domestic work (*WDD*, 1,5, 15). Diantha purchases in-season, affordable food for the Porne family, and Isabel explains that the young woman orders food “more scientifically. She has made a study of it. And the bills are much lower” (*WDD*, 1, 6, 14). Diantha applies her techniques to her growing business, detailing the expenses and profits of each individual industry. Even her eventual decision to hire her mother to manage the accounts reflects a scientific approach, considering “natural adaptation” in the “distribution of duties,” as Frances E. Leupp encourages (835). She scientifically manages and professionalizes domestic work by training separate individuals as cooks, cleaners, and laundresses. Through describing Diantha’s successful approach, Gilman suggests that scientific management of household labor benefits everyone involved.

Diantha Overcoming Naysayers

Though she tries to articulate the advantages of her plan, like Salome, Diantha faces resistance from her family, the townspeople, and her fiancé, Ross. Diantha’s family sharply criticizes her because they think she will bring shame to the family. Her father says, “You can go, of course, and disgrace the family as you propose—but you needn’t expect to have me consent to it or approve of it—or of you. It’s a shameful thing—and you are an unnatural daughter--that’s all I’ve got to say!” (*WDD*, 1, 2, 18). Her father’s words are particularly painful because they go beyond criticizing her plan to chastise her

personally. Though he says that she “can go,” he nearly suggests that action would be a divorce from her family. Diantha’s sister similarly remarks,

The idea!...A girl with a good home to live in and another to look forward to—and able to earn money respectably! To go out and work like a common Irish girl! Why Gerald is so mortified he can’t face his friends—and I’m as ashamed as I can be! My own sister! You must be crazy—simply crazy! (*WDD*, 1, 5, 14)

While her sister’s comment exhibits her prejudice against the Irish, she also highlights her embarrassment and shame regarding her sister’s decision. Diantha’s family accepted her previous position as a teacher, but that career did not satisfy Diantha because there was little, if any, economic mobility. The family views the role of a house-maid much more disdainfully because it was not considered appropriate work for a middle-class white woman. In contrast to her father and sister, Diantha’s mother attempts to dissuade Diantha by emphasizing how much she relies on her daughter. She pleads, “O my baby! My baby! Don’t leave your mother. I can’t bear it!” (*WDD*, 1, 3, 19). The criticism and emotional manipulation from her father, mother, and sister continues even in the letters they send after she has departed. While she “found tears in her eyes over her mother’s letter” and her sister’s makes her “both sorry and angry,” the letters do not deter Diantha from her goal (*WDD*, 1, 5, 14). Despite her family’s lack of support, Diantha initiates her plan because she strongly believes that it can positively change her personal life and community.

Like her family, the townspeople profess disgust at Diantha’s decision, indicating a society-wide prejudice against domestic workers. Diantha aims to counter this stigma

by professionalizing and thus legitimizing domestic service as a field of work. In the beginning stages of her scheme, Diantha “listened to quite a volume of detailed criticism, inquiry and condemnation” from neighboring ladies Mrs. Delafield and Mrs. Schlosster, (*WDD*, 1, 3, 16). The local preacher, Dr. Major, also approaches her with an argument “based on reason, religion, tradition, the custom of ages, the pastoral habit of control and protection, the father’s instinct, [and] the man’s objection to a girl’s adventure” (*WDD*, 1, 3, 17). Dr. Major emphasizes cultural norms, especially gender distinctions, when he tries to persuade Salome to forego her plan. Though he opposes her, his position is still “courteous, kind, and rationally put[.]” unlike her family’s protestations (*WDD*, 1, 3, 17). The preacher still signs a document attesting to her strong character, thus demonstrating his continued approval of Diantha even though he disagrees with her progressive stance on labor. The townspeople, like her family, unsuccessfully attempt to convince Diantha to forget her new plans for work.

Diantha also faces criticism from her fiancé Roscoe, or Ross, Warden, who combines many of the deterrent strategies used by other critics. Before revealing her plans, she tests the waters by inquiring how he would react if one of his four sisters moved away to work. He tells Diantha, “I wouldn’t allow it...I should think it was a disgrace to the family, and a direct reproach to me” (*WDD*, 1, 3, 17). Ross’ perspective mimics her father’s sense of the familial shame from a woman holding such a position; furthermore, Ross’ statement aligns with the preacher’s emphasis of gendered hierarchies that would allow Ross to prohibit his sister—or his wife—to work. He emotionally pleads, much like Diantha’s mother, when he says, “you are the greatest joy and comfort

I have, dear—you know that. If you go away—it will be harder and slower and longer—that’s all. I shall have you to worry about too...How can I get along without you?” (WDD, 1, 3, 21). Ross selfishly focuses on how Diantha’s absence would be challenging for him. He undermines Diantha’s resolve, saying, “You won’t go, my darling” (WDD, 1, 3, 21). However, Diantha promptly responds, “I am going Wednesday on the 7.10” (WDD, 1, 3, 21). Diantha’s determination persists and Ross faces the reality of her departure. He acknowledges that he “can’t stop” her and encourages her to not be “afraid to come back” to him no matter what happens (WDD, 1, 3, 21). Ross espouses a complicated standpoint on women; he says he will not permit a woman to work, but later says that he cannot stop Diantha. Thus, his earlier statement seemingly suggests a preference rather than a perception of domination. Though readers may disagree with Ross’ response, they may admire his openness and honesty when he tells Diantha, “I shall love you always, whatever you do. But I will not disguise from you that this whole business seems to me unutterably foolish and wrong” (WDD, 1, 5, 14). Ross initially disapproves of Diantha’s plan, but he ultimately recognizes Diantha’s ability and resolve to execute her ideas. Though Diantha would prefer his support, she is not asking for his permission. Diantha’s choice to persist without the backing of her family or fiancé models for readers an individual, autonomous woman who makes decisions based on her own experiences, thoughts, and desires.

A major turning point occurs when the Orchardina Home and Culture Club asks Diantha to speak because the town is pleased and surprised by the effectiveness of her labor in the Porne household. This event initiates Diantha’s shift from demonstrating the

effectiveness of her work in an individual household to creating a community-wide business. Many women and their husbands attend the club meeting to hear Diantha's ideas. She explains that many forms of production, such as weaving or spinning, have transitioned from domestic labor to wage-earning work conducted in factories. She emphasizes the large turnover rates in domestic work, often because of women getting married, and underscores the wasteful nature of current domestic operations. She employs her scientific approach to household management when she articulates her plan:

Three expert cooks, one at \$20 a week and two at \$15 would save to those twenty families \$150 a week and give them better food. The cost of kitchen furnishings and fuel, could be reduced by nine-tenths; and beyond all that comes our incredible waste in individual purchasing. What twenty families spend on individual patronage of small retailers, could be reduced by more than half if bought by competent persons in wholesale quantities. (*WDD*, 1, 7, 15)

Diantha argues that the current system of individual households hiring cooks, purchasing food, and preparing meals for one family is inefficient. By managing the food of multiple households, everyone can not only save money but also consume better food. In her business, skilled laborers will work hourly, and employees will deliver prepared food to homes. Diantha emphasizes the economic benefit to employers, indicating that they will save "about two-thirds of the expense of living." She also highlights the system's convenience for employers, eliminating their responsibility to manage servants. However, home owners are not the only group who benefit from this plan; Diantha asserts that it "will give to the employees a respectable well-paid profession, with their own homes and families" (*WDD*, 1, 7, 15). This revision to the current system significantly benefited

domestic workers, for it eliminated the live-in system that engendered no leisure time and constant surveillance. These job expectations made having a family difficult if not impossible, leading many women to prefer factory work. In Diantha's system, women could become domestic workers and maintain their private lives. This change would allow Diantha to recruit highly skilled women to the field, especially once the work was "elevate[d]" and "enoble[d]," as Diantha phrases it" (*WDD*, 1, 7, 15).

Though her plan benefits both employers and employees, Diantha recognizes that the potential association between her plan and cooperative households would deter some of her audience. She anticipates their counterarguments regarding cooperatives when she says, "Every family is a distinct unit...Its needs are separate and should be met separately" (*WDD*, 1, 7, 15). After emphasizing that the homes are and will remain discrete entities, she explains that they can still be "served by a common water company, by a common milkman, by a common baker, by a common cooking and a common cleaning establishment" (*WDD*, 1, 7 15). Diantha stresses that homes already share some services such as their water supply; she hopes to expand this model to include the cooking and cleaning of homes while maintaining their individual status.

Though Diantha's ideas are persuasive to many, the club erupts in disagreement, indicating that her proposed system is fairly radical. According to an article by Alice Stone Blackwell, the club expected Diantha to "set forth reasons why educated women should more generally go into housework" (A. S. B.). Instead, "[t]o the horror of the more conservative members, she sets forth instead the reasons why they cannot be expected to do so, under present conditions, and advocates a radical change in the

traditional way of getting the work done” (A. S. B.). Once again, Diantha faces resistance. Madam Weatherstone calls her ideas “foolish” and “dangerous,” but Rev. Dr. Eltwood and Miss Eagerson speak out in support of Diantha’s plan. Diantha’s professional approach is especially persuasive to Miss Eagerson because she has always viewed housework as a business (*WDD*, 1, 7, 16). The club argues about Diantha’s ideas and eventually splits, unable to reconcile their differing views. Diantha’s theories sway townspeople like Eltwood and Eagerson, but others are more convinced later upon seeing her philosophy in action.

The Benefits of Diantha’s Labor for Self and Community

Diantha’s plan significantly benefits many members of the community. Over time, naysayers witness Diantha’s methods when they visit their friends who order meals from Diantha’s business. Many were in disbelief at how economically and efficiently Diantha and her employees provided all the services. As the narrator remarks, “That was the universal comment in Orchardina circles as the months passed and Union House continued in existence—‘I don’t see how she does it!’” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 16). Though many were skeptical about Diantha’s venture, all the individuals who used her services appreciated them. For instance, Mrs. Weatherstone claims that Diantha’s system improved the lives of the Pornes, the Wagrams, the Sheldons, and the Brinks, “who have told [her] themselves that they are far happier than they ever were before—and can live more cheaply” (*WDD*, 1, 13, 12). The women are relieved that their household management becomes easier, and the men are pleased that they are getting “good food” at “clock-work regularity” along with “reduced bills” and “the increased health and

happiness of their wives” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 8). Diantha’s system has a profound impact on the town: “Orchardina basked and prospered; its citizens found their homes happier and less expensive than ever before, and its citizenesses began to wake up and to do things worth while” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 10). Diantha’s plan increases the townspeople’s happiness and improves the economic situation for both employers and employees. Most importantly, though, Diantha awakens the women, and their newfound freedom allows the citizens to become more involved and “do things worth while” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 10). Diantha’s business multiplies benefits in unimagined ways; the lessened workload frees individuals to do more socially beneficial work with a charitable spirit.

While Diantha cares about the homeowners, she also promotes the employees’ wellbeing. In “‘To Work is to be Socially Alive’: The Failed Promise of Domestic Service in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *What Diantha Did*,” Kellen H. Graham disagrees with this assertion. Graham contends that “the women who serve in Diantha’s employ are exploited and forced to work unrelentingly at menial jobs that provoke a modest pay increase but that fail to deliver the kinds of personal and social benefits spelled out by Gilman” (195). While I agree with Graham that the text focuses primarily on the benefit for the homeowners,²¹ and that the narrative forefronts Diantha’s perception, Graham overlooks some significant ways that Diantha’s changes benefit workers. Diantha intends

²¹ Though Gilman’s business offers benefits to a wide range of women, her prioritization of the housewife or mistress is clear in her dedication in the 1910 Charlton edition of the novel: “With earnest love and a warm wish to help; with the highest respect for her great work and the desire to see it done more easily, pleasantly, scientifically, economically, hygienically, and beautifully, hoping for her a happier life, a larger income, better health, and full success in living: this book is affectionately dedicated to THE HOUSEWIFE” (qtd. in Rich, Introduction 13).

her system to serve as a replicable model that can make domestic labor “easier for homeworkers everywhere” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 7). Her business improves their conditions because they “now worked an agreed number of hours, were paid on a basis by the hour or day, and ‘found’ themselves” rather than living in the homes of their employers (*WDD*, 1, 10, 16). This ability to house themselves increases the women’s autonomy and enables a greater sense of ownership over their time and space. The opportunity for self-government also enables improved psychological well-being. Like the home that Salome constructs, the workers have lessons, clubs, and a ball room for meetings, dances, and more (*WDD*, 1, 10, 16). Of course, the women are still participating in domestic labor, which may be an undesirable task for many; however, their conditions and pay are significantly better than real houseworkers at the turn of the century. These women frequently worked “ten-to-fifteen-hour days of near-constant labor at very low pay” (May 47). Though their living conditions varied, some “received little more than leftovers to eat and a bed in the hall on which to sleep” (May 48). The worst circumstances often emerged from the servant’s relationship with the family members; many domestic workers endured micromanaging employers, sexually aggressive men, and incessant, demeaning commentary. The theories of Diantha’s business would substantially enhance the circumstances of many domestic workers. She does not revolutionize the exchange of money and services but works within the existing capitalistic system to ameliorate conditions and offer more autonomy to women at every socioeconomic level.

In addition to the material conditions that Diantha transforms, she also revises perspectives of domestic labor. She tells the workers, “This is a new stage of labor... You

are not servants—you are employees...And each one of us must do our best to make sure this new kind of work is valued and respected” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 10). In other words, Diantha wants to improve the way capitalist beneficiaries view the domestic workers and their labor. By switching from servants to employees, they are still working for the homeowners, but the change in status and language emphasizes the business relationship. As in Winslow’s text, however, the novel does not include the worker’s perspectives about how their lives have changed. The narrator does explain that the workers “were delighted to have a house of their own with the parlors and piazzas all to themselves, and a garden to sit in as well” (*WDD*, 1, 13, 13). Unlike previously when women begrudgingly joined the domestic labor force, women were now eager to enter the training. While this change paints a positive picture of their views on the conditions and labor, the exclusion of their voices obscures the thoughts of the working class. Though Diantha’s family is not wealthy, their appalled reaction to her work as a house-maid indicates that this was not an expected or respectable path for someone of her social standing. Thus, while the disparate socioeconomic gap between Winslow’s Salome and the mill workers is greater, cultural uplift still pervades *What Diantha Did*. The workers themselves do not organize and improve their work and their conditions; instead, Salome, from a higher socioeconomic background, enhances their lives. However, given how resistant many are to Diantha’s plan and how disdainfully middle and upper-class individuals viewed domestic workers in the Progressive Era, it would have been very difficult for household servants to make such substantial changes to the system. Diantha’s

business improves the workers' conditions, but the novel highlights those in relatively powerful positions who generate these changes rather than the employees themselves.

Gilman's *What Diantha Did* describes how the changes in the community benefit numerous specific women. For instance, Isabel Porne is a recently married architect who just had a child and struggles with home management. Isabel is immensely relieved when Diantha begins cooking and cleaning and she can resume her own labor. Isabel reflects on the marriage proposal, thinking, "They don't say, 'Will you be my Cook?' 'Will you be my Chamber maid?' 'Will you give up a good clean well-paid business that you love—that has big hope and power and beauty in it—and come and keep house for me?'" (*WDD*, 1, 4, 16). Though Isabel loves her husband, she does not like her new position as a household manager, especially because it consumes time that she could spend doing architectural work. She emphasizes that the marriage proposal does not and should not include inquiries about becoming a cook and chamber maid. She maintains her disapproval of these gender norms when her friend asks her if she enjoys fine things in their home: "Of course I enjoy it, but so does Edgar. Can't a woman enjoy her home, just as a man does, without running the shop? I enjoy ocean travel, but I don't want to be either a captain or a common sailor!" (*WDD*, 1, 5, 12). In her mind, just because an individual enjoys a domain does not mean that they should assume control of it, especially when he or she has another occupation. She does not dislike labor; she is "willing to work" and she "like[s] to work," but she "can't bear housework!" (*WDD*, 1, 4, 15). She exclaims, "I'd rather plan a dozen houses... Yes—I'd rather build 'em—than to keep one clean!" (*WDD*, 1, 4, 16). However, because of the expected duties of married

women, she does not have time to maintain her business as an architect. Her husband, though, professes that he did not expect this loss of occupation. He tells Isabel, “I never meant that you should give up architecture—that’s a business a woman could carry on at home I thought, the designing part anyway” (*WDD*, 1, 6, 12). While Mr. Porne theoretically supports his wife’s work, he underestimates the practical challenges of domestic work for someone unskilled in the area; Isabel is not able to complete typical household tasks, let alone her architectural work. Fortunately, Diantha takes over the household management in a more efficient and economical manner, allowing Isabel to resume her own work. She still is the caretaker for her child, but when the baby is sleeping and playing, Isabel draws architectural plans. The whole family changes: “Peace, order, comfort, cleanliness and economy reigned in the Porne household, and the lady of the house blossomed into richer beauty and happiness” (*WDD*, 1, 6, 13). Diantha and Isabel both pursue forms of work for which they have passion and skill, which leads to the betterment of all involved individuals.

Though she is initially skeptical and displeased, Diantha’s mother benefits from her daughter’s plan when she becomes a manager of the business accounts. Diantha could calculate costs and incomes, but the accounts were the only portion of the business that worried her. Her mother’s new role, then, benefits Diantha too. The rewards for Diantha’s mother are visible in her physical body; her “shoulders lifted a little,” her “eyes grew bright again, she held her head as she did in her keen girlhood,” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 12) and she started “growing plumper” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 8). Her new work improves her health and posture, conveying a new sense of happiness. Diantha cared for her mother when she

lived at her parent's home, suggesting that her mother was ill and getting older, but the work changes her entirely. Like in "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman argues against idleness, especially for women considered sick. Her mother explains to Diantha, "That's just what I'm feeling...as if I'd just begun to live! This is so different! There is a big, moving thing to work for" (*WDD*, 1, 12, 17). Diantha's mother possesses the skills and passion to be an accountant; this work reignites her youthfulness and cultivates a sense of purpose in her life. The fact that her mother has a vital role in the business, but not her father, indicates that her mother may be the more skilled of Diantha's two parents. Her father constantly struggled to build wealth for the family, but, stubbornly asserting his role as the masculine provider, he continued working and her mother stayed at home, at least until Diantha employed her. However, her father also benefits from Diantha's business; as one reviewer comments, he is "relieved from care and hard labor" and finally "begins to make inventions that succeed" (A. S. B.).

The new business also positively impacts Mrs. Viva Weatherstone personally by inspiring her to take control of her household management and economically through rousing a newfound interest in investment. After listening to Diantha's speech, Mrs. Weatherstone assumes greater leadership in her household and starts by firing her ineffective maid, Mrs. Halsey. She tells Diantha, "Now you have waked me all up—your paper this afternoon—what Mr. Eltwood said—the way those poor, dull, blind women took it. And yet, I was just as dull and blind myself! Well, I begin to see things now" (*WDD*, 1, 8, 17). Viva explains that Diantha's plans have awakened her to a new understanding of home management. She wants Diantha to work in her home for one

hundred dollars a month, but Diantha plans to obtain a cottage and start training other women for domestic work. Viva thinks of a way to satisfy both desires: Viva will employ the women in her home while Diantha trains them. This arrangement is only the beginning for Viva, though, as she eventually invests in the business and becomes a “richer woman” because Diantha’s “work has paid” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 11). Though both are benefitting, Viva points out that their foci differ: “You are interested in establishing the working girls, and saving money and time for the housewives. I am interested in making money out of it—honestly!” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 9). Despite this distinction, both women achieve their goals because of the success of Diantha’s plan.

Viva’s self-perception also develops because she increasingly identifies herself as a business person. She says, “I’ve taken a new lease of life since knowing you, Diantha Bell! You see my father was a business man, and his father before him—I like it” (*WDD*, 1, 11, 9). Though it was her male predecessors who shared her interest, Viva feels pride in continuing a family tradition. Diantha’s company even inspires Viva to make new products, namely a food container that she manufactures and rents to Diantha (*WDD*, 1, 11, 13). Diantha and Viva both benefit from their friendship, becoming a part of what Sharon M. Rambo terms the “New Woman network” (155): Diantha inspires Viva, Viva invests in Diantha’s business, Viva develops a new product, and Diantha gets to use the new product. The friendship between the two new businesswomen flourishes.

Diantha benefits from her business because it offers economic stability and personal satisfaction. She not only supports herself, but also her mother and father. Additionally, Diantha’s success motivates a businessman to buy Ross’ grocery store,

allowing him to purchase a farm in Orchardina. Diantha is also satisfied with her work because she likes helping the employers and employees of domestic service. The narrator explains that her “big business” was “busy and successful, honored and liked by all the town—practically...She was happy, too, in her babies—very happy” (*WDD*, 1, 14, 11). The general acceptance of her business practices pleases Diantha, and her three children with Ross also bring her happiness. In this passage, the narrator articulates Diantha’s satisfaction in both spheres: she is a successful business owner who fulfills her desire to be a wife and mother. Like in Winslow’s text, part of the utopian element of *What Diantha Did* is the total success she has in both areas, though Gilman’s narrative extends longer after marriage than Winslow’s. *What Diantha Did* contends that the title character flourishes as both mother and business woman simultaneously, not required to sacrifice one priority for the other. Aleta Feinsod Cane asserts that this dual success is also a common feature in Gilman’s *Forerunner* short stories, which often depicted “ordinary women who deflect the traditional trajectories of their lives to create better situations for themselves and, in so doing, improve the lives of those around them” (Cane 95). As a dominant theme in Gilman’s writing, she clearly wanted to persuade readers that such a utopian ideal could become a reality, even if those closest to them did not always support their goals.

Ross—the Last Naysayer

Charlotte Perkins Gilman emphasizes that Diantha’s labor in both the public and private spheres critically forms her identity as a New Woman. Ross does not fully accept Diantha’s business—and therefore, Diantha’s personhood—until the very close of the

novel, which is a significant hardship for Diantha. Unlike Villard in *Salome Shepard, Reformer* who always supported women in business, Ross consistently displays a “wall of disapproval. He loved her, he did not love her work” (*WDD*, 1, 12, 15). However, if Diantha had not initiated the business, *she* would not have been fully satisfied. After talking with Mr. Thaddler who supports Diantha, Ross tells Diantha, “I have been a proud fool—I am yet—but I have come to see a little clearer. I do not approve of your work—I cannot approve of it—but will you forgive me for that and marry me?” (*WDD*, 1, 13, 16). Ross constantly distinguishes between Diantha and her work, but Diantha’s business endeavors are a crucial element of her self-identity. Thus, it would be challenging, if not impossible, to fully love Diantha but not the work she does. While she loves being a mother and fiancé/wife, that is not the totality of her person, and until Ross accepts her work, he does not fully accept Diantha. A reviewer in *The Public* reasons,

...Ross Warden appears to be much like his own guinea pigs, upon a group of which he is experimenting to ascertain the scientific certainty of an acquired heredity. It seems probably that several generations of him may be required to eradicate his ancient prejudices and fetch him up to Diantha’s modern pace (A. L. M. 282).

This reviewer describes Ross’ outdated ideas about gender roles; he “constantly reflects the values of true womanhood which his mother embodies” rather than embracing New Women like Diantha (Rambo 158). Despite his traditional perspective, when Ross asks Diantha to marry him, she acquiesces. Even after years, though, “in her heart of hearts she was not wholly happy” because of his continued disapproval of her business (*WDD*, 1, 14, 12).

Not until Ross' world lecture tour discussing his guinea pig experiment does he learn to love Diantha's work. The outpouring of enthusiasm for his wife's progressive system of domestic work eventually persuades him. He writes to her, "As a man of science I must accept any truth when it is once clearly seen; and, though I've been a long time about it, I do see at last what brave, strong, valuable work you have been doing for the world" (*WDD*, 1, 14, 12). After interacting with so many supporters, Ross values Diantha's work in multiple ways: "As a student I recognize and appreciate your work. As man to man I'm proud of you—tremendously proud of you. As your husband! Ah! My love! I am coming back to you—coming soon, coming with my Whole Heart, Yours!" (*WDD*, 1, 14, 12). Ross had already professed his love for Diantha, but not her work. He now sees what "brave, strong, valuable work" she has been doing, which is the critical piece that they lacked in their relationship. After reading the letter, Diantha sobs and says, "thank you." She did not yearn for Ross' approval but if he does not fully accept her work he does not wholly embrace Diantha; this impasse prevented their complete happiness (*WDD*, 1, 14, 12). With this obstacle overcome, Diantha has achieved romantic love, personal satisfaction, and economic stability. As Aleta Feinsod Cane points out, "Gilman refutes the notion that in order to be a proper wife a woman must give up her career and be cheerfully self sacrificing" (100). Diantha is firm in her conviction that she can be wife, mother, and business woman. Though Ross does not support these goals at first, Ann J. Lane claims that this is a common narrative for Gilman's heroines who "do not marry the most sympathetic men. They come to love the men who have to change; and those men do change ultimately, a hint to woman readers that it is possible to

persuade men to think and to behave differently” (xlv). This line of thinking could create uncertain, even dangerous, results. Should a woman take a risk and marry someone who does not support her ideas about her own position in the world? While Winslow’s text suggests that women should find men who support women’s work before they marry, Gilman’s text implies that women can convert men to their way of thinking. This notion comprises part of the utopian element of *What Diantha Did*; if a woman persists and convinces enough people about the benefits of her labor, she can persuade even her resistant husband.

Gilman’s Audience and the Possibility of the Utopian Vision

Progressive Era readers of the novel found the narrative unlikely in some ways, but practical in others, largely through its careful estimations of costs. Critiqued for her “flippant sarcasm” (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *Independent* 572) and the novel’s “irritating sentimentality” (A. F. 296), one reviewer still described *What Diantha Did* as “a book which women will find worth reading” (A. F. 296). The review in *The Freewoman* argues that her audience is not “the enterprising people who might possibly be roused to take action, but to those prejudiced opponents whose enmity is based on their habits of mind” (A. F. 296). While the novel may attempt to persuade a resistant audience, the text also offers a relatable narrative for some Progressive Era women. For instance, a review in the *International Socialist Review* states that “Diantha’s story is the story of the struggle many women make to-day when they insist upon having a life work of their own outside of the kitchen or the home” (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *International Socialist Review* 645). Though it contains a relevant story of an

independent woman, Gilman's arguments did not convince everyone. One reviewer expresses that Gilman's ideas "do not sound convincing when one tries to imagine one of [her societies] set down in a modern city" (A. F. 297). Another reviewer comments that though they are "almost persuaded," "[d]isagreeable things must be done by somebody, and peeling potatoes would be no pleasanter task in the rear of a municipal cookshop than in an ordinary kitchen" (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *Independent* 571). This *Independent* reviewer presents a valid point about domestic labor—even with increased pay, more training, greater autonomy, and improved working conditions, the labor itself could still be unpleasant. While Diantha works partially for her personal satisfaction, some women work out of necessity and not for pleasure.

Gilman's use of numerical estimates brings some authenticity, "sensib[ility]," and persuasiveness to the text, though some reviewers argue that these features mean that the text does not fully align with genre conventions of the novel (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *Independent* 571). The *Independent* reviewer asserts that "chronicle" may be a more appropriate term because "she determines to standardize and put on a strictly business basis the complicated affairs of housekeeping. We have tables and accounts, everything standing in the dry light of reason and of common sense" (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *Independent* 571). A reviewer in *The Public* similarly states:

'What Diantha Did' is less a novel than a text book in the business of home supplies. It is a sort of Aladdin's lamp to the ambitious seeker of undeveloped industries. With its mathematical accuracy, its carefully compiled tables of profit and loss, it might serve as a key to success with a woman of genius like Diantha, who understands perfectly the art of cooking and the satisfying order of home keeping. (A. L. M. 282)

Other reviews reiterate the idea of the novel serving as a guide; for example, one critic states that *What Diantha Did* contains “carefully worked out facts and figures for the guidance of other Dianthas disposed to embark on similar enterprises” (Review of *What Diantha Did*, *International Socialist Review* 645). Indeed, architect Alice Constance Austin is another Diantha—or perhaps another Isabel; as Dolores Hayden explains, “The heroine Diantha’s friend, Isabel Porne, an architect who provides her with a residential hotel and kitchenless houses, the perfect environment for running her business, is a prototype, if not an inspiration, for Alice Constance Austin” (Hayden 282). Austin implemented Gilman’s idea for kitchenless houses in her architectural plans for a circular city in Llano del Rio, California. The lack of finances and water in the area prohibited the community’s construction, and Austin died before they could attempt development again in another time and place. However, Gilman’s ideas appealed to future readers. Alice Stone Blackwell, in an article published seven or eight years after Gilman’s text, indicates that acceptance of Gilman’s ideas grew over that time. Though it was “looked upon as terribly radical when it first came out...the course of events has been steadily carrying us toward an acceptance of its central idea” (A. S. B.). Through its utopian promises for self and community, *What Diantha Did* presents a narrative outlining potential benefits of women’s wage-earning work.

Conclusion

Dominant discourse encouraged middle and upper-class women to engage in charitable work or a limited number of acceptable professions like teaching. It was unconventional for women to assume leadership roles in large companies that they could

profit from financially. However, by demonstrating how this labor benefits the communities at large, Salome and Diantha prove that profit-earning labor and societal improvement are not mutually exclusive goals. Their narratives merge an aspect of True Womanhood with the emerging concept of New Womanhood in the Progressive Era, demonstrating how women's work is not a selfish endeavor but one that can be personally and communally beneficial. As the women "propose to be [their] own agent[s]," they also commit to developing systems in their businesses that will improve the conditions and wellbeing of workers, making them heroic New Women (Winslow 98). Diantha's and Salome's end goals somewhat differ. Salome is particularly interested in improving the morality and character of the mill workers through the enhanced living and working conditions. In contrast, Diantha focuses on efficiency and economics, improving the perspective and labor of domestic workers while also alleviating the labor for mistresses. Diantha and Salome do not have much support for their plans initially, demonstrating for readers that challenging cultural norms requires initiative and resilience. Nevertheless, the utopian result of personal satisfaction, romantic love, and community improvement could make this onerous work seem appealing to readers. These texts mediate utopia and practicality; many reviewers identify achievable elements despite the tidy, happy, utopian endings. Just as Diantha "wakes [Viva] all up," these texts attempt to broaden women's understandings of their possibilities in the world, especially as contributors to society who can benefit economically, personally, and even romantically from profitable labor in the public sphere. Diantha and Salome both prove that single or married middle and upper-class women's labor does not have to be

uncompensated; rather, it can be economically profitable and personally satisfying work that also enhances the community. The following chapter elucidates the complications of marriage for working New Women.

CHAPTER III

“IF YOU THINK WE COULD DO IT TOGETHER”: WORKING TO ENSURE EQUAL FOOTING IN MARRIAGE

As middle or upper-class women in the Progressive Era entered the working world, they simultaneously negotiated marital expectations. Some women married to have basic access to food and shelter,²² and some worked only until they married. However, women increasingly desired marriages based on love and compatibility, along with the option to continue working post-marriage. The growing number of working women providing financially for themselves could be choosier in their marriage partners, and many wanted spouses who would support their work outside the home and share duties within it. Suffragist and labor lawyer Inez Milholland tackles the problematic gender roles related to work and marriage in a 1913 article published in *McClure's Magazine*. She explains that some women were forced into marriage in order to “live according to reasonable standards of what living is” and “because the prevailing masculine ideal of the ornamental, comparatively useless woman has withheld from them the training and equipment that would have enabled them to cope with life as it is” (214). In the patriarchal society, men’s ideas of women’s so-called natural tendencies and

²² In *Women and Economics*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman comments on the absurdity of women’s economic position and reliance on men: “we are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation. With us an entire sex lives in a relation of economic dependence upon the other sex, and the economic relation is combined with the sex-relation” (5).

biological differences influenced their access to professional pursuits. With little educational capital or training for the working world, some women had no options other than marriage. Milholland explains that the goal of progressive women is not to eliminate the institution of marriage, but to transform it: “No one, of course, —least of all the advanced feminist thinkers, —questions the imperative of beauty and value of romantic love. Indeed, the hope is that marriage, far from being undermined or destroyed, can be made real and lasting” (214). By making the marriage relation a true and enduring connection between partners, women would be able to balance the challenges of public and private labor, while finding personal satisfaction in both. Milholland writes, “the ideal of marriage is a fine, healthy, continuous companionship and sharing of burdens” (219).

In the Progressive Era, fictional texts describing marriage relations present a broad scope for how women might operate within the institution. However, novels and short stories often depicted New Women as “characteristically single, or else married late in life” (Eby 88). Fictional New Women pursuing marriage sometimes struggle to negotiate their existing or developing romantic relationships and their work. Women’s working ambitions could deter potential suitors or present challenges in sustaining relationships. In *Reading the American Novel, 1865-1914*, G. R. Thompson points out that in New Woman’s Fiction, “not every heroine triumphs, not every story ends happily, and marriage may lead to misery” (195). For example, he contends, Elizabeth Stoddard’s

The Morgesons,²³ Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* depict marriage as "a disaster, leading to imprisonment, insanity, or death" (Thompson 195). Progressive Era utopian texts by women, however, describe positive marital relations in which women are happy, both in the private and public spheres. Though the novels focus more on the pre-nuptial relationship than the post-ceremony bond, they present examples of the necessary components for a stable, fulfilling, equal partnership. However, scholars have largely overlooked these positive portrayals of marriage in utopias by women and thus their criticism of marriage in the Progressive Era. Carol Farley Kessler agrees in her article, "The Grand Marital Revolution: Two Feminist Utopias"; even though "virtually all utopias by U. S. women...consider marriage," critics "generally have not noted that utopias by women point to malaise in the marital quarters" (70). Kessler argues that the frequent interrogation of marital relations in utopian texts suggests that they are not ideal arrangements in reality. The utopian novels capture both Progressive Era women's dissatisfaction with marital expectations and their capacity to imagine fulfilling partnerships. Building on Kessler's conversation, I discuss reformist utopias of the Progressive Era that confront the institution of marriage in their historical and cultural context.

²³ Often classified as a female bildungsroman, Thompson's labeling of *The Morgesons* (1862) as New Woman fiction is unconventional. While the New Woman was certainly a developing concept and figure through the late nineteenth century, most scholars consider the 1890s to be the decade in which she emerged in the public's awareness. Though Thompson does not clearly articulate his rationale for classifying *The Morgesons* as New Woman fiction, he points to Susan K. Harris' argument that the novel is radical because the protagonist Cassandra is "not offered as a model for womanhood" (195). However, Cassandra does not align with many of the common associations of the New Woman: she does not attend college, she does not work, and she agrees to a marriage that seems unlikely to be enriching and satisfying.

I contend that, within these utopian texts, female protagonists successfully balance romantic love with economically profitable, personally satisfying labor, offering models for readers to accomplish the same. Building from the conversations of work in the previous chapter, I focus more heavily on the romantic and marital bond in this section. While many authors frame romance in idealistic terms, divorced from the economic structures of the surrounding society, these Progressive Era authors connect women's work with marriage. They novels frame work as critical to successful marital partnerships because it can offer women economic self-sufficiency and personal satisfaction, allowing them to marry for love rather than social or economic need. Additionally, through work women can develop community with other women. Though women sometimes shared domestic tasks, or labored together while enjoying each other's company, household labor was sometimes isolating. By moving their labor from the private sphere into the public, women could more easily develop connections with each other. Carol A. Kolmerten identifies these "female-centered communit[ies]" as a common trait of women's utopian fiction, suggesting that "the importance of motherhood and child-rearing" often guide these networks (108). However, these novels focus on the *women's* wellbeing and sustenance. Though marriage and motherhood are possibilities on the horizon, the communities emphasize the woman's development rather than her responsibilities to a husband or children. In fact, these novels overlook questions of childcare and domestic labor, critical elements of women's lives that I address more fully in the fifth chapter. By having a community of women along with the ability to earn their own wages, women could delay marriage; in other words, they could be choosier in their

marriage partners, finding someone compatible with their ideas and lifestyle. The Progressive Era women utopian authors establish women's work, supportive female communities, and slowly-developing relationships as necessary components of a successful marriage.

For instance, in Martha Bensley Bruère's *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* (1919), serialized in 1918 and 1919 in *Ladies Home Journal*, Mildred enters the Universal Service: a compulsory, one-year term of labor for all citizens. The usefulness of labor persuades Mildred. She enjoys patriotically contributing to the nation's wellbeing and creates friendships across class lines that her parents find upsetting. Mildred worries that she and her fiancé Nick will no longer be compatible, but when they reunite they learn that this shared experience transformed them both. In Adeline Trafton Knox's *Dorothy's Experience*, serialized in *Christian Union* in 1890, Dorothy beneficently enacts Christian teachings, even when she questions her own faith. Edes, a local preacher, encourages Dorothy to engage in meaningful labor beyond her work as a women's seminary principal. Through their collaboration helping working women by establishing a home and developing a network of support, they fall in love and get married. In this text, a working woman named Cynthia also develops a romantic connection with a young newcomer Amos. Their relationship succeeds because she receives support from the other women in her community, rather than relying on Amos. For both Dorothy and Mildred, a male community leader inspires their new perspectives on labor, and they must navigate whether their feelings toward these men are romantic. Just as in *What Diantha Did* and *Salome Shepard, Reformer* discussed in the second chapter, the New Woman heroines

find fulfilling love and satisfying work. However, the texts emphasize that both partners must support women working and share their motivation for contributing to society. In *Dorothy's Experience* and *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*, the heroic New Women prioritize their work and, through this pursuit, develop companionate partnerships with men who support and encourage their wage-earning, communally-beneficial labor.

I have selected these texts because they were published near the start and at the close of the era, giving some sense of how the ideas of marriage continued to evolve toward more progressive ideas of equality. These two texts are also valuable to consider in conjunction because they approach the topic of labor in distinct ways; Knox's text frames the motivation for labor in a religious context, while patriotism drives characters in Bruère's novel. Significantly, in both texts, the shared experience of labor strengthens the romantic relationships and allows for a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship.

Though Knox and Bruère are relatively unknown, conjointly considering their biographies highlights that women from divergent sociopolitical viewpoints could share an interest in reforming women's positionalities. Adeline Trafton Knox was born in Saccarappa, Maine, in 1845. Her father was a well-known Methodist Episcopal clergyman, author, and one-time congressman who supported temperance and antislavery movements (Dykeman 478). Because of her father's occupations, she spent a couple of years each in Albany, NY,²⁴ and Washington, D. C., before attending Wesleyan Female

²⁴ In Albany, "her father held a pastorate at the beginning of the Civil War" for two years (Willard and Livermore 440). Though slightly after the Second Great Awakening, and a bit too far east to be within the burned-over districts, the influence of the spirit of revival lingered.

College in Wilmington, Delaware (Willard and Livermore 440). After publishing several works, including *An American Girl Abroad* (1872) and *Katherine Earle* (1874), “ill health compelled her to lay aside her pen, which she...never resumed, except to bring out, through the columns of the ‘Christian Union,’ in 1889, a novelette treating of social questions” (Willard and Livermore 441). Over her lifetime, Knox wrote four novels and published several stories in *Scribner’s* magazine (Dykeman 478). Though relatively little is known about her life, Amy Dykeman indicates that because her work was “more intent on providing entertainment than a moral message, [Knox] remained popular with young readers for at least a few decades” (479).

Dykeman astutely observes why Knox may have maintained some popularity, but nevertheless the novel argues that labor benefitting the community is more important than strong religious belief. Knox includes themes of temperance and antislavery in her fiction, and a brief note in *Woman’s Who’s Who of America*

suggests that she was “against woman suffrage,” a common position for

conservative and religious women in the era (Leonard 465). She married a lawyer named Samuel Knox, Jr. in 1889 and lived with him in St. Louis until he died in 1897 (Dykeman 478). Thus, *Dorothy’s Experience*, which depicts several blossoming romances, was



Figure 6. "Adeline Trafton Knox." *A Woman of the Century*. By Frances E. Willard. Moulton, 1893. p. 440.

published just one year after her own nuptials. While details about her marital relationship are unavailable, she married around the age of forty-four, and the short-lived marriage lasted only eight years before Samuel's death. Therefore, Adeline Trafton Knox spent most of her life as a single woman or a widow, giving her insight into opportunities and difficulties for single, married, and widowed women.

Martha Bensley Bruère was born in 1879, attended three different colleges, painted portraits in Chicago from 1895-1903, and in 1907 married Robert Bruère who



Figure 7. "Martha Bensley Bruère." Box 51, Folder 6. Women's City Club of New York Archive, Hunter College Libraries, New York, NY.

was an "author and specialist in industrial relations" (Kessler, "The Grand Marital Revolution" 75). Like many authors discussed in this project,²⁵ Martha was a member of several women's clubs including PEN, Author's League of America, Query, and the Women's City Club of New York (Kessler, "The Grand Marital Revolution" 76). Martha's first book was a collaboration with her husband, Robert, entitled *Increasing Home Efficiency* (1912), in which they asserted that both men and women should learn domestic skills. Kessler points out that the "Bruères believed that both men and women should know

²⁵ Martha Bensley Bruère knew and corresponded with Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the Schlesinger Library houses some of their letters from the 1930s. Bruère writes about her work doing surveys, comments on other authors like Prestonia Mann Martin and Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin, and encourages Gilman to visit again. Their relationship seems affectionate; in one letter Bruère calls her "dear Charlotte" and sends "love and much of it" (Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 1860-1935).

how to manage a household and that women should not be solely responsible for domestic duties” (“The Grand Marital Revolution” 75). Given that Martha wrote *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* after *Increasing Home Efficiency*, the novel’s lack of discussion regarding childcare and domesticity likely results from an assumption that Nick and Mildred will share these tasks. Martha and Robert did not have any children together, focusing their attention instead on tasks like editing *Survey*, a magazine that addressed social issues, from 1919-1947. Like the characters in her novel, Martha and Robert offer an example of an equal partnership in which both members value the importance of productive labor.

Defining successful marriage is a difficult, if not impossible, task. Not only is it individually subjective, but what creates a positive marriage is also very historically and culturally specific. Thus, I have built my definition of a successful marriage on the novelists’ depictions and historians’ explanations of gender and marital relations at the time. For this project, I have identified two key elements for a satisfying marriage. First, the relationship stems from a strong affinity for another individual rather than social or economic pressures. Secondly, a successful marriage builds from mutual respect and the desire to support an individual’s autonomy even within the partnership. For the utopian authors, marital success often includes men’s post-nuptial support of women’s work, a progressive notion especially for middle and upper-class circles. This type of partnership corresponds with the Progressive Era concept of a companionate marriage, which Schneider and Schneider define as “a relationship in which husband and wife perceived each other as equals, sharing joys and responsibilities in a partnership” (147-148).

Though Schneider and Schneider explain that young men expected their wives “to keep themselves attractive” and were eager to enjoy “the pleasures of marital sex[,]” the reformist utopias rarely discuss sexuality and attraction. While companionate partnerships could connote divorce by mutual consent or a focus on companionship rather than child-rearing, I am most interested in the concept’s emphasis on equality in the marriage relation. As Clare Virginia Eby asserts, “companionate marriage provides an egalitarian forum for balancing the needs of both spouses” (68). This new idea diverges from earlier, Victorian notions of marriage influenced by coverture, “the doctrine which dictated that wives’ legal identities be ‘covered over’ by their husbands” (Eby xvii). This legal requirement bled into the interpersonal, romantic relationships, positioning men hierarchically above women. However, women’s participation in economically profitable work enabled them to find companionate marriage partners who would support their roles in the public sphere.

Though this chapter primarily addresses romantic relationships, I also discuss women’s work and labor for two primary reasons. First, women’s work increases their ability to select marriage partners, particularly for the working class and often for the middle class. This progression informed the organization of this project, addressing work and labor in the second chapter before turning to questions of marriage. In *Making Marriage Modern*, Christina Simmons writes,

Both culturally and materially, employment—especially better-paid or respected professional work—most profoundly affected the conception of women’s sexual and marital lives because for most women the ability to earn an independent living was probably their most significant source of power. (112)

Through this newfound power, women were better able “to decline marriage or to possess more authority within it, and to leave it when necessary” (Simmons 112). Simmons identifies economic stability as a crucial factor impacting women’s power in romantic, sexual, and marital relations. While she emphasizes employment specifically, the reformist utopian texts depict a range of economically profitable working arrangements that benefit women. Work and romance also coincide because relationship maintenance is a form of labor. For instance, Mower and Weil include “women’s labor in maintaining the institutions of marriage and heterosexual love” in their list of forms of labor for women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which also includes child-rearing, household labor, wage-earning work, and further education (5). This labor could include emotional effort, sexual acts, or household responsibilities. Recognizing the effort that marriages require acknowledges the broad range of women’s labor.

In this chapter, I offer historical context for *Dorothy’s Experience*, addressing the publishers, the novel’s reviews, and marriage in the late nineteenth century. I then describe Dorothy’s lack of religious belief and work in the community, encouraged by the social gospel-preaching minister Edes with whom she develops a romantic connection. The working woman Cynthia’s romantic relationship with Amos and Dorothy’s marriage to Edes model examples of women who are self-supporting, socially and financially, prior to marriage. In the subsequent segment about *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*, I analyze Bruère’s framing of women’s labor in a patriotic (and thus more palatable) context, comparing it to contemporary war-related discourse. I discuss Mildred’s attraction to John Barton as a prophet of labor, her family’s expectations of marriage

according to socioeconomic status, and Mildred's lingering thoughts of Nick that develop into a renewed romantic connection. Bruère positions marriage as a personal matter rather than a duty to the nation, resisting the extratextual pressures to marry before men left for World War I. The chapter concludes by asserting the novels' reformist rather than revolutionary approach to marriage by skirting relevant, more progressive discussions about divorce or lesbian relationships.

Dorothy's Experience

Adeline Trafton Knox's *Dorothy's Experience* traces two developing romantic connections: middle-class Dorothy's relationship with Edes, and working-class Cynthia's romance with Amos. Though the romantic relationships are not entirely equal partnerships, the women successfully grow, work, and learn about themselves before marriage. They labor in the community, develop important female friendships, and cultivate a sense of personal satisfaction. These opportunities set their marriages on proper footing; the women marry for romantic love, not out of necessity. Middle and upper-class individuals often feared that without proper living conditions, working class women might become prostitutes. Reformers like Helen Campbell told "dramatic tales of young girls driven to sell their bodies by constant wage reductions[,]” which "captured the public conscience" and motivated middle and upper-class women's assistance efforts (Kessler-Harris 104). The supportive community in Seabury helps working women avoid prostitution. Additionally, if middle or upper-class women have no options but to marry (and engage sexually) to maintain their living standards, then their lives also bear similarities to prostitution. Even during the period, some citizens recognized the element

of “prostitution within the marriage relation” (Flower 60). Though neither novel depicts much of the post-wedding relationship, the events leading up to the union establish methods to give women ownership over their lives, allowing for improved marital relationships. Thus, to understand their restructured marital relations, it is important to understand the women’s labor and community. Knox portrays the significance of work differently for the working and middle class; for working-class individuals, *Dorothy’s Experience* implies that women should be able to provide for themselves before getting married, while for middle-class individuals, women should not only find this economic sustenance but also personal satisfaction and meaning in their work. Religious faith, or lack thereof, drives Dorothy’s developing relationship with Edes and her newfound labor in the community. Whether working or middle class, the changes made in Seabury through the collaboration of Dorothy and the working girls allows them to enter a loving marriage with their economic and social needs already fulfilled.

Historical Context for *Dorothy’s Experience*

The *Christian Union* originally serialized *Dorothy’s Experience* in 1893. This journal began as a Baptist paper *Church Union* in 1867 and changed names in 1870 with new owners (the Fords) and a new editor: American Congregationalist minister Henry Ward Beecher (Mott, III: 422-423). While the journal evolved from an overtly religious publication to a journal of opinion, it retained its religious inflection. Given this context, readers anticipate the religiosity of *Dorothy’s Experience*, but more surprising is that a novel discussing women’s labor and marriage appealed to a religiously focused journal. Through the 1880s, the circulation of *Christian Union* stayed around 20,000 (Peterson

156). In July of 1893, the journal was renamed again as *Outlook* and “turned to the broader fields of public affairs and general miscellany” (Mott, IV: 59). Even after this change, the journal was “rather more preoccupied with religious points of view” than other journals (Mott, IV: 292). *Dorothy’s Experience* was published as a book by Lee & Shepard, a company that frequently championed women’s rights, published many women writers, and specialized in children’s literature. Lee & Shepard never published a highly esteemed author but printed pieces they felt would be appealing to the general reader. Raymond Kilgour, a professor of library science, explains that the publishing company developed their positive reputation in their first twenty years and maintained their success by “feeling the public’s pulse, with the result that their selections provide a clear picture of the average reader’s taste in New England and in much of the East, a taste that skirted literary masterpieces and seized with avidity on the commonplace and the sentimental” (201). *Dorothy’s Experience* aligns with Lee & Shepard’s frequently published “novels of purpose,” which offer not only entertainment but also ideas about social reform (Kilgour 245). More specifically, Dorothy represents an average woman who makes money, betters her community, and cultivates romantic love. While the novel’s publication in *Christian Union* signposts its religious elements, the book’s publication by Lee & Shepard underscores its reformist qualities. Additionally, the fact that both companies published Knox’s text suggests that the distance between the categories of reform and religion and their respective readerships was not too great.

Reviews of Knox’s novel emphasize both Dorothy’s example of faith in action and the pleasing qualities of reading the text. A brief description of the novel in *The*

Independent comments, “In this story the author of ‘An American Girl Abroad’ keeps well up to her best work. Those who have read her other stories will not be disappointed in this one” (Review of *Dorothy’s Experience* 19). The review suggests that readers of *The Independent* may be familiar with Knox’s other works, including *An American Girl Abroad*, and that her style is consistent and enjoyable. *Zion’s Herald*, “one of more than a dozen ‘unofficial’ Methodist papers” of the 1890s (Mott, IV: 291 n66), reprinted the chapter of *Dorothy’s Experience* depicting Edes Hindlay’s call, identifying it as a “charming serial” that they feel “assured beforehand” will lead to “the thanks of [their] League young people” (“The Call of Edes Hindlay” 246). J. McCarroll’s review in *Belford’s Magazine* also praises the novel: “As a simple narrative the story is one of genuine interest. It deals with characters and incidents which are alike original and well depicted” (94). Critics positively regarded the tale’s simplicity and its careful and interesting depictions of the characters. However, Dorothy’s example moves the work beyond a “simple” novel to read for enjoyment:

Her sincerity in this relation [to God] she illustrates by lifting with her own hand the fallen or needy out of the gutter, clothing and housing them, and redeeming them from vice. She founds homes and schools for those who have neither, and is the guardian angel of many a poor working-girl who stands on the verge of a precipice. (94)

Dorothy “illustrates” her relationship to God through working with women in the community. The review again emphasizes the role of middle-class women helping

working-class women who may be on a “precipice,” always on the edge of falling into an immoral life.²⁶

Ironically, though middle-class men often supervised their female relations, middle-class women deemed themselves the guardians of working-class women. Religious views and a sense of morality often motivated this impulse; not only were they attempting to create improvements for their fellow humans and thus bolster their moral image, but they were also trying to improve or guard the morality of the working-class women. Middle-class women like Dorothy often tried to keep working women away from men who may destroy their reputation or lead to an unfulfilling life. Contemporary readers, at least as these reviews suggest, enjoyed the novel and valued the depictions of the characters, especially Dorothy, who successfully aids working-class women. Her story depicts a woman navigating duties to herself and her community while exploring the possibility of marriage.

Knox’s presumably middle-class readers would be aware of the perceived incompatibility of work and marriage, especially for those outside of the working class. Though earning wages provided late-nineteenth-century women more options for marriage (or, to not marry at all), their families, new husbands, and the society at large expected them to quit after their vows. Trying to work while maintaining a romance proved difficult and was statistically unlikely. According to Simmons, in 1900, only six percent of all married women were in the paid labor force (148). Kessler-Harris also

²⁶ See the discussion of Working Girls' Clubs in chapter two for further description of the relationship between middle/upper class and working-class women.

points out the disparity amongst married and single women, explaining that “[a]t the turn of the century, 87 percent of female workers were unmarried and nearly half were under twenty-five” (153). Though Kessler-Harris’ and Simmons’ figures differ slightly, the vast majority of married women were not wage-earning laborers and rates varied significantly according to class and race. Kessler-Harris provides statistics from seven southern cities in 1880, in which 35.4% of black married women and 7.3% of white married women worked, while 73.3% of black single women and 23.8% of white single women earned wages (123). While Dorothy, Cynthia, and Mildred are all white, in the following chapter I discuss black female protagonists who navigated the somewhat different expectations for their work and marriages. Despite the racial distinctions, Nancy Woloch explains, “East or West, native-born or foreign-born, the wage-earning woman of the turn of the century was likely to be young and single. Expecting to be only a temporary member of the labor force, she retained a grasp on domestic ideals” (229). For most single working women, work was a temporary endeavor—a stepping-stone toward marriage when they would return to domesticity.

If a woman wanted to pursue both marriage and work, the balance was difficult for numerous reasons. As Simmons points out, “Enormous obstacles confronted women attempting to combine paid work with marriage. Legal interpretation and public policy opposed equality by sustaining the male breadwinner ideology and husbands’ ownership of wives’ labor” (174). The common law of coverture had traditionally subsumed women under their husbands, giving husbands rights to their wives’ property and salaries. Legal battles over property rights waged over the Married Women’s Property Acts passed by

individual states, starting with Mississippi in 1839. However, in most cases these statutes covered only the property women brought into their marriages but not what they gained or earned while married. Joyce Warren explains, “The married woman who worked for wages in a factory, or sewed at home or in a sweatshop, or sold butter and eggs on a farm, or ran a boardinghouse, or opened a store or business—was not legally entitled to keep any of her earnings” (51). By 1887, one-third of states had still not enacted any laws that gave women rights to their own earnings (Warren 52). Even if women were able to overcome these legal hardships, the continued burden of household labor on top of wage-earning work was tremendous. If they had children, the tasks grew exponentially. However, if women worked and supported themselves financially before getting married, they had more freedom to choose a suitable marriage partner. If they wished to continue working, they could—theoretically at least—find a partner who supported that endeavor. Though Dorothy already works at the seminary, her increased community engagement and newfound relationships with other women bring her life greater purpose and satisfaction before any thought of marriage.

Dorothy’s Religious Conversion

Religion has long-lasting ties to utopian perspectives. In fact, Claeys and Sargent posit Christianity as “one of the dominating influences in the development of utopianism” (Claeys and Sargent 6). For instance, the Garden of Eden evokes a perfect landscape where man and woman could live in harmony and heaven references an ideal world in the afterlife. While these locations exist in the past and future, respectively, some Christians try to actualize the utopian vision of Christian teachings in their present moment. In

nineteenth-century America, this impulse often manifested in attempted utopian communities with a range of social and religious thought. Transcendentalist nineteenth-century utopian communities include George and Sophia Ripley's Brook Farm and Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands, both in Massachusetts. More directly tied to Christian religious belief were the Harmonites, who originated in Germany but moved to the United States where they developed multiple communities. Similarly, Indiana and Adin Ballou formed Hopedale Community based on Practical Christianity. Like these utopian communities, utopian texts often wrestle with the compatibility of religion and a utopian world. Of the novels discussed in this dissertation, *Dorothy's Experience* is unique in its engagement with this question. Knox bridges the religious and secular divide by advocating faith in action. Dorothy and her collaborators create their utopian community by developing relationships and helping everyone actualize their full potential.

Religion is a driving force in Dorothy's life, impacting not only her sense of self but also her relationships and role in the community. Dorothy's father was a minister (like Knox's father) and she grew up attending regular church activities, but despite this "religious education," "she had never 'experienced religion.' She had been through revival after revival, apparently unmoved" (7). Dorothy lacks the religious fervor that many of her friends and fellow parishioners exhibit. She laments that "[s]he had no story of despair and sudden light to tell. She alone had had no 'experience'" (12). By "experience," Dorothy means a tale of suffering or great awakening. This phrasing is also key given the title of the book; because Dorothy feels at the start that she is lacking experience, the reader will anticipate that watershed moment. As she grows older, her

lack of emotional connection to organized worship expands to include doubts about the truth of religious teachings. She asks about those still attending church, "...was their faith nothing but an inherited delusion? Was this Book which they revered only the gathered records of the Jewish people, with their songs and insane prophecies, and the improbable story of a young Nazarene peasant?" (19-20). While she attended church through her time at seminary, as an adult she no longer participated in the religious institution. Not only did this separate her from members in her current community, but it also distanced Dorothy from her memory of her deceased, religiously-focused parents.

Dorothy's interaction with the minister Edes Hindlay transforms her sense of self and her understanding of her faith. He shepherds her back into a relationship with God by deeming her a member of the faith community and motivating her to enact Christian teachings. Early in the narrative, Dorothy does not view herself as an exemplar of religious and spiritual devotion. When shoe-store owner Mr. Ruggles asks her to be a Sunday school teacher for girls who work at the shoe factory, she responds, "It is impossible!...It would be a strange theology that I should teach them! I could not take the class, sir...It would be no advantage to these girls, believe me" (22). Immediately after this interaction, she returns home to find a letter from a nearby church she attended in her younger years. The letter, written by Edes Hindlay, begins, "Dear Sister and Fellow-Disciple" (24). This phrasing significantly impacts Dorothy:

The words sent a strange thrill through her heart. No reproach, no doubt as to her Christian character, no sharp questioning upon all these silent years—only confidence and love and a desire for united efforts in building up the kingdom of God! And she was one of this people! (24)

Edes' letter accepts and includes Dorothy within the Christian community. When she began questioning the church's foundational ideas, she distanced herself from the institution and its followers, which made her feel disconnected from her peers. With no family or developed friendships in Seabury, Dorothy feels isolated and alone; the familiar religious community appeals to the young woman. Knox writes that "Dorothy Drake's 'true experience' began at that moment" (24). Her experience, then, starts with a message of acceptance—both into God's kingdom and his community of believers.

Edes serves as a spiritual guide—even as a savior—for Dorothy, initiating her "experience" and altering her perspective on her purpose and relationship to religion. After receiving the letter, she visits Edes and tells him that twelve years ago at seminary she was "ignorant" and has "learned not to subscribe blindly to any form of words" (43). Knox sharply critiques those who "blindly" accept scriptural teachings. Edes does not try to convince her of the ultimate authority of scripture, but rather offers advice for interpreting it: "Read [the Bible] in a large way, not searching for verbal discrepancies. Take the spirit of it. Look at it as a whole; Christ's scheme, if you will, for the uplifting of humanity" (45). Edes encourages Dorothy to act based on the general principles of the Bible instead of dealing with "abstractions" (46). For Edes, scripture is rooted in a message of love and service. He tells Dorothy, "do something—some good, honest work which needs to be done, for the bettering of those around you" (45). He advocates a doctrine of good works rather than a theology emphasizing salvation based on faith alone. Dorothy's employment as the seminary principal does not fulfill Edes' vision of social uplift. Edes asks her, "Will you think me very rude, Miss Drake, if I say that you seem to

me to need some—work?” (47). While I identify work as a task meant for economic gain that may coincidentally be personally satisfying or communally beneficial, work in Edes’ definition necessitates community betterment (a feature that dominates Diantha’s and Salome’s work discussed in the previous chapter). Edes suggests that her job does not allow her to put religion into action, preventing closer relationships with God and her community. Edes persuades Dorothy, not to return to a traditional Christian belief, but to stop wondering about the truth of Christian teachings and start helping her surrounding community. Edes relieves her from her doubts and isolation and converts her to a gospel of socially productive labor.

Edes’ perspective on the purpose of God’s kingdom aligns with the social gospel prevalent in the Progressive Era. He tells Dorothy that the church is “a company of human beings, liable to error and assailable by sin, who band themselves together for strength in their efforts to elevate humanity; and in lifting others they sometimes raise themselves” (47). Again, Edes’ focus is outward rather than inward, employing the teachings of the Bible to “elevate humanity” (47). This uplift can occur spiritually or materially, but the latter was a key emphasis for Progressive Era citizens. They hoped that improvements in the material realm would positively impact an individual’s spirituality. An 1892 article in *The Andover Review* explains the late nineteenth-century religious shift from converting souls to assisting with material needs. Though one or two generations ago “practical Christianity” focused “upon the unevangelized world,” the article articulates a “new duty which has been laid upon the church of loving one’s neighbor” (“Social Christianity—The Andover House Association” 82). This article

identifies key principles of social Christianity, including integration into every neighborhood and ministering to the whole person. An 1898 article emphasizes that conversion is still important, but that “The Gospel, said our Lord...is for the poor. The first note that He sounded was a social gospel, a gospel that deals with circumstances, a gospel that changes the outside conditions of a man’s life” (“The Social Gospel” 453). This writer for the *Zion’s Herald* emphasizes that helping people’s physical, practical needs is a vital ministry that Christ espoused. Similarly, Edes encourages Dorothy to do work that benefits others—not to evangelize—and Dorothy develops systems that improve the material conditions of working girls in Seabury. This approach reflects the social gospel: to improve citizens’ inner lives by aiding the outer. Because Dorothy is not confident in her religious belief, this practical approach and its focus on material conditions better aligns with her perspective.

As a tale of a woman re-entering the faith community, *Dorothy’s Experience* is reminiscent of conversion narratives that communicate an individual’s transformation from an old way of life to a new relationship with Christ. Emily Walker Heady calls conversion a “typical literary trope” and describes it as a “process that permits a person who has gotten it wrong to mend his ways, to fix what was broken, and to firm up a new and improved self who will go on to tell the tale of what happened” (1). In Knox’s novel, Dorothy’s shift in focus improves her relationship to her community and her own self-efficacy. Though this transition aligns with the conversion narrative, Dorothy’s interior change and its outward manifestation differ from the genre’s typical stories. Rather than developing a relationship with Christ, she practices her faith by cultivating friendships

with community members. Likewise, instead of speaking or writing about her conversion story, she aids the working girls of Seabury. Thus, rather than a conversion of faith, Dorothy's transformation hinges on her relationship to the community. Edes helps her reconsider her own membership in the faith community and her role within the broader society as someone capable of developing relationships with diverse persons and offering them assistance. Knox challenges the ideology of salvation by faith alone when she depicts Dorothy practicing good works but not developing an individual relationship with Christ. Though Dorothy undergoes a transformation, she revises common conversion narratives by focusing on faith in action rather than belief and testimony.

Dorothy's Faith in Action

Dorothy immediately puts Edes' advice into practice, trying to build connections and uplift people in her nearby neighborhoods. While waiting for the train after her meeting with Edes, Dorothy sees a "dreadfully common" girl in "some sleazy gray material" (53, 49). Dorothy was not well-acquainted with anyone who *looked* like Cynthia, and her appearance signifies her class status. Knox explains, "In Dorothy's whole experience she had never known anything like this type of young womanhood; and yet Miss Drake was unaccountably drawn to the girl" (53). She speaks to the young woman, and just as Dorothy drew a class distinction by describing her as "common," the working girl calls the seminary girls "airy," emphasizing their perceived elegance and delicateness (54). From their first interaction, both women demonstrate an awareness of their distinct class statuses. Knox further emphasizes the women's contrasting socioeconomic positions when Cynthia reveals that she had told Mr. Ruggles, the shoe-

store owner, that she would come to Sunday school if he could find a "right-down, smart teacher, double A, narrow toed, 'n' high in the instep!" (55). Cynthia realizes that Mr. Ruggles thought Dorothy could fill this role, but ironically both Dorothy and Cynthia resist Mr. Ruggles' plan to meet in the church. Instead, they meet in the secular space of the train station and make plans to meet again in Dorothy's home. The women notably meet and interact of their own accord rather than through the mediation of a male character. Though Edes inspires Dorothy's plan, the simple interaction between two women establishes the foundation of their community.

Dorothy moves the relationship forward by inviting Cynthia and her friend Maria to tea, but she finds it difficult to build trust with the women. Initially, she focuses on their uplift, as Edes encouraged. Before they come, Dorothy wonders to herself,

How could she elevate their tastes, refine Cynthia's shocking language, and bring them to hate all shams—as a vision of [Cynthia]'s cotton lace rose to her mind. But after all, these were trifles. She must go deeper...It was the true and the beautiful in a larger sense she must bring them to consider—in time. (58)

Though she at first concentrates on external factors such as language usage and fashion, she acknowledges that these are superficial concerns tied to her class status. Dorothy struggles to implement the social gospel, unsure what to prioritize when attempting to aid these women. She contemplates ways to elevate the working girls to a more refined perspective. When Maria and Cynthia come for tea, the former acts aloof: "there was distrust, if not positive antagonism, in the sullen, half-closed eyes that met hers" (59).

Though Cynthia acts warm and friendly, Dorothy's plan flounders as she struggles to build trust with Maria.

Eventually, Dorothy shifts from social uplift to collaboration, working with the women for the betterment of all involved. When Maria returns in a few days, they talk and listen to each other. By initiating the interaction herself and thus claiming more authority in the situation, Maria feels comfortable enough to tell Dorothy, "I ain't had nobody t' look after me since I was ten years old; only t' cuff me an' beat me—'bring me up,' they called it, and they were good people, too, church-folks; ' with a laugh not pleasant to hear. 'I tell you I can take care o' myself'" (68). Words like "cuff" and "beat" represent Maria's restrictive, violent experience in the church. She rightly proceeds cautiously with anyone she sees as connected to the church because of her past mistreatment. She clearly associates Dorothy with this religious group, thus providing some rationale for why she was so unsociable in their first meeting. Maria defiantly tells Dorothy, "I don't go t' church, and I don't never read my Bible, nor say my prayers" (61). Though Maria intends to shock Dorothy, these confessions actually draw them together. Dorothy says under her breath, "Nor do I," revealing her similar distance to religious activity (61). Dorothy is transparent with Maria about her intentions and the way their interactions are changing her perspective. She explains, "And I was hoping to do something to elevate *you!*...Maria, teach *me*. For I had never thought of these things before" (70). Maria says, "You ain't lived in the midst 'em" (70). Knox emphasizes the importance of hearing someone's lived experience, especially before trying to assist them. Dorothy says, "Let me help you. There must be something I can do. Maria, I will

not be refused. We will work together” (71). In this passage, Dorothy’s mindset transitions from lifting up working girls to working *with* them to learn about and improve their living conditions. This collaboration is a shift for both involved, as Maria replies, “I’m set against yer kind...But I believe you, and—I’ll come” (71). Because of their transparency, Dorothy and Maria eventually agree to labor together for material and social improvements for working women in Seabury.

Together the women create a community that offers physical and spiritual nourishment, providing purpose and satisfaction for the single women. Dorothy explains her newfound labor to Edes:

Dorothy told him of her interest in the homeless class of young girls of the town; of her Saturday evenings, to which they brought their work—homely work—the mending, cutting, and making of their own garments; of the cooking-school, where each one took her turn on Saturday nights in helping to prepare a comfortable dinner for the Sabbath, which those who chose to do so could come together and eat, the others taking their part to their rooms; of the Bible-reading on Sunday evenings, with a half-hour, at least, devoted to singing, when any one could ask a friend of the other sex. (85)

This developing group of women spends time together doing everyday chores, sharing meals, and attending to their spirituality through reading scripture and singing. The variety of activities highlights the real community-feeling amongst the women. But, like the Working Girls' Clubs discussed in the second chapter, these interactions also allow for supervision of the working women. When they are spending time together, Dorothy—and her collaborators such as Maria—can ensure that the working women are not engaging in immoral activities. The hymn-singing also fills the space with a religious air,

discouraging practices deemed corrupt. Thus, the community offers both support and surveillance of the working women.

Eventually, Dorothy and her collaborators expand their support for the working-class women by opening a permanent home for them. Upon visiting the newly decorated space, Maria says that she does not know if the place is homelike because she has not “seen much o’ homelike places” (154). However, she further explains, “it seems t’ me like the kingdom o’ heaven... You know it’s to begin on earth” (154). Maria’s evocation of heaven points to the utopian quality of Dorothy’s labor. She, along with the help of folks like Edes and Maria, has created an ideal home for working class women with a well-functioning, supportive community. This network also benefits Dorothy herself by providing friendship and purpose. Like Salome and Diantha, Dorothy pursues profitable work and fulfilling labor, but her efforts are divided into two different tasks: her seminary work and her labor at the women’s home. She develops strong connections with others in her community; Maria and Dorothy “understood each other, these two women so outwardly unlike. The same thought, the same desire, had stirred in each heart: 'If we can only, in ever so small a degree, make this kingdom of heaven begin here!'" (155). Though initially their distinct class statuses and biases impede Maria and Dorothy’s connection, their shared commitment to improving the working women’s lives draws them together.

This productive labor for the community and the relationships that result cause Dorothy’s heart to be “strangely warm to all the world” after an evening spent at the home (182). The phrase “strangely warm” evokes John Wesley’s famous description of his conversion experience at Aldersgate that, as Emily Walker Heady explains, “shows

up in any number of crisis conversions” (15). The phrase “strangely warm” is meant to evoke a religious transformation, but Dorothy converts to a doctrine of the social gospel rather than developing a personal relationship with Christ. By meeting the social, material, and even the religious needs of the working women, Dorothy and Maria have formed a heavenly, utopian sisterhood between themselves and the other working women in Seabury.

The conversation with Edes is the impetus for Dorothy’s newfound involvement in the community, which gives her purpose not only in her labor but also in her friendships with other women. Thus, she does not rely on a romantic relationship for this fulfillment. Additionally, the working women have newfound stability in their caring community and home. This support provides the working women the opportunity to carefully select a marriage partner rather than resorting to men for their sustenance and protection. As a result of this new position for working women, Cynthia *chooses* to marry Amos, just as Dorothy slowly and naturally grows closer to Edes.

Working Class Women’s Romantic and Sexual Relationships

Knox highlights the different circumstances and considerations for working-class and middle-class women’s marriages. Cynthia was the first working woman of Seabury to meet Dorothy, so she had been an integral part of the community from the start. She has a slowly developing relationship with a man named Amos, which indicates that she is not pressured or forced to marry because she has a community that meets her needs. The first time that she meets Amos, a man who left his middle-class family and now makes

his own way in the world, she explains the benefits of the new home that Dorothy helped to establish:

It's a very nice place down here that Miss Drake an' some of the rest of 'em have fixed up for girls that work. Where they can stay, you know, and get things to eat, and learn how to mend up their clothes, and—and all that. I guess you don't know what it is to come in from the country, as most of 'em do, and no place to go to, 'specially nights, when you've got through with your work, an' no friends t' speak to. (135)

Cynthia articulates the multiple needs that this new program addresses; food, shelter, clothing, and, perhaps most importantly, friendship, are all provided. In terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the community satisfies the working women's basic and psychological needs, which improves their status. As a member of this group, Cynthia can consider marriage partners solely for the sake of a romantic, intimate relationship rather than to fulfill basic physiological needs.

Cynthia grows closer to Amos over two years, slowly learning about him and assessing their compatibility for marriage. He was from a middle-class family but had run away and was now a "workingman" (129). At first, Cynthia is very guarded, and her anxiety about interacting with this stranger permeates their first encounter. Amos is unaware of the insular nature of the seminary and the working women's home. For instance, he wants to visit the women's home, but Cynthia explains that male friends can only come on Saturday nights by invitation and he has no one to ask him. He assumes that Cynthia can and will invite him, but she merely comments that Mr. Hindlay might bring him. She allows Edes to assess Amos' appropriateness; if he invites Amos to the

home, he must be a suitable enough acquaintance for the working women. His friendship with Edes reassures Cynthia, evident when she remarks, "...you must be all right if Mr. Hindlay knew you" (145). When he accompanies Mr. Hindlay to the home, Cynthia's distance offends Amos, though she is not aware of this slight. Amos' heart softens quickly when she eventually speaks to him. Over time, their relationship deepens and their esteem for each other grows. Though he was "not a handsome young man," Cynthia comes to view him as "big," "strong," and "almost handsome" (129, 136). She feels "sympathy" for him, and her "womanly kindness" moves him (136, 168). Her anxiety dissipates and their friendship—and romance—slowly develops over the following two years.

Amos communicates his affection for Cynthia—including an implied marriage proposal—through discussions of his mother. His separation from his family has been difficult for him, and Cynthia becomes a nurturer in this new town of strangers. He thinks about bringing his mother to Seabury, where she "might get to know this girl who had so struck his fancy" (168). Amos misses his mother's comfort, though Cynthia has begun to fill this lack. He dreams about them meeting each other, telling Cynthia, "I know mother'd take to you" (177). Amos conveys his first explicit compliment to Cynthia through his analysis of how his mother would esteem her. Amos' pronouncement significantly states that his middle-class mother would "take to" working class Cynthia. This "implied praise" sent a "vivid blush...to Cynthia's cheeks" (178). Because of his regard—or perhaps his Oedipal attraction—for his mother, Cynthia recognizes that Amos' statement expresses his affection for her. Amos also approaches Cynthia for

advice on his familial relations, suggesting that he views her as a mature and wise adviser. He asks whether he should make amends with his family since he had spoken unkind words and left abruptly. She exudes immense "pride... at being thus appealed to for advice!" (178). Not only does his inquiry bolster Cynthia's self-image, but after this interaction, "Amos was overflowing with a happiness he could not have explained" (181). Amos predicted his mother's view correctly, demonstrated when he receives a letter from his mother saying she would like to meet Cynthia. He is overjoyed and eagerly asks if she will go home with him. Just as Edes mediates his first "implied praise" to Cynthia through his mother, this invitation to visit his mother serves as an implied marriage proposal. He asks her, "There ain't nobody that you like better 'n you do me, is there" (210). Amos inquires about Cynthia's feelings, not making any assumptions despite their long, slowly developing connection. Knox writes, "There was a moment's silence. Then the parasol fell with a soft thud out of Cynthia's grasp. One hand stole quickly across his coarse shirt-bosom and around his neck, and Cynthia's little freckled cheek was pressed tightly against his face" (210). By quickly dropping the parasol and embracing Amos, Cynthia indicates that she likes no one better than him. Her unspoken affirmation suggests that both Cynthia and Amos understand their mutual affection. Both individuals are happy in their partnership, not because they will now have basic human needs met but because they admire each other and enjoy spending time together. Cynthia and Amos' relationship exemplifies the type of marriage that Knox suggests will be positive for both members—one that is slow to develop and based on mutual affection.

Because of the new, supportive community for working women, Cynthia avoids even considering questions of sexual promiscuity, either in a personal relationship or as an occupation. However, this evasion was not always possible. Maria explains to Dorothy early in the text that because Cynthia's parents did not have regular work, Cynthia's "on the street a good deal" (65). Though "on the street" could refer to Cynthia being homeless or working as a prostitute, the latter is a definite possibility. Dorothy reinforces this idea when she tells Maria, "When I met Cynthia, I had seen girls like her walking the streets evenings alone, or in company with others like themselves, laughing and talking noisily" (65). This passage alludes to either prostitutes or young women staying out later than deemed culturally appropriate, illuminating the blurry line for working class women. Dorothy does not hold these laughing, talking girls in high esteem and she thinks that Cynthia either currently "walk[s] the streets" at night or that she could in the future. Dorothy empathizes with the difficult decisions that women must make, stating, "I, too, was left to take care of myself. But for the accident of circumstances I should be in the same place" (66). Likewise, Maria approaches the difficulties of poor women with an understanding tone: "What can they do, poor things? Away from their homes, or without any. Herding together in an attic maybe, and not a full meal in the week. Tempted by things you never thought of, that come to you like the air o' heaven—light an' warmth an' decent food" (68-69). The phrase "poor things" takes on a double meaning, as they are both poverty-stricken and pitiful in Maria's description. The women Maria describes do not even have their most basic needs like food and warmth met; thus, Maria implies her understanding that some women turn to alternative means of earning a livelihood.

As Maria and Dorothy imply, some working women enter prostitution²⁷ relations to have more stable access to basic necessities like food and shelter. Maria dated a man named Rob Small who ended the relationship because of suspicions regarding Maria's sexual behaviors while he was away. Maria refutes his perspective when she tells Dorothy, "...say I was t' die, I should like [Rob] to know that I wa'n't what he thought—akind of a shiftin' light like the one down the harbor, blazin' this way an' that, and only shinin' out steady at last when you'd got hold o' me t' keep me straight" (94). Maria employs the metaphor of a light to argue that she is steadfast (and monogamous) in her relationships. Rob Small starts dating another woman, Sarah Waite (who works in the book-bindery downtown), and his paranoia about leaving a romantic interest behind continues as he asks Dorothy and Maria to watch her while he is gone.

Some women's rights advocates of the Progressive Era fought against these kinds of social surveillance and the stricter expectations for women's sexual behavior. In *Dorothy's Experience*, this surveillance occurs not only when the middle class (represented by Dorothy) monitor the working class, but also when the working-class women try to regulate and survey each other. For instance, Maria explains to Dorothy that she "take care o' Cynthy" (70) and she "set Cynthy t' lookin' after" Sarah Waite (72). She tells Cynthia to "pass it along...an' maybe this poor creetur 'll lend a hand t' somebody else" (72). Maria argues that the working women must look out for each other

²⁷ I use the term "prostitutional" to refer to any relationship—whether marriage, prostitution, or somewhere in between—that involves women relying on men for economic support in exchange for their sexual, romantic, or marital associations. Despite their socioeconomic status, women sometimes relied on these transactional relationships for their economic and social security.

and hopes that her system will spread. Unbeknownst to Rob Small, the women have already been looking out for Sarah Waite, but they acquiesce to his request to keep an eye on her. True to their word, Maria reports to Dorothy that she saw Sarah walking with Tom Swan. The narrator explains that Sarah Waite had "taken up with a set o' girls that won't do her no good" and that Tom was the "junior partner in the firm which employed Sarah; and his reputation was not the best" (100). Again, the text does not explicitly name prostitution, but gestures toward that interpretation by depicting Sarah associating with a group of potentially harmful women and a man of ill repute. Maria runs after Sarah, finds her on the train about to depart, and yells, "'Fool!...Do you think he cares for you? He cared for me once, but I—held out.' She was dragging her, feebly resisting, along to the door. 'I said I'd take care o' ye'" (104). Maria feels responsibility to save this woman from a man who was seeking not marriage but only sex. She suggests that because Sarah did not "h[o]ld out," Tom Swan does not care about her. Maria does not want Sarah to continue engaging in this sexual relationship, but to come home and wait for Rob Small to return. Sarah resists leaving, and in the scramble, Maria's dress catches, and she falls onto the tracks where she was found "insensible, but still alive" (105). Maria wanted so desperately to stop Sarah Waite that she puts herself in harm's way, causing an injury that leads to permanent physical impairment.²⁸ Maria was aware that in a culture that valued

²⁸ After hearing of her injury, Edes comments to Dorothy that he does not think Maria will ever marry now. However, he suggests, "I doubt if she would ever have married...Maria's surroundings have been poor enough, but her ideal is high. The mental superiority she would have looked for, she could not have found in her own class. And the moral excellence that could have won her respect, it would be hard to find anywhere" (111). Though terrible to eliminate Maria from the pool of suitable marriage partners because of a physical impairment, Edes is complimentary to Maria's ideals and morality. However, his comment is extremely classist because he suggests that she would not be able to find someone similarly respectable "in her own class" (111).

women's sexual purity so highly, the stakes for working women and their sexual and marital relations were high. Rather than critiquing this societal standard, Maria protects working women from the negative implications of sexual relations. The community of women curtail each other's sexual expression to ensure each other's greatest possibilities for the future.

Fears of working-class women's sexual promiscuity and prostitution permeated the Progressive Era. Nancy Woloch points out that working women often switched from factory work to prostitution because of the higher salary; many women saw prostitution as an "avenue to social mobility" (235). Schneider and Schneider explain that while some women were certainly lured or taken into prostitution against their will, most prostitutes entered "the trade not by entrapment but by chance or choice" because of an economic system that made it difficult or impossible for women to support themselves and any children "on the pittance they might earn in factories or department stores" (138, 139). Many middle and upper-class women tried to eliminate prostitution, or what they often called the white slave trade. An 1893 article by J. W. Walton in *American Journal of Politics* critiques those who have stopped fighting prostitution and have labeled it a "necessary evil," which he asserts is "plainly a contradiction in terms" (606). He defines prostitution as the "unlawful intercourse for gain" and argues that the "primal cause is sin" (606). Walton underscores an individual's choice to participate in prostitution, but states that social factors also contribute to the system: "The struggle of thousands of young women in our large cities to maintain virtuous lives in the face of temptation and unfortified by sufficient food, if realized, would move all hearts profoundly" (607). Like

Maria and Dorothy, Walton paints the women in a sympathetic light, pointing out difficult choices women must make between obtaining sustenance and maintaining virtue. Walton's sympathetic tone continues when he offers suggestions for working against prostitution: "Rescue the poor victims in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth... Strive to elevate the self-respect and the wages of working women. Watch the young as they gather into great cities, and be beforehand with the devil" (617). Walton clearly views anti-prostitution efforts as moral and religious, but also underscores working women's needs for positive self-images and living wages. These conversations about prostitution reflect views on women's sexuality and behavior more generally. Though sex radicals fought for more freedom in sexual behavior, especially for women, most citizens still believed in female chastity and deemed strong sexual impulses unnatural, even for married women. As the moral center of the home and the nation, mainstream society encouraged women from every class background to refrain from sexually promiscuous behavior. Rob Small's quick dismissal of Maria when he suspects sexual promiscuity demonstrates the high stakes for women in cultivating and maintaining a positive public perception. This experience motivates Maria to help others—including Sarah and Cynthia—satisfy their economic and social needs through the community of women rather than prostitudinal relations with men.

Romantic and Sexual Relationships in the Middle Class

Marital arrangements even for middle and upper-class women sometimes contained prostitutional qualities, as reformists in the Progressive Era recognized.²⁹ Though prostitutes typically had short-term transactional relationships, married women had long-lasting economic and sexual exchanges. As Eby explains, through the “fusion (and confusion) of the sexual and the economic, the wife, then, becomes functionally identical to the prostitute” (40). In *The Arena*—the same source that published *Salome Shepard, Reformer*—founder B.O. Flower writes about “Prostitution Within the Marriage Bond” in 1895. He explains the evolving relationships between men and women:

For ages men regarded women as slaves, whose duty it was to perform menial tasks, wait upon them, and be the instruments of their sensual gratification. Later, among the wealthier classes, woman became more or less a doll or petted child, who for sweetmeats, flattery, and fine presents was expected to give her body to her master. Still later, she was supposed to come into much higher and truer relations to man; but, unfortunately, this was more largely theoretical than actual. And at the present time, in order to consider one of the chief factors in the immorality of to-day, we must frankly face the problem of prostitution within the marriage relation. (60)

Flower emphasizes the hierarchical structure in marriage that can mimic prostitutional relations. He evokes the language of slave and master, aligning with the discourse about the white slavery of prostitution in the Progressive Era. He even suggests that “[n]o more unblushing falsehood has ever been made current by conventionalism than that woman is

²⁹ In *Until Choice Do Us Part*, Clare Virginia Eby points out that in *Women and Economics*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman draws a comparison between marriage and prostitution: “By framing marriage as the selling of sexual ‘goods’ for a sizable fee, and wives therefore as members of a trade union, Gilman forces readers to see wives and prostitutes as varieties of the same species: women in the sex trade” (41).

free in the marriage relation” (65). Much of his discussion focuses on married women’s unfair treatment and society’s mistaken encouragement of overly lustful men entering marriage to satisfy their desires. Flower asserts,

[w]hen justice is according to woman in the marital relation, and she shall be protected from enforced maternity and prostitution, then I believe the time will come when society will recognize the fact that true marriage is impossible where the two contracting parties are not drawn together by pure love. (71-72)

This union based on love will “draw them upward toward the loftiest ideals” (72), thus bettering the individuals, the marriage, their children, and perhaps even society more broadly. Rather than marriages mimicking prostitution, New Women (and many suffragists) wanted equal partnerships based on love and respect. Dorothy and Edes allow their romantic attachment to organically develop after finding personal satisfaction and economic stability in their own labor; thus, they successfully avoid a prostitutional marital relationship.

Edes and Dorothy exhibit romantic tension even in their first interaction when they discuss the letter Edes sent. Even before they meet, the reader learns that Edes is a kind, dedicated man—a suitable marriage partner for a woman who wants respect and support. The narrator describes Edes as a hard-working man who cares for his sister and pays for his college tuition by turning the swamps into cranberry fields. His sister Rose tries to keep “a strict guard” over him, especially when they move to Putnam near Seabury, where, perhaps “through some ecumenical pleasantry,” young eligible women surround him (39, 37). Rose views Edes as “a very innocent and weak-kneed lamb, set in

the midst of devouring wolves” (38-39). Rose perceives Edes as prey and the young women as predators, painting him as innocent, unsuspecting, and kind. Though Edes “gave very little thought to his tormentors,” Rose surveys the women and is thrilled when Dorothy approaches their home, thinking her a very “stylish creature” (39, 40). She tells Edes to go “make [himself] as nice as [he] can” before he meets her (40). Knox underscores their romantic possibility from the first moment that they meet. When Dorothy enters the house, she “paused in some embarrassment upon the threshold. For it had never occurred to Miss Dorothy Drake that the minister might be a young man” (41). Perhaps because of her own father, Dorothy expected Edes to be an old, paternal minister. Instead, he was a young man not much older than her, making him an eligible bachelor for her and all the other young women. Though Edes may be oblivious, Dorothy and Rose recognize the romantic and marital possibilities between the two characters.

Dorothy and Edes increasingly admire and respect each other, despite their initial mentor/mentee, pastor/parishioner dynamic. At first, he is pleased to hear that “...she was acting upon his advice” and that she solicits his guidance regarding the working women’s home, both of which reinforce his mentorship role (80). Dorothy is nervous around Edes and finds that her charms do not work on him: “She was always a little afraid of this very kind friend, who...was never in the least impressed by the dignified manner which slightly awed her other associates. She fancied sometimes he found her romantic and utopian” (107). Dorothy clearly views these descriptors in negative terms, but her utopian mindset allows her to apply Edes’ suggestions and build the community with the working women. When Edes calls her “fine[,]” she responds with frustration because “her one

desire had been to be honest and true, and to do some faithful work for a higher meed than praise!" (117). They develop shared ownership over the project, emphasized when Dorothy tells Edes, "It really looks as though our little project of helping these girls were about to become an institution" (109). Though Dorothy takes the leadership role, their collaboration strengthens their connection, not only because they are partners in the venture but also because it increases their interactions. For instance, after they finish putting books onto the home's bookshelves, Edes "held out both hands, and taking [Dorothy's,] lifted her to her feet. It brought her face for an instant very near to his. What did she read in the eyes that suddenly seemed to look into the very depths of her own?" (149). Though she is unable to fully describe it, the gaze goes "straight to the heart" (149). Dorothy becomes aware that they are alone and blushes at the thought of him walking her home, ultimately deciding to stay. Though readers are still not privy to Edes' thoughts, Dorothy is clearly aware of the growing romantic tension between them. However, Edes seeks out Dorothy's company and advice. For instance, when Edes considers the "schemes for the greater field he was about to enter upon" in his future church and community, he wants to talk to Dorothy (187). The narrator explains that they have become mutually helpful and supportive of each other: "He wanted her sympathy. He felt the need of a certain courage with which her shyly proffered advice inspired him" (187). Just as Dorothy could inspire him, Edes' words "lifted her out of herself" and "carried her on" to do good work (187). Once they reach this point of mutually beneficial support and encouragement, they have laid the groundwork for a positive relationship and marriage based on love and respect.

Though Knox frames Edes as a suitable marriage partner, Dorothy still hesitates about the prospect of marriage generally. She had long thought that marriage was “not for her,” and even that she was “superior” to “the ordinary need of her sex” (184). This statement associates women with a desire for marriage. Edes similarly remarks to Dorothy, “most women would hold a happy marriage the crowning blessing of life, I think” (112). Though Dorothy agrees with this generalization, she does not see marriage as an imperative, necessary, or even desired aspect of her own life. She struggles to write an article entitled “The Duty of Woman: To Herself and to the World” (184). She realizes that she “was as foolish as any one of her girls whom she had caught throwing notes over the Seminary walls, and that, with all her boasted strength of mind, she was only a woman after all” (185). Dorothy is disappointed that she is not above romantic feeling, implicitly deeming romance irrational or juvenile. However, her desire for marriage notably emerges within herself rather than from societal expectations or economic need. She provides for herself but develops a relationship with a compatible partner, cultivating a desire for marriage. Dorothy’s work frees her from the necessity of marriage, enabling her to choose a partner based on romantic attachment.

The novels’ characteristics of successful marriage—communities of support, adequate time before marriage, and providing for oneself emotionally and economically—are reinforced in Dorothy and Edes’ proposal and marriage. Edes emphasizes that he pursues marriage with her because of love, not because he needs her help in the church. Dorothy worries that churchgoers might disregard her, but he says, “I do not ask you to teach—I do not want you to work in the church. I want you for myself”

(201). Though not sexual in nature, the idea of marrying Dorothy to procure her labor as a pastor's wife aligns with the idea of prostitution or slavery in marriage. Edes resists this framework, only desiring Dorothy's companionship in a mutually supportive marriage. Like Cynthia and Amos, Dorothy and Edes have a slowly-developing romance; after their engagement they "were not married at once. Little Rose was the first bride. Her wedding took place the morning before Edes left for Putnam" (202). When they finally marry, Dorothy and Edes have "a quiet wedding, attended by many friends, however, for Miss Drake was a social favorite" (203). The community of women celebrate the partnership, and she parts from Maria "with the deepest emotion" (203). As the seminary principal Dorothy was economically self-sufficient, but her relationships with the working women gave her life purpose. Rather than seeking all her meaning within a marriage, Dorothy enters the union as a satisfied, mature woman.

Knox leaves Dorothy's labor and religious faith—the main topics in her initial meeting with Edes—somewhat ambiguous at the close of the novel. After she leaves for Putnam with Edes, the home continues to prosper: "It was a place of refuge to more than one sorely tired woman. It was eternal salvation to who can say how many homeless girls? And...it was the outward and blessed expression of Dorothy's inner religious experience" (210-211). The home's continued success after her departure affirms her labor. The novel only generally explains her role in Putnam: Dorothy "was considered as having no 'gift' as a worker in the church. But she gathered the women of her husband's flock into her heart, especially those upon its outskirts, and was, unconsciously to herself, an example and a stimulus to them toward a higher and purer life" (211). Like in

Seabury, she cultivates a community of women who support each other socially and emotionally. Knox identifies Edes as the possessor of the flock, but like her husband, Dorothy serves the people in the community. Though the notion of social uplift still arises in Knox's language, Dorothy emphasizes relationships over elevating the women, only "unconsciously" pushing them upward. Knox stresses the importance of Dorothy's actions over her religious doctrine: "Whether she ever again attempted to formulate a creed, or to settle the theological questions which had once disturbed her mind, who can tell? It is a question which was never asked her here, and perhaps it may not be hereafter" (211). Dorothy translates faith into labor, which offers personal gratification and the chance to develop a relationship with Edes, a fellow community servant. The modern reader could be frustrated by the ambiguous ending that implies Dorothy may not still be working. Nevertheless, Knox emphasizes that social and physiological needs do not force Dorothy to marry; instead, Dorothy and Edes marry for love.

Knox's text is reformist and progressive because it imagines new arrangements for romantic partnerships. More specifically, Knox subtly resists the hierarchical framework by establishing both the man and woman as autonomous, economically independent individuals. Dorothy is not reliant on family and provides for herself. This self-subsistence allows her to pursue marriage for love and companionship rather than material comforts. In addition, Edes moves from mentor to collaborator in their community project, establishing Dorothy and Edes as equals. Lastly, though Dorothy is in her late twenties, near the end of her prime years for marital possibility, she is content with single life. She does not seek marriage for the sake of the institution or to maintain

her social standing; rather, because she loves Edes specifically she decides to marry. All these factors reform the traditional marriage relation and move Dorothy and Edes toward a companionate marriage. Martha Bensley Bruère's text *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* pushes this conversation even further by describing an engagement based not just on love, but a shared commitment to work for the nation.

Mildred Carver, U. S. A.

Mildred Carver, U. S. A.'s representation of marriage and labor differs from *Dorothy's Experience*, largely because the former was published nearly thirty years later in 1919 and depicts an upper-class woman. Bruère focuses more intently on labor than Knox, though unlike Gilman's character Diantha or Winslow's Salome, Mildred does not decide independently to enter the working world. In the alternative society, the government requires a compulsory year of labor for all eighteen-year-olds. Nevertheless, her labor experiences transform her goals for life and marriage. Bruère employs timely patriotic rhetoric to defend women's right to work outside the home, even after marriage. Compared to Knox's novel, Bruère's text more heavily emphasizes Mildred's developing romance(s) and her potential marriage partners. In fact, the novel opens with a depiction of Nick and Mildred's engagement, and though separated for some time, ends with them reunited. By focusing more on labor, work, and marriage, this text provides an even clearer understanding of Progressive Era ideas about women's work and its impact on romantic relationships. *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* offers more progressive ideas than *Dorothy's Experience*, likely because it was published nearly three decades later and because Knox was more religious and conservative than Bruère. Mildred offers an

example of a woman devoted to labor in the public sphere and *unwilling* to marry someone who does not share this belief and support her endeavors. However, Bruère contends that this shared worldview is not enough; a potential husband and wife must also share a strong romantic connection. Mildred's ideological and romantic compatibility with Nick, combined with her continued wage-earning, satisfying work, establishes the novel as utopian.

Waiting for Marriage, a Community of Women, and Personally Satisfying Work

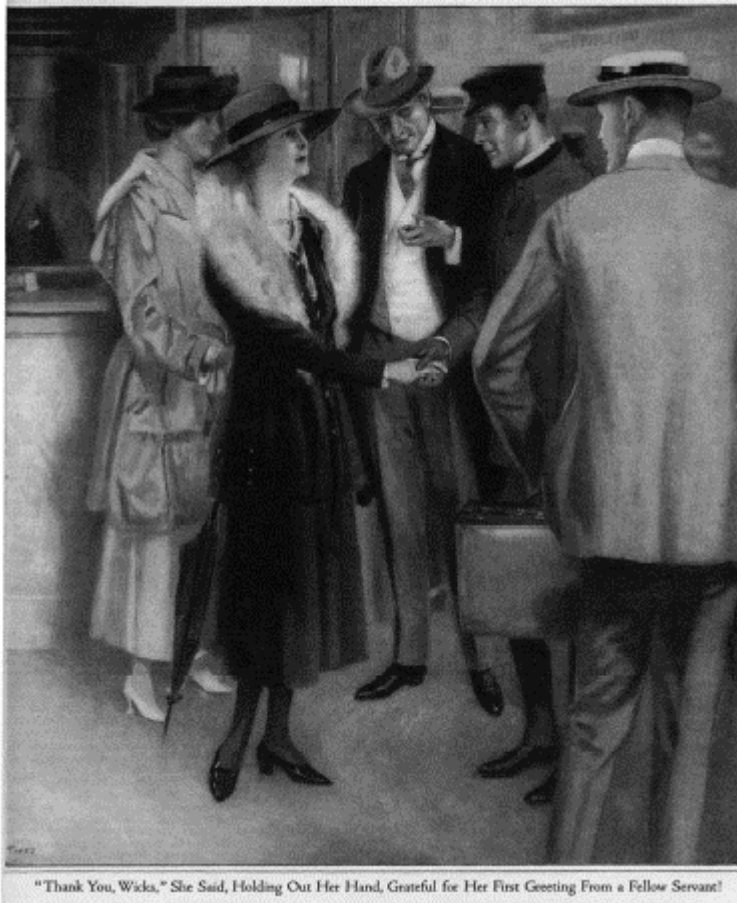
Like *Dorothy's Experience*, Bruère's novel also emphasizes having adequate time before marriage, developing a community of women, and providing economically and socially for oneself. The year of government-enforced labor spurs all three elements of successful marriage. For instance, Nick and Mildred must delay their nuptials because the law prohibited marriage until after their year in the Service; their parents discourage even an engagement at their youthful age with so little life experience. Nick's father thinks "eighteen is a bit too young" to marry (16). Similarly, Mildred's father insists that because they are very young, inexperienced, and have not served their mandatory year, they must wait a year to get engaged. Bruère opposes rushing into engagement or marriage before someone leaves for the Service, comparable to a quick marriage before going to war. By contrast, in his 1918 article "The War Marriage and Its Purpose," Episcopal Priest Percy Stickney Grant praises hasty pre-war marriages:

No doubt, many engagements were brought to a happy climax by the war; many marriages that have been delayed for financial or family reasons were concluded in the uplift of patriotic expediency. The indecision of sentiment which often makes young people wait was stimulated by the heroism of the occasion. (689)

The married men, he contends, have “far more courage and determination on account of the girls they have left behind them as brides in their homes” (689). Grant celebrates quick pre-war marriages because of their benefits for soldiers. For the fictional Service, though, Nick *and* Mildred are leaving their home for unknown adventures and hardships. Though the work is not as dangerous as the war, marriage could still be a comforting solace in the Service because of the strenuous labor and vastly new social interactions the Service entails. However, Bruère argues *against* getting married in a hurry before leaving for a major life event. What Grant calls an “indecision of sentiment,” Bruère frames as useful for a lasting, happy marriage.

Once Mildred enters the Service, she meets socioeconomically diverse people and forms a community with the women, much like Dorothy does with working women in Seabury. This process of interclass mingling initiates even before she boards the train for the Service. She shakes hands with Wicks, “one of the Carver’s young footmen[,]” before departing (9). Though they did not have a close relationship, the Service draws them together because of their shared servanthood (see fig. 8). Those entering the Service were “of every race, every complexion, every degree of prosperity to be found in New York City” (29). Like Mildred, Ruth Ansel is upper class, but Mildred also connects with Ellen Forsythe, a middle-class artistic feminist, Mamie Epstein, a working-class woman, and Winkles, a Syrian woman. The Service is an equalizing force amongst the women; despite their different backgrounds, all of them must labor for a year. As Mamie Epstein states, “It don’t make no difference if you got a million dollars or just ten cents, you gotta work just the same” (49).

This feature of the novel intrigued the Progressive Era audience, as evidenced by the reviews. One review published in *Outlook* explains: “Rich and poor, Jew and Gentile,



“Thank You, Wicks,” She Said, Holding Out Her Hand, Grateful for Her First Greeting From a Fellow Servant!

Figure 8. Taffs, C. H., illustrator. *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* By Martha Bensley Bruère. *Ladies' Home Journal*, vol. 35, June 1918, pp. 15.

the educated and the ignorant...are thus thrown into intimacy with one another, profit personally by the democratic association, and produce economic results of value” (Review of *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* 38).

This reviewer emphasizes the religious and educational variety amongst members of the Service, as well as the personal and economic

benefits of the government’s requirement. However,

another review from the *New York Times* is more skeptical of Bruère’s depiction:

Everything moves in the most harmonious manner imaginable, and, according to Mrs. Bruère, girls and boys of the most diverse types and inheritances, coming from all sorts and kinds of homes and of all degrees of education and refinement, mingle together in perfect accord, with absolute ease and no jealousies or frictions, and it is all too perfectly lovely for words. (Review of *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* 87)

This reviewer uses positive language such as “harmonious” and “perfect accord” to describe the Service. Not until the last phrase—“*too* perfectly lovely for words”—does the subtle criticism really come through (my emphasis). The review deems Bruère’s depiction of relations between people from such diverse backgrounds as unrealistic. The reviewer finds it difficult to believe that there could be “no frictions” within such a group. However, the reviewer overlooks tense moments when the women must negotiate differences, such as Mildred’s and Mamie’s distinct opinions on marriage. While Mamie is eager to marry someone affluent, Mildred rejects the idea of marrying for wealth, or for any reason other than romantic attachment. Overall, though, the young men and women of the Service learn from each other and get along well. Like *Dorothy’s Experience*, this heterogenous yet harmonious mixing of people establishes the utopian community. Mildred works alongside and builds community with a diverse range of people.

Not only are these new friendships meaningful to Mildred, but she also finds the labor personally satisfying, much like Salome, Diantha, and Dorothy. In the Service, Mildred witnesses labor not as an activity solely for economic profit but “because the thing you were doing had to be done!” (38). In her upper-class family with servants, Mildred was unaccustomed to the idea of exerting effort to accomplish a task. As someone who was from “the part of the world that spent money instead of earning it,” Mildred did not need to work for compensation (38). The idea of laboring to do something productive compels Mildred, and she begins to imagine herself contributing to the country’s wellbeing. Mildred has an image

of a whole people working together for the things that they all needed to have. And just by virtue of this vision, dim and misty as it was, the aversion with which she had entered the Service vanished and she was filled with a tremulous delight in the new adventure in which she—Mildred Carver, an independent, free swimming human being—was embarked; and she knew way down in the bottom of that soul that she was just beginning to be conscious of, that she wouldn't give up the chance of it,—no, not for anything that the world has yet seen fit to offer her, beloved daughter of the rich and great as she was. (59)

Though initially skeptical of the Service, Mildred develops a sense of her own function within a greater system of laborers supporting the nation. Despite her upper-class background, she grows determined not to give up this newfound purpose for anything, presumably including marriage. Iva Balic asserts that Mildred's newfound satisfaction through public labor is the biggest difference between *Mildred Carver* and Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, which she sees as a major influence for Bruère: "The most glaring departure from Bellamy's work is Bruère's insistence that women's active engagement in the public sphere can bring not only independence but also satisfaction and the sense of pride and accomplishment" (20). While Bellamy's novel and many other utopian texts posit work as undesirable, for Mildred and other middle and upper-class women of the Progressive Era, it was key to their liberation. Mildred's labor allows her to recognize her own abilities, find a meaningful purpose, and consider futures that did and did not include marriage. Like *Dorothy's Experience*, *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* emphasizes waiting to marry, finding a community of women, and participating in personally satisfying labor that also benefits the community.

Participating in Useful Work for the Nation

Given that Mildred is from an upper-class family, she does not share the same economic concerns as Dorothy or Diantha. Rather, Mildred focuses on finding work that is beneficial for the nation. In truth, this interest differs little from Diantha's and Dorothy's because they also seek communal improvement, but Mildred focuses on the larger community of the nation. Additionally, though her labor in the Service was compulsory and unpaid, she does not desire to continue volunteering; she looks for employment rather than initiating her own project like Dorothy, Diantha, and Salome. All the women, though, see the benefit of labor—whether paid or unpaid, employed or not—for themselves and their communities.

Bruère's incorporation of patriotic rhetoric is timely because the novel was published at the end of World War I, a period requiring women's increased participation in work and service because of the reduced number of men in the country. Not only did more women gain employment, but WWI also changed the forms of work available to women. As Maurine Weiner Greenwald explains in *Women, War, and Work*, "The federal censuses of 1910 and 1920 show that the First World War primarily occasioned a shift within the female labor force, rather than a movement of non-wage-earning women into categories of paid labor" (13). From 1910 to 1920, working women increased by 6.3 percent, and women delved into new occupations including "stenographers and typists, bookkeepers, cashiers and accountants, saleswomen and clerks in stores, school teachers, telephone operators, laborers in manufacturing, trained nurses, and waitresses" (Greenwald 13). Jobs focusing on domestic skills decreased, while opportunities for more

varied, easily mastered occupations increased opportunities for women. “The war opened opportunities barely fathomable to such women” before the war broke out (Greenwald 31). But, as women who were already working obtained most of these jobs, married and middle or upper-class women were, largely, still unemployed. Though they often engaged in community service, especially for the war, Bruère depicts an upper-class woman who works for economic profit and the country’s benefit and plans to continue her work after marriage. *Mildred Carver U. S. A.* asserts the value of work for individuals from every socioeconomic background, whether married or single.

By employing timely patriotic rhetoric, Bruère posits women’s work as nationally productive rather than selfish. The novel’s serialization in *Ladies Home Journal* continually reminded readers of the international conflict because the publication presented war information and propaganda.³⁰ As *Ladies Home Journal* was one of the most popular periodicals of the time, *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* was likely the most-read text discussed in this dissertation. Originally edited by Louisa Knapp Curtis who had been editing the women’s department for her husband Cyrus H. K. Curtis’ *Tribune and Farmer*, the *Ladies Home Journal* received a new editor, Edward Bok, in October of 1889. Most of the audience was conservative, so Bok’s arguments against some women’s clubs and suffrage in the early twentieth century may have aided his subscription

³⁰ *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* was also published in novel format by The Macmillan Company in 1919. George Edward Brett founded the American branch of the London publishing house in 1869, though it broke from its parent company in 1896 (“Macmillan Company Records”). They published Owen Wister, Jack London, F. Marion Crawford, and Henry James, among other prominent writers (Tebbel 355). The publisher attracted major American authors and became “the colossus of American publishing” (qtd. in “Macmillan Company Records”). The publication of *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* with a popular journal and a prominent publishing house conveys its appeal to contemporary critics and readers.

numbers (Mott, IV: 547). The journal was influential for many readers because “its subscribers looked upon it not merely as another magazine, but as a friend and counselor in the home” (Mott, IV: 548). In the fall of 1919—shortly after the serialization of *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*—the journal reached a circulation of 1,000,000 (Mott, IV: 549). As Mott writes, “it was beyond question the most valuable monthly magazine property in the world” (IV: 549). During war time, this powerful publication became a vehicle for delivering information and making suggestions about how individuals could support the war effort. Mott writes,

With the coming of the war in 1917, Curtis and Bok placed all the resources of the magazine at the command of the government. Upon the advice of President Wilson, Bok resolved to do little in the way of portraying the progress of war at the front, but to support the ‘second line of defense’ at home. (IV: 549)

For instance, the June 1918 *Ladies Home Journal* (the first issue that includes *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*) features articles such as “The ‘In-Between’ Child in Wartime,” “The War Bridegroom,” and “The After-the-War Woman: What is She Going to Become, and Where, Too, Will be Her Place?” War—and especially women’s role in relation to the war—was a major topic of the journal at the time. Taft, Wilson, FDR, and Hoover all had war-related articles published in *Ladies Home Journal* and Mott explains that “the magazine was probably an extremely affective arm of the national defense” (IV: 550). Bruère argues that women’s work is patriotic and beneficial for the nation, not a selfish endeavor. As Iva Balic points out, patriotism “serves as one of the tools that the author utilizes to smooth women’s access to wage work” (23). Bruère navigates the

selfish/selfless work conversation discussed more extensively in the second chapter by explaining the importance of labor (even if economically profitable) for not just the immediate community but for the whole nation.

Mildred's time in the Service alters her perspective on work which she carries into her employment after her compulsory year. In the Service, "[d]uty to the nation had been made a direct personal relation for them" (98). Mildred and her companions celebrate the importance of their roles in the nation's operations. Mildred's labor, first in a flour mill and then in fields, persuades her that contributing to the nation's food supply is a vital task. But just as society expected women after the war to retire from the workforce or return to previously held positions when the men returned, the gentility expected women from the upper-class such as Mildred to resume their "normal" lives after their year of service. This lifestyle made Mildred feel trapped; though she had beautiful clothes and access to wonderful entertainment, she felt she had "all the sweets of life but no bread!" (241). She does not want meaningless wage-earning work like "the making of tackle boxes, or human hair," but something that profits the whole nation (241). She ponders, "How was she going to give her country the service due from a loyal citizen? How was she going to help in some work essential to the nation?" (241). Mildred feels a responsibility to do something worthwhile and productive for the country. After the Service, Mildred's position mimics Salome's and Diantha's; having a taste of labor in the public sphere, she wants to continue in profitable employment. Her father eventually hires her to develop new steel blades for farm equipment and she finally feels that she was doing something that "needed to be done for the country: something she liked to do

and that interested her!” (281). Carol Kolmerten emphasizes Mildred’s distinction between “rote work where the owners, not the general public, benefit” and work that contributes to the country’s wellbeing; of course, she much prefers the latter (116). Compared to Salome, Diantha, and Dorothy, Mildred focuses on the broader community of the nation, and she earnestly seeks work that benefits the country.

Mildred’s focus on labor reflects conversations about the war, nation, and women’s work during the Progressive Era. As a 1916 article in *The Living Age* explains, before the war most women who did not earn wages were married, worked in their homes, were economically dependent, and were not concerned with suffrage (“The War and Women” 793). Additionally, the *Living Age* writer argues that all classes presented marriage “as an ideal, as an end in itself, as the only satisfactory solution of life for a woman” (“The War and Women” 794). Typically, then, if women worked for wages, it was “an episode temporarily undertaken solely for the sake of the pay” (“The War and Women” 794). In other words, while “the number of women entering trades and professions annually grew, the polite assumption was that women could not work, should not work, and did not work” (“The War and Women” 794). The writer recognizes that poor women frequently worked out of “economic necessity,” but their work was not a celebrated or enjoyable pursuit. During the war, however, there was a significant shift in views of women’s work; it “was recognized, approved, called for, not only by employers, but by public demand, through the press, by the man in the street, throughout the country” (“The War and Women” 795-796). Rather than discouraging and criticizing women who engaged in wage-earning labor, popular media praised them for doing so

during war. Some women just continued working, perhaps in different occupations, but others started working for the first time. Norma B. Kastl explains the many options available to the large numbers of women interested in doing something productive during war-time. She writes,

Any essential work is war work. You don't have to be enlisted in the Red Cross or the navy or in Government service. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, if your job is necessary to any person or anything that is contributing, even indirectly, toward winning the war, then your job is a war job. (Kastl 59)

This argument frames any task—large or small—as important for the country. The concept of “essential” work mimics Mildred’s discussion in the novel: she classifies work like agriculture as beneficial for the country while she deems box-making less important. Kastl also argues that all tasks that in any way contribute “toward winning the war” are war jobs. This statement essentially establishes women as soldiers, making them part of the U. S. military force for World War I, just as the Service was mandatory for women in Bruère’s novel. While Kastl broadens the definition of war work, perhaps even to include women’s philanthropic and domestic labor, Bruère emphasizes women’s equal access to work and employment that benefits the country while finding personal satisfaction and economic benefits for themselves.

Because of its publication toward the end and after the war, Bruère’s text emphasizes that women’s work can always be productive for the nation, not just during a crisis, refuting much of the mainstream discourse that encouraged women to surrender their jobs once soldiers returned. Though the nation encouraged women to undertake

these new forms of employment, leaders often reminded them of its intended temporariness. For example, an article entitled “Time for Women to Drop Knitting” simultaneously encourages women to leave domestic labor to pursue new occupations while reminding them that they should immediately give up their positions when men return. The article frames wage-earning labor traditionally held by men as more prestigious, calling it a “greater service” than knitting (127). The writer argues that the current issue is not finding women to work in factories but to find “places in those factories for the men when those overseas and in the cantonments are released for civilian duty” (“Time for Women to Drop Knitting” 127). In fact, the issue has already arisen in Cleveland where the women conductors “are not showing an impetuous disposition to surrender their jobs” (“Time for Women to Drop Knitting” 127). Curiously, the article contemptuously conveys this fact while explaining that the women are likely “averse to retiring to the peace and quiet of their former humdrum domestic existence” (“Time for Women to Drop Knitting” 127). This writer frames wage-earning work as more honorable and exciting than women’s domestic labor, but the powers-at-be expect women to leave their new positions simply because men have returned to American soil. An article published in 1919 entitled “What Shall Be Done with Women Who Have Replaced Men in Industry?” points out that only five percent of women doing war work did not have previous employment; most had just shifted their occupation. In light of that fact, a director in the Department of Labor named Mary Van Kleek suggests that “the problem for women in the war industries is to arrange for their early transfer to normal employment” (“What Shall Be Done with Women Who Have Replaced Men in

Industry?” 124). This framing of women’s “normal” and non-normal or atypical labor genders men’s and women’s work. It also emphasizes the temporary nature of the employment and insinuates that the gendered structures of labor have not altered despite this momentary change. *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* presents a different reality through the depiction of the Service. Mildred starts laboring and—though her family does express their concerns—continues doing work that she views as fulfilling and productive even after her mandatory year. She resists expectations related to her class status and gender to pursue satisfying work. Mildred cultivates this view of labor and work through her time in the Service under John Barton’s leadership.

The Prophet of Work for the Nation: A Suitable Marriage Partner?

Just as Edes is Dorothy’s prophet of the social gospel, John Barton is the prophet of patriotic duty and productive labor who awakens Mildred to her newfound role and responsibility in the nation. Much like Dorothy’s “experience” after her interaction with Edes, Mildred “felt a stirring” “like the way you would expect to feel in church” as John Barton discusses the importance of feeding of the nation (69). Her first experience in the mill builds upon his inspiration:

When she marched back to the barracks after the first six hours of work she had ever done in her life, Mildred had a sensation of almost religious upliftedness, as though the sewing of flour sacks was a great ritual, and the mill a cathedral with John Barton as the officiating priest. (69)

Just as Edes spurs Dorothy to labor for the working women, Barton inspires Mildred to devote herself fully to the labor at the mill. By using religious language such as

“cathedral” and “priest,” the narrator frames Mildred’s experience as sacred and transforming. However, Barton’s leadership does not so compel all the women; Mamie sees him as a typical boss or foreman, Ruth views him as a smooth operator, and Ellen perceives him as an annoying ruler. To Mildred, though, “John Barton was a beneficent contemporary Prometheus, holding in his hand the processes through which the people were fed” (84). Mildred views John in mythic terms, perhaps because he is so distinct from the non-working wealthy men of her upbringing. The narrator further emphasizes his roles as hero and prophet:

All sorts of tendrils of appreciation went groping out toward him, and her little unawakened soul was filled with the sight and sound of the foreman of the mill as of a godlike prophet, a bringer of light, a Theseus and Sir Launcelot and Joshua rolled into one. He appealed to the religious enthusiasm which is hid in the heart of every young girl, the fanaticism that can develop either into hero worship or passionate self-sacrifice, and can fill convents as easily as cradles. (85-86)

Barton is clearly a compelling figure. Not only is he compared to famous heroes and leaders, but the narrator also depicts his charismatic and passionate leadership as very persuasive and even sexually attractive to young women. The inspired women’s potential “self-sacrifice” suggests a denial of their own interests, but Mildred’s long-lasting commitment to work conveys that it truly is her own passion. Barton aids Mildred’s awakening to understand herself capable of laboring productively for the nation. While working for the country may be a secular value, Mildred receives it with a religious zeal.

John Barton embodies the patriotic, productive form of labor that has transformed Mildred’s entire worldview. She displaces her newfound affinity for this labor onto him,

mistaking inspiration for romantic love. Even after her time in the service when she sees John Barton, "...to Mildred the romance of the work of giving bread to the nation still hung around him; he personified the greatest experience of her life; he seemed to stand on a little hill and hold out to her her chance of service and patriotism" (243). Barton represents her satisfying participation in productive labor, but she lacks true romantic feeling for him. Bruère emphasizes this point when she writes, "She did not think of John Barton as a man, but as a very big, very impersonal force that would make all the rest of her life a service of citizenship" (243). She does not have romantic feelings for Barton, but she craves his lifestyle of laboring for the nation. Mildred does not want to hear about how beautiful she is or what their future would hold, "but of the wonderful work of feeding the people and how she was going to help him do it. She wanted him to paint her future as an assistant priest at the altar" (273). She wants, desperately, to be a bigger part in this system that has so transformed her own worldview. Rather than being his romantic partner, she wants to help him feed the nation. Mildred is similarly uninterested in physical contact with John Barton: "She got more joy out of the sound of his voice telling how the farmers of the northwest organized the Nonpartisan League, than out of the touch of his lips on hers" (274). Her joy in interacting with John stems from his knowledge and enthusiasm about the Service. Mildred's disinterest in physical contact, along with her lack of desire to discuss their future, suggests that she really does not care for him romantically. When she expresses her attraction to John Barton, she implicitly conveys her desire for productive, patriotic labor, a goal she was finding difficult to achieve after her year in the Service. While she could find work at places like the box

factory, she wants to find something that would better benefit the nation, like agricultural work. But John Barton is not interested in filling this void in Mildred's life: "John Barton said in everything but words that the role of prophet wasn't the one he cared to fill. He was a lover and he wanted to be loved, not as a leader, but as a man" (275). Cognizant of Mildred's misplaced interest in him and looking for a true romantic connection, John terminates their informal engagement, telling Mildred's parents that they should let her work because "what she was really going to marry [him] for, was a job" (275-276). Unlike Edes who happens to serve as both inspiration and romantic love for Dorothy, Barton cannot fulfill both roles. Mildred's admiration for John Barton obscures her lacking romantic interest; she hopes that she can better fulfill her patriotic duty as his wife. Thus, John Barton is a means to an end rather than an end in himself.

Perceptions of and Expectations for Marriage

In the Service, Mildred's interacts with socioeconomically diverse women and learns about various perspectives on marriage. Mamie, a working-class individual who would rather marry someone wealthy than work, tells Mildred even in their initial meeting that she hopes and plans to marry an uptown man. Mamie's blunt and straightforward articulation of this desire stuns Mildred: "She was a well brought up member of the upper class where if they didn't marry for love they at least put up a consistent bluff about it" (47). As their relationship develops, Mamie's obsession with marital possibilities annoys Mildred. She tells Mamie that no one "*has to marry*" and Mamie shrugs, which the narrator describes as a "quick arraignment of the whole feminist movement" (133). Mamie resists Mildred's notion because, for her, a life

without marriage would mean hard, undesirable labor. She tells Mildred, “An old maid you think I should be working by shirtwaists till I gotta die! Such plans I ain’t got for myself!” (133). She explains that Mildred’s outlook differs because her family has a lot of money, but for Mamie, every time a “young man come[s] along,” she asks herself, “Is that the young man you should get married to, Mamie Epstein?” (134). Marriage, for Mamie, is a way to improve her social standing. As she has seen from other women in her neighborhood, working-class women struggled to provide sufficiently for themselves without marriage. Mildred struggles to recognize that marriage is an economic opportunity or transaction for Mamie. Unlike working-class women Cynthia and Maria in *Dorothy’s Experience*, Mamie does not feel freed to remain single or to marry for love.

Mamie views marriage quite differently than Ellen, the artistic feminist, who tells Mamie she does not want to marry: “Do you think I’d give up my *Career* and be a parasite and let a man support me?” (82). The italicization and capitalization of career emphasizes, or even exaggerates, the importance of Ellen’s art career in her life. She aligns wives who do not work with parasites, leaching off men. Unlike Mamie who worked only because she must, Ellen feels fulfilled as an artist and wants to continue pursuing that endeavor. She opposes marriage because she treasures her independence and has enough resources—seemingly from her artist brother—without doing undesirable work or marrying someone whom she does not love. Mildred learns varying perspectives on marriage from her friends in the Service as she herself grows to love work more than she has ever loved a man.

When Mildred returns home, her family reinforces their expectations that Mildred, as a young, upper-class woman, will marry someone from the same socioeconomic background. Unlike Dorothy whose parents are deceased and who is in her upper twenties, Mildred is only nineteen and resumes her residence in her parent's home. Mildred's Uncle Andrew's perspective differs from most of the Carver family; he argues to Mildred's mother, Mary, that women had only so invested in marriage because "it was the most attractive career open to them," but now that "they've choice of so many things to do, marriage loses its monopoly. It's only one of many careers" (192). Andrew poses marriage as a career, aligning with discourse that suggested women pursued matrimony for their economic wellbeing and perhaps gesturing toward the labor women contributed to marital relations. Because the Service taught Mildred ways to support herself economically and socially, Andrew implies that Mildred may not choose marriage as her "career." However, the rest of her family assert their expectation that Mildred's future will be marriage. For instance, her Aunt Millicent says, "you know as well as I do that girls like Mildred are brought up to be married" (31). Aunt Millicent suggests that Mildred's family raised her to become a desirable bride, not a productive laborer. After she returns from the Service, her parents arrange for her debutante dance where she can meet men they deem suitable bachelors. After the party, Mildred's mother anxiously observes, "you know—everybody knows, —that there's just one reason for bringing a girl out and that's to get her married. We may pretend about it, but we know that's what it's for!" (197). Frank agrees, and they acknowledge that they want her to marry "the right sort of a man," which for them means someone substantially wealthy and influential

(197). Even among the New York socialites invited to the party, Mary says, “there was hardly a man here to-night I’d consider letting her marry” (197). Mary professes ownership and decision-making power over her daughter’s marital partner. For Mildred’s parents, familial background and class status determine potential spouses, and they assume their daughter will marry their selected partner.

Mildred’s views on marriage after her year in the Service differ from her family and her friends Mamie and Ellen. She is frustrated by the constricting expectation that she should get married—and soon. The life of the Carver women who had gone before her and “borne their modest quota of children” appeared dull and predictable to her (188). As Carol A. Kolmerten explains, “When she finally returns home after her year is up, she is absolutely unsuited for the traditional life laid out for her by her mother: engagement, marriage, and a life of leisure” (116). While Mildred does not ignore possibilities of engagement and marriage, she is no longer content with the prospect of a leisurely life dominated by familial and social activities. Because Nick is also from the upper-class, Mildred’s associates him with the “life of leisure” that she no longer wants. When she thinks of Nick returning and “expecting to marry her,” she “felt as though a terrible thing were coming nearer, something that would close over her and shut out the air, that would bind her hands and feet and lay an intolerable burden on her shoulders, and unless she had some relief, she knew she would scream” (189). Mildred assumes that Nick’s views on labor, marriage, and gender roles align with the majority in the upper class, including her own perspectives before her service year. The idea of marrying such a figure feels suffocating and overwhelmingly constrictive to Mildred. She tells her wealthy friend

Ruth Ansel, “It’s so awful to have that the only thing expected of me—and there’s no one I want to marry anyway,—too old, or too dull or something. I don’t see why I should marry just to get out of the way!” (220). Mildred is frustrated by this sole option and expectation. Ruth tells her that, in Mildred’s position, she “wouldn’t stand it” and would work rather than marry (220). She continues, “you’ve got to break away from it all and *be* something...there was no use *being* rich, and popular and a debutante, if you were just in prison all the time” (221-222). Bruère’s text italicizes this idea of being twice. The second instance emphasizes Mildred’s wealthy position, while the first frames being something—or doing something productive—as incompatible with a restrictive marriage. Ruth posits this type of union as imprisonment and encourages Mildred to break away from this expectation. Mildred agrees and takes Ruth’s advice by finding work. However, for Mildred, the idea of marriage—not for the sake of societal expectation but for love and companionship—reemerges after she establishes herself in a satisfying, productive job.

Rekindling Romance with Nick

Mildred seeks a marriage partner who shares her patriotic values, believes in women’s right to work, and expresses mutual feelings of love. Though John Barton shares her perspectives, she lacks the romantic connection to him that—Bruère implies—is crucial for a successful marriage partnership. However, she fears that while she had a romantic attachment to Nick, her childhood friend and neighbor, he likely does not share the same beliefs on a woman’s right to work for the nation. After John ends their relationship and Mildred works at her father’s company, she feels like she is still missing

a crucial element: romantic love, or marriage. She “sometimes thought of Nick coming back and saying how he loved her, and begging her to marry him” (281). Mildred imagines her “stern and noble” response: “No, Nick, the Mildred that you cared for is gone—It isn’t me you love. I have plans that your wife couldn’t carry out. The world is going to be better fed because I have lived” (281). Mildred exhibits both her lingering affection for Nick and her fears about their incompatibility; she desires his return but imagines she must reject him.

Mildred reaches a new understanding with Nick; they have a romantic history and a newly developed mutual commitment to labor for the nation. Mildred mistakenly believes that Nick hates building roads and that he “didn’t see this great business of working for the United States as she did” (122). Nick similarly imagines Mildred on a farm and considers how “she must hate it” (140). Their perspectives have transformed; no longer did they think like their aristocratic parents but as devoted citizens and laborers for the nation. Mildred and Nick “were not any longer two young people with nothing to do but fall in love in a sense-compelling setting, but extraordinarily busy recruits set primarily on the adventure of work” (142). Because Mildred and Nick do not tell each other about their new perspectives, they continue imagining their incompatibility and longing for marriage: “Mildred was very sorry for herself...it was quite clear that she must go through life unloved. Only men that she wouldn’t think of marrying cared for her. John Barton had refused to marry her, and Nick had forgotten!” (282). Mildred feels lonely because of her limited marriage prospects; she has no reciprocal romantic relations in sight. Nick continued working on the roads, and though he temporarily returned home

when he learned she was engaged to Barton, he left when Mildred firmly announced her love for the foreman. Upon learning they were *not* married, he goes back to Mildred once again. He “forgot everything but Mildred as he caught her in his arms and kissed her” (286). Nick forcefully expresses his affection when he tells Mildred, “I’m just going to make you marry me because I love you so much” (286). Mildred also wants marriage and still feels affection for Nick. As they grow to understand that they share their beliefs on the importance of work and their duty to the nation, Mildred responds, “Nick, if you think we could do it together” (289). Mildred agrees to the idea of marriage, contingent on a companionate partnership that allows them to “do it”—presumably work for the nation—even while married.

In some ways, Mildred and Nick’s partnership reinforces class boundaries; they are engaged at the novel’s beginning and become engaged again. Despite their cross-class friendships from the Service, their new social relations do not extend to marital bonds, highlighting the limits of their transformation. Viewed alternatively, Mildred and Nick’s reunion emphasizes the Service’s ability to transform both men and women, even from the upper-class. Additionally, because Bruère juxtaposes Nick against John Barton, Mildred’s engagement to the former suggests the importance of romantic affection in addition to shared perspectives on labor and women’s role. Though the ending may seem “overly sentimental,” Iva Balic points out that the ending “promotes rather than undermines the underlying progressive notion that two individuals can find happiness only if their goals and efforts are shared” (25). While I agree with Balic, romance also serves a critical role. Her reunion with Nick is liberatory because they share not only

many ideological perspectives, but also an intangible romantic connection. Mildred marries an individual who expresses mutual love and support, and while class could still influence their decision, she no longer relies on a marital partner for economic support.

Marriage and The Nation

Though Bruère suggests that marriage partners should share some critical beliefs and perspectives, she also highlights the importance of mutual support and romantic love. However, these discussions of marriage also relate to war-related conversations which often encouraged women to hastily marry to support individual men and thus the nation. In a discussion of women's work during the war, the author of a 1916 article in *The Living Age* criticizes "women shirkers" whose "aim is a good time for themselves at whatever cost to others" ("The War and Women" 798). This article proposes that the remedy is not productive labor but wifehood. The writer describes a coming era of more respectable, selfless women: "marriage undertaken with a due sense of its responsibilities—not only towards the husband, but towards the nation—will be desired and respected" ("The War and Women" 798). This writer frames marriage as a duty to the nation, especially for wives who are not able to serve as soldiers. As Rev. Sticky proposed in an earlier quotation, pre-war marriage could bolster men's confidence. Many citizens thought that women agreeing to marry, even in a hasty marriage, was profiting the individual soldier and thus the nation. Sticky comments that he has heard young women say that if their husbands "must take the chance of death on the battlefield, their own future could only become endurable in caring for his child" (689). This quotation nearly conflates the roles of wives and mothers and encourages women to support the

nation by marrying and bearing children. Sticky's discussion emphasizes reproduction as a form of production, or a reproducing of the means of production in creating the next generation of business owners and laborers. This type of discourse continues even after the war. In 1919 writer and journalist Corra Harris asks how America should care for its veterans—how the nation should “make the best possible use of their glory and strength in this nation” (261). While Harris proposes that it will be easy to provide materially for the veterans, she argues that a wife is the “only person qualified by nature and society to do this” (261). During both the war and the soldiers' reintegration into society, women function as the primary support system for individual men. These arguments propose that women's primary responsibilities to the nation are through their roles as wives and mothers. Bruère's *Service* does differ from war in significant ways, especially in the lessened risk men faced and women's equal requirement to participate. However, in *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*, Bruère describes women as productive laborers and poses marriage as a potentially satisfying, personal endeavor rather than a duty to the nation.

Mildred Carver, U. S. A. is reformist and progressive because it does not depict work and marriage as mutually exclusive for women. Mildred is not only able to do both but also find a partner who supports her desire to work. Mildred and Nick also care for each other romantically, establishing this connection as a necessary component for a successful marriage, along with shared ideological perspectives. As an upper class, white, urban woman, Mildred is statistically very unlikely to work for economic profit, but in many ways, she aligns with common perceptions of the New Woman. Bruère emphasizes the possibility of the working New Woman by depicting Mildred's employment with her

father's company where she invents and develops new steel blades for tractors.

Additionally, the novel resists war-related discourse that encouraged women to return to their "normal" tasks when men returned by depicting women who continue to work even after their compulsory year in the Service. Like Dorothy and Edes, Mildred and Nick move toward equal status throughout the novel because they both complete a year in the Service. Through their mutual support and romantic attachment, Mildred and Nick exemplify a companionate partnership.

Progressive, But Reformist Not Revolutionary

Though *Dorothy's Experience* and *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* do imply recommendations for revising marriage to enhance women's lives, the novels also reinforce many traditional views. In Knox's novel, Dorothy leaves her home and job to accompany Edes at his new employment; the narrative frames Edes as the breadwinner and suggests that the importance of his job supersedes Dorothy's. Additionally, the fear of sexually active unmarried working class women reinforces Victorian ideas about sexual purity, especially of middle and upper-class women trying to regulate the morality of working class women's sexual actions. In *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.*, men—namely Nick, John, and Frank Carver—sometimes negotiate Mildred's romantic relationships without her involvement, implying their perceived control in the matter. Like *Salome Shepard, Reformer* and *What Diantha Did*, Bruère's novel changes some elements of society (such as women pursuing wage-earning labor and empowering them to actually choose a marriage partner) while retaining others, illustrating the reformist nature of these texts. As Simmons explains, "Many [reformers] were deeply attached to marriage

as a cultural sign of full adulthood and the locus of childbearing and child rearing” (220). Most Progressive Era reformers wanted to revise marriage to enhance gender equality, but “did not wish to destroy it, believing that it was essential to social order and a civilized nation” (Simmons 220). Like many Progressive Era citizens, Adeline Trafton Knox and Martha Bensley Bruère were not sex radicals or advocates of an entirely revised system of marriage. In fact, their novels neglect to discuss some dominant topics related to marriage in the Progressive Era, especially related to childcare, divorce, and lesbian relationships. Instead of promoting revolutionary changes, Knox and Bruère propose small changes that can produce much greater satisfaction—in fact, a utopia—for partners within individual marriages.

Absent from *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* and *Dorothy’s Experience* are discussions of married women’s responsibilities for childcare and household duties that could influence their ability to work for wages. In Bruère’s text, the focus on personally satisfying labor for the nation and fulfilling romantic love rather than domesticity deemphasizes the correlation between women and domestic tasks. The text ends with Mildred and Nick deciding to “do it together,” but the novel obscures how this shared commitment to the nation will work in practical terms (289). Who will take care of their home? Will they have any children and, if so, who will be the primary caretaker? Carol Farley Kessler argues in “The Grand Marital Revolution: Two Feminist Utopias” that Bruère’s novel ends with “few clues as to how the marriage will encompass the work needs of both partners” and despite the fact that men learn domestic work in the Service, “just how Nick will share with Mildred the homemaking (or childrearing) is not

specified” (78). I agree with Kessler that the novel is vague on this point. Neglecting to discuss domestic work and childcare could lead to disagreement later in Nick and Mildred’s relationship, but it also deemphasizes the importance of such considerations for a marital bond. Nick and Mildred share their perspective on labor and their love for each other, and that is the basis for their relationship, not a desire to have children (though that could emerge later in their lives). Additionally, because Mildred and Nick are from wealthy families, these tasks are not as concerning because they could pay other people to assist them. By not addressing domesticity and childcare, Bruère and Knox divorce the marriage relation from a negotiation of these roles. This separation is consistent with the concept of companionate marriage, which emphasized the romantic attachment between two people. Some viewed it as distinct from “family marriage” in which a couple would have children, though many hoped that companionate marriages would transition into family marriages. While romantic love and shared views on labor are key, *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* and *Dorothy’s Experience* propose that the care of the home and children are not the most crucial elements for a successful marriage.

Like childcare, divorce is not a topic sufficiently covered in either novel despite it being a growing concern for many women’s rights activists in the Progressive Era. If women could get divorced, reformists argued, they held more power over their lives within a marriage relation. Divorce rates were slowly increasing in this period; according to Simmons, they doubled from 1870 to 1900 and doubled again—up to 7.7 per 1,000 marriages—between 1900 and 1920 (112). Teddy Roosevelt, amongst other national leaders, was “alarmed by the escalating divorce rate” which he correlated with a

decreasing respect for the institution of marriage (Eby 28). However, as Clare Virginia Eby explains, reformers argued that changing “the law to make divorce a matter of mutual consent...would elevate marriage, not erode civilization, as scaremongers warned” (xviii). The experts argued that once “marriage and divorce became truly free...voluntary monogamy would replace compulsory monogamy, further improving the institution” (Eby xviii). These texts, however, present utopias for engaged and married couples. They show how a woman can find satisfying work, be engaged in her community, and still be romantically involved with a man. By depicting happy relationships and marriages without raising the possibility of divorce, these authors emphasize improved marriages that better women’s position without implementing divorce, appealing to more conservative readers.

These novels do not present same sex relationships as valid possibilities even though both Dorothy and Mildred are members of supportive female communities. Dorothy develops friendships with working women such as Cynthia and Maria as well as the women in the town where she and Edes move. Likewise, Mildred cultivates relationships with women like Mamie and Ellen during her time in the Service. While possible that the protagonists simply are not lesbians, the texts ignore the possibility that they or any other female characters could have a romantic connection to another woman. In fact, Ellen tells Mamie, “There’s no more chance of Mildred Carver’s marrying that man than there is of her marrying me” (83). Ellen argues that same-sex and cross-class marriages are both preposterous, especially for Mildred. Seemingly, the only options for the women are to remain single or marry a man. For some in the Progressive Era, such as

“male physicians, politicians, even modernist writers, the New Woman/Mannish Lesbian symbolized disorder in a world gone mad” (Smith-Rosenberg 40-41). However, women increasingly cohabitated with other women in Boston marriages, possibly because many were receiving higher education and thus could support themselves (Simmons 13). This type of relationship was particularly common for progressive women, such as those participants of *Heterodoxy*—of which Simmons estimates up to 1/5 of members were lesbian (67). Though many opposed such partnerships, women sometimes promoted the benefits of strong female relationships. Opposers saw homosexuality as a representation of “women’s independence from men and as such a threat to new marriage” (Simmons 147). Rather than engaging with the possibility or conversation about homosexual bonds, Knox and Bruère focus on ways that heterosexual relationships can be positive, successful, and beneficial for both parties.

Conclusion

Rather than advocating for more revolutionary changes such as divorce or acceptance of lesbian relationships, these novels propose that women working outside of the home and cultivating friendships with other women could improve marriage. Both factors, these novels contend, can bring women economic, personal, and social satisfaction that allows them to pursue a marriage relation solely for the sake of love rather than financial reasons. Dorothy is economically self-sufficient through her position at the seminary and finds fulfillment through building a home for working women. Mildred discovers how much she enjoys laboring for the nation and continues working after the Service. Only when the women are satisfied with their work and relationship to

the community—small or large—are they in a position to get married for romantic love. Like Diantha and Salome, Dorothy and Mildred are heroic New Women because they find happiness and purpose in many aspects of life. They contribute to their communities, support themselves economically, and choose marriage partners based on a romantic connection rather than for the fulfillment of their basic needs. They do not want to eliminate marriage but create a companionate partnership of equality. As Mildred says, they want to “do it”—work, service, love, marriage—“together.” Characters like Dorothy and Mildred face sexist ideologies related to work and marriage, but because they are white they have the privilege of choosing to ignore the widespread racism of the period. For some women, though, the separation from racist oppression was a critical third component to their utopia beyond work and marriage, as I will discuss more in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

“SHE HAS DONE WHAT SHE COULD”: CREATING LOCALIZED UTOPIAS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Beyond satisfying wage-earning work and supportive marriage partnerships, Progressive Era black women often articulated a desire for safe communities insulated from institutionalized racism. Despite the supposed freedoms African Americans gained after the Civil War, the ideologies that allowed for slavery persisted, leading to obscene abuse and discrimination. Black women navigated their new identities as free women in a world that discredited them for not only their race, but also their gender. Some writers, such as Frances E. W. Harper and Lillian Jones Horace, envisioned African American utopian communities isolated from white culture that foreground the importance of familial bonds, enable women’s work, support marriages of equality, and encourage literacy practices. In her collection of essays, *A Voice from the South* (1892), educator, activist, and scholar Anna Julia Cooper explores the strengths, responsibilities, and future of African American women. The first essay presents Cooper’s 1896 speech in Washington, D.C., to black ministers of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Cooper highlights women’s roles as mothers in the black community, arguing that “the fundamental agency under God in the regeneration, the re-training of the race, as well as the ground work and starting point of its progress upward, must be the black woman” (28). Because women typically served as children’s primary caretakers, Cooper asserts that mothers will effectively raise the next generation and strengthen the race as a whole.

Though she likely speaks to a predominantly male audience of ministers, Cooper does not prioritize religion or masculine leadership in the race's development. Rather, Cooper suggests that they must "go to the root"—or the start of a black person's life under their mother's care— "and see that it is sound and healthy and vigorous" (29). If individual mothers can improve their homes and families, they will enhance the whole race because a "race is but a total of families" (29). This emphasis on the familial unit is particularly important in the black community, given that not forty years prior white slave owners separated families by selling or trading individual members. In the post-slavery era when families were legally able to maintain their structure, Cooper places the hope for African Americans in the strength and abilities of black mothers.

While Cooper imbues motherhood with this importance, she does not limit women to this singular role. Instead, she asserts that women should have more opportunities, especially for higher education. In the collection's second essay, "The Higher Education of Women," she argues that colleges are "sending out yearly into the arteries of this nation a warm, rich flood of strong, brave, active, energetic, well-equipped, thoughtful women" (50). She lavishes praise on such women, saying that they are "quick to see and eager to help the needs of this needy world" and "can think as well as feel, and who feel none the less because they think" (50). Cooper posits education as the catalyst for women's improvement, making them intellectual and beneficent persons. She also emphasizes that higher education equalizes aspirations and opportunities for men and women: "The old, subjective, stagnant, indolent and wretched life for woman has gone. She has as many resources as men, as many activities beckon her on. As large

possibilities swell and inspire her heart” (70). Cooper articulates the miserable and boring qualities of women’s historical and traditional existence; however, she predicts that possibilities for women will grow and sees their role—whether as “home-maker, as wife, mother, or silent influence even” as more “important and necessary” than even theologians (79). Cooper balances her arguments for women’s new roles with affirmations of their traditional responsibilities. She advocates black women’s higher education, which could enhance their personal development and their community service.

Black leaders in the Progressive Era supported women’s increased opportunities not only for their individual development, but also so they could uplift African Americans. In fact, Cooper suggests that the “earnest, virtuous, helpful woman” is “at once both the level and the fulcrum for uplifting the race” (45). Employing a metaphor of simple mechanics, Cooper asserts women’s ability to raise up something larger than themselves, namely the African American community. She explains that men and women need to be “lifting up and leading, advising and encouraging with the truly catholic benevolence of the Gospel of Christ” (30). Like many other rhetors in the nineteenth century, Cooper simultaneously evokes the language of religion and uplift. Cooper encourages black men and women to help others—presumably lower than them on the socioeconomic ladder—to advance their positions economically, socially, and morally.

This notion of uplift was not just an idea, but a pervasive ideology and semi-institutionalized philosophy. For instance, Booker T. Washington³¹ established Tuskegee

³¹ In his article “‘This is How We Lost to the White Man’: The Audacity of Bill Cosby’s Black Conservatism,” Ta-Nehisi Coates argues that Booker T. Washington’s argument about black self-reliance has persisted throughout the twentieth century, informing Marcus Garvey’s Black Nationalism and

Institute in 1881 in Alabama, and the school advanced his position that “blacks [should] practice self-help in advancing their cause” (Moore xvi). Washington, and by extension Tuskegee Institute, focused on “giving African Americans a basic education while also providing them with training in practical skills, such as carpentry, to ensure that they could earn a living” (Moore xvi). By gaining an education and securing a job, they could better their own socioeconomic position and help lift up other members of their race. Tuskegee Institute demonstrates that the notion of social uplift influenced and perhaps even created institutions, such as black schools, in the Progressive Era. However, not everyone approached the idea of social uplift in the same way; in fact, Washington’s ideas sharply contrasted with those of another prominent figure, W. E. B. Du Bois.

Jacqueline M. Moore explains,

Washington, the more conservative of the two, advocated a gradual approach toward gaining civil rights, starting with economic concerns rather than political or social issues. Du Bois, the more radical of the two, insisted on immediate and full civil rights in all areas. (Moore xv)

Du Bois pushed for “an educated black aristocracy,” or a “Talented 10th” of educated and professional black people who would lift the other 9/10 of the race (M. Brown 124).

Though both were eager to improve African Americans’ lives in the late nineteenth

Malcolm X’s view that change should come from within the black community. Coates’ article focuses on Bill Cosby, whose nationwide lecture tour aligned with Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on a “gospel of discipline, moral reform, and self-reliance [that] offers a way out—a promise that one need not cure America of its original sin in order to succeed” (Coates). Coates describes the “black conservative tradition” that favors “hard work and moral reform over protests and government intervention.” Much like Booker T. Washington, Bill Cosby received criticism from “various quarters of the black establishment,” but his arguments were well-received in much of the “black mainstream” before his fall from favor over sexual assault allegations (Coates).

century, Washington and Du Bois attempted uplift in radically different ways. Prompted by failed Reconstruction efforts, black leaders debated and explored ways to improve the economic, social, and political positions of African Americans in the Progressive Era. Black women authors such as Lillian Jones Horace and Frances E. W. Harper joined this conversation, adding their own ideas about how to uplift the race and create a more utopian community.

Though reformers in the Progressive Era sought positive changes in many facets of society, white citizens generally ignored or even reinforced racial injustices at the time. As Sandy Dwayne Martin explains, this era was “an increasingly difficult time for Afro-Americans. The political rights that recently emancipated Southern blacks had enjoyed during Reconstruction were gradually eliminated as reactionary Southern governments assumed control” (3). Though the national government legally eliminated slavery, institutionalized racism persisted, especially in Southern states where the remnants of the Confederacy lingered. But the racist establishment was not the only threat to African Americans. Martin elaborates, “Just as dangerous to blacks as these ‘legal’ structures that fostered segregation and poll taxes was the rise of illegal, secret vigilante groups that openly harassed and murdered their victims” (3). This racism operated on multiple levels—both governmental and interpersonal, national and local—causing African Americans to face discrimination at every turn. White Americans showed supposedly free African Americans what they could still not do, from the jobs they could not acquire to the neighborhoods they could not live in. The pervasive racism did not merely impact their economic and social wellbeing, it endangered (or ended) their

lives through the numerous massacres, riots, and lynchings. Given these racially oppressive circumstances, the separatist and isolationist utopian impulse among black writers at the turn of the century is not surprising.

Two utopias written by black women in the Progressive Era—*Five Generations Hence* and *Iola Leroy*—suggest that utopia for African Americans requires separation from white society, and that black women can actualize this better community. Frances Harper's *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892) presents a localized utopia in North Carolina with characters who support each other and pursue satisfying occupations. Much of the plot discusses Iola Leroy's discovery of her black identity and the family's journey to reunite during and after the Civil War. The utopia develops at the close of the narrative when Iola and her brother move to the South with their new spouses to serve and bolster the black community. Lillian Jones Horace's *Five Generations Hence* (1916) similarly describes an isolated, localized utopia in Texas. The protagonist Grace Noble creates the life she wants through becoming a writer and marrying a kind doctor. Jones Horace also gestures toward a second utopia on the African continent, but the protagonist never interacts with the community directly. However, Grace Noble writes a book that encourages African Americans to emigrate to Africa. She establishes herself as a writer, which contributes to the development of her own utopia in Texas. Each character employs his or her specific interests and skills to better their local community and their race, and the book emphasizes the possibility of utopia, even in Texas, through Grace's creation of an isolated but enriching space within her familial home. While this emphasis on the home aligns the novel with nineteenth-century domestic fiction, *Five Generations*

Hence differs because it features a black woman who focuses on her career and community betterment. Both Iola and Grace find personal happiness through work and romantic love and develop an isolated utopia removed from the era's oppressive racism. *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence* depict heroic New Women who celebrate their black identity and create localized utopias that support women's work, close familial and marital bonds, and education and literacy for the black community.

Though other reformist utopias do not focus exclusively on gender concerns, they do not address race as extensively as *Five Generations Hence* and *Iola Leroy*. In fact, some are openly hostile toward racial minorities, such as *What Diantha Did*, which I discuss in the second chapter. Having already addressed the negotiations of work and marriage in reformist utopias in the second and third chapters, this chapter focuses primarily on race, as well as the ways in which racial concerns may impact a woman's work and marriage. While the other utopias discussed in this project tend to include a larger community, many envisioned by African American authors are what I call localized utopias, which exist within America but in a contained community apart from white culture. For some, this isolation is within the black community, such as at the close of *Iola Leroy*, while for others the containment is even smaller, such as an individual family's home like in *Five Generations Hence*. Black women writers create these insulated worlds to protect themselves and their families from harmful, even deadly, racist individuals and institutions. While not surprising that the authors chose to create utopias outside of dominant white society given the widespread racism of the time, the fact that an integrated utopia was either not desired or not imaginable communicates the

extent of the division between white and black communities. However, the black women writers powerfully imagine supportive, segregated communities within the United States, despite the pervasive oppression and discrimination.

In this chapter, I first discuss *Iola Leroy* and offer biographical background about Frances E. W. Harper, then present reviews of the novel that argue that Harper depicts the condition of African Americans in a realistic and sympathetic fashion. I argue that Eugene and Marie Leroy, Iola's parents, unsuccessfully attempt to create a localized utopia in their Southern home. After death and enslavement disrupts the family, Iola works toward utopia by reuniting with her family, forming a friendship with a progressive black woman, pursuing various occupations, and marrying a respectable black man. Iola creates a localized utopia in North Carolina; the novel depicts the movement toward this utopia through metaphors of shadow and sunshine. *Iola Leroy* demonstrates an awareness of the Back to Africa movement, but rejects its premise and reiterates that African Americans should establish supportive communities in the United States. I then discuss *Five Generations Hence*, starting with a discussion of Lillian Jones Horace's biographical information and the setting of her novel in Texas at the turn of the century. In Lillian Jones Horace's novel, Grace Noble is a black New Woman protagonist who wants to aid the black community and, after a transformative moment in nature, decides to transition from teaching to writing. Grace's friends Violet and Bessie embody distinct forms of womanhood that help Grace navigate her own future, including her romantic relationship with Carl Warner that, along with her career and service to the community, establishes her localized utopia at the end of *Five Generations Hence*. These

texts offer two examples of utopias that provide isolated but fulfilling communities in the Progressive-Era United States.

Iola Leroy

Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* presents a localized utopia for Iola and her family shortly after the Civil War when the possibilities for African Americans seem bright. By pursuing her vocational interests, marrying a supportive husband, and contributing to the wellbeing of her community, Iola establishes herself as a New Woman protagonist. The narrative suggests that, despite the pervasive racism that African Americans faced, they could create an isolated but flourishing utopia apart from white culture. Harper's novel begins during the Civil War, which not only emphasizes the factual basis in the plot but also suggests that going backwards in time from the 1892 publication date and revising the trajectory of African Americans will help create the fictionalized utopia. The Civil War was an era of division between the Northern and Southern regions of the United States that created a liminal space between slavery and freedom for many African Americans. The war itself increased hardships for many slaves because they often had less food to eat and more work to accomplish, especially for women whose husbands had left to fight with the Union. African Americans' efforts to secure a livelihood after the Civil War were slow and grueling. Many Southern state legislatures passed "black codes" that restricted African Americans' freedoms and propagated systems that paid freed slaves unjustly low wages. Though the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments offered some legal protections, the rise of violent organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan endangered the lives of black citizens. In setting *Iola Leroy* during the

Civil War, Harper returns to the moment anticipating utopian possibility for African Americans that is never fully realized.

Though set during the Civil War, the novel also connects to the decade of its publication, emphasizing that African Americans in the Progressive Era continued to face unacceptable discrimination, such as Grandfather clauses that prohibited voting, and intolerable violence, including lynchings. P. Gabrielle Foreman emphasizes this relationship to the 1890s through her discussion of the text's histotextuality, which she defines as "a strategy marginalized writers use to incorporate historical allusions that both contextualize and radicalize their work by countering the putatively innocuous generic codes they seem to have endorsed" (329). The novel's histotextuality allows Harper to point to the historically factual injustices of the Progressive Era, including horrific lynchings, rapes, and disenfranchisement. Foreman asserts that Harper pulls from the sentimental tradition while creating homonymic references to important figures at the dawn of the Progressive Era, especially the "fiery radical activist" Ida B. Wells whose pen name was "Iola" and the "feisty autobiograph[er]" Lucy A. Delaney who published *From the Darkness Cometh the Light* in 1891 (331, 342). Harper blends

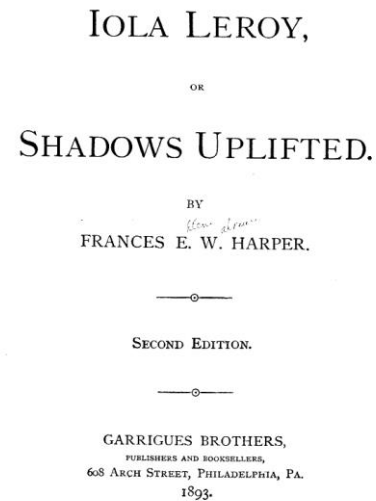


Figure 9. Frances E. W. Harper, *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted*, 1893. Making of America Books, University of Michigan Library, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/abx9698.0001.001/3?view=image&size=100>.

the historical events of the Civil War past with notable figures of the 1890s present to reimagine the status of African Americans in the future.

Publication and Biographical Context

Garrigues Brothers at No. 608 Arch Street in Philadelphia first published *Iola Leroy* in 1892 and “sold well enough to have at least four reprintings” (Bird 528). In addition to *Iola Leroy*, Garrigues Brothers published Mrs. A. L. Washburn’s *Wayward and Obedient; Or, The Narrative of Seven Years of a Life* (1880), T. S. Arthur’s *The Strike at Tivoli Mills* (1879), and Jennie Smith’s *Valley of Baga: A Record of Suffering and Triumph* (1883) and *Ramblings in Beulah Land* (1888). Though Washburn and Smith were not incredibly well-known, Timothy Shay Arthur³² was an extremely prolific writer who published many stories in *Godey’s Lady’s Book* and edited his own *Arthur’s Home Magazine*. Known for his investment in the temperance movement, Arthur addresses the dangers of alcohol in *The Strike at Tivoli Mills*. Taken together, these texts suggest that Garrigues Brothers were interested in fiction related to reformist and moralistic ideas.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was born in 1825 in Baltimore, Maryland, and her parents died when she was three (Leeman 171). John Bird explains that she was likely “the daughter of a woman who was a freed slave” and “her father was most likely white, although records of her early life are quite sketchy” (526). Until she was thirteen, she

³² Carla L. Peterson points out an additional connection between Harper and Arthur beyond this shared publishing house when she explains that in Harper’s novel *Sowing and Reaping*, the use of the names Mary and Joe Gough “suggest Harper’s awareness of the national dimensions of the temperance movement as they recall Joe and Mary Morgan, the central characters of T. S. Arthur’s famous *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*, as well as John Gough, a well-known temperance lecturer whose 1869 *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* detailed his own intemperate youth, conversion, and marriage to his wife, Mary” (“Frances Harper” 49).

attended a school for free colored children that her uncle, Rev. William Watkins, ran. Afterwards, she worked in a family's home with access to their library and started to write and even publish articles and poetry, including *Forest Leaves* (1845). She taught in



Figure 10. Mrs. F. E. W. Harper, Author and Lecturer, Philadelphia, Pa. 1902. Photograph. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-f262-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

Ohio and Pennsylvania, aided in the Underground Railroad, and eventually decided to “enter the Anti-Slavery field as a lecturer” (H. Brown 99). After securing a permanent lecturer position in 1854 through the anti-Slavery Society of Maine, she traveled for nearly two years in eastern states and spoke to “women and men of all races and backgrounds” (Foster,

Introduction xiii). She also published *Poems on*

Miscellaneous Subjects (1854)

which contained “an introduction by William Lloyd Garrison” and “went through some 20 editions by 1874” (Wall 182). Carla L. Peterson points out that Harper’s “writings appeared regularly in the pages of the *Christian Recorder* throughout the postbellum period” and “by the 1850s Harper was already a well-established antislavery lecturer

[and] activist in the causes of racial uplift, temperance, and women's rights" ("Frances Harper" 42). In 1860 in Cincinnati, she married Fenton Harper, a widower with three children, and together they had one daughter who "died while still young" (Carby 66). Harper became a home maker, providing her experience with multiple forms of women's labor in both public and private spheres (H. Brown 101). After the death of her husband, Fenton, in 1864, Frances E. W. Harper quickly returned to abolitionist work and writing.

A few decades later in 1892, Harper published *Iola Leroy; or, Shadows Uplifted*, placing her amongst the first female African American novelists. Scholars agree that, for Harper, producing literature was a form of political activism. For example, according to Elizabeth McHenry, Frances E. W. Harper saw her writing as an extension of her political efforts, as a means to "intervene in the political sphere and promote social change" (199), and Hazel V. Carby asserts that Harper wrote the novel to "aid in the uplifting of the race" (63). Frances Smith Foster similarly explains that Harper viewed writing as "one of the ways in which she sought out to live her convictions and to work for the betterment of the world within which she lived and with whom she identified" (Foster, *Written by Herself* 135). Like many African American writers at the time, she dually focused on enhancing black Americans' self-image and public image. She stands out, though, as "one of the very few African Americans who published regularly in both the religious press and the secular press, in venues read largely by blacks and in venues read primarily by whites" (Foster, Introduction xv). Later in life, Harper devoted herself to the temperance cause and "held the office of superintendent of colored work in the Women's Christian Temperance Union" (Wall 182). Harper was also "a founder and vice

president” of the National Association of Colored Women (Wall 182) and a member of the Congress of Colored Women in the United States and the American Equal Rights Association (Leeman 172). Invested in issues related to both race and gender, Harper is an excellent example of a New Woman. She died on February 22, 1911, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, leaving behind a big legacy. As Cheryl A. Wall explains, she was “the most popular black poet of her day” and a “sought-after lecturer...speaking on behalf of abolitionism, temperance, and women’s rights” (181-182). *Iola Leroy* addresses many of these issues, proposing that a better life is possible in the United States for African Americans, and that black women are key in actualizing that improved, albeit insulated, world.

Several periodicals from “both the African American and mainstream presses” contain reviews of *Iola Leroy* that emphasize the novel’s factual and realistic qualities as well as its intent to invoke sympathy (Peterson, “Frances Harper” 59). For instance, one reviewer explains,

It is a narrative of experiences in this country, in which the form is fiction, but many of the details are fact, and deals with the difficult problems arising from the mixing of blood, with the sorrows of slavery, and the prejudices and temptations which hamper the black race in freedom. (“Literary Notes”)

This reviewer argues that, though in fictionalized form, the novel depicts factual events and hardships that African Americans faced.³³ Similarly, a reviewer for *Friends’ Review*

³³ This basis in truth was a crucial element of reform fiction. Readers must believe in the historical reality of the narrative in order to be persuaded by its reformist argument. In *Reforming the World*, María Carla Sánchez argues, “Social reform movements depend upon being perceived as truthful: few people will support a cause if they believe that it, or its adherents, are dishonest about the very issue that brings them

states, “While this book is classed as fiction, it is so full of historical facts, and of thought on one of the problems of our day, that the reader accepts it as an easily absorbed philosophical history” (M. H. G. 758). Framing the novel as “philosophical history” emphasizes the text’s basis in actual events as well as its interrogation of large theoretical questions, like definitions of race and the country’s future. A reviewer for *The Watchman* considers its theme “well-worn,” but credits the novel because it depicts “the actual inner life” of individuals from black and mixed ancestry “by one of their own number” (Review of *Iola Leroy* 13). Harper’s identity as a black woman enhances the novel’s credibility and contributes to its perceived factuality. Additionally, the author’s racial identity impacts reviewers’ interpretations of the novel’s purpose. The *Friends’ Review* contributor explains that the novel is “devoted to showing the intellectual capacity of the Negro, and the peculiarly difficult position of those who are apparently white, and yet have a little Negro blood with their Caucasian ancestry” (758). This analysis focuses on two ideas: the intelligence of the race, and the hardships that those referred to as mulattos and mulattas faced. The reviewer in *The Watchman*, however, considers a broader purpose: “The prayer of the author, that her work may supplement the mute appeal on the part of a race long-suffering, and now on trial as to its capacity for progress, to the more favored class, for patience and sympathetic encouragement, will find a wide ‘amen’”

together” (19). This connection between truth and reform is also explored in August Rohrbach’s *Truth Stranger than Fiction* and Susan M. Ryan’s *The Grammar of Good Intentions*. Like many reformist writers, Harper herself emphasizes the correlation between the basis in truth and the persuasiveness of her reformist aims in her note at the close of the novel. She writes, “From threads of fact and fiction I have woven a story whose mission will not be in vain if it awaken in the hearts of our countrymen a stronger sense of justice and a more Christlike humanity in behalf of those whom the fortunes of war threw, homeless, ignorant and poor, upon the threshold of a new era” (219).

(13). This individual suggests that the novel successfully evokes compassion and concern for African Americans. Taken together, these reviews suggest that contemporary readers saw the novel as a realistic and sympathetic portrayal of black Americans' lives in the late nineteenth century.

The Leroy Family's First [Failed] Attempt at a Localized Utopia

Though the novel opens during the war, the narrative flashes back to the Leroy family's beginnings: Iola's white slave-owning father, Eugene, attempted to develop a localized utopia with her previously enslaved mother, Marie. Eugene sends Marie North for an education, and she later returns to the southern plantation and marries Eugene in a non-legally binding ceremony. Within the confines of their home, their life is pleasant and happy. Marie, "sheltered in the warm clasp of loving arms, found her life like a joyous dream" (67). Her family members contribute largely to her happiness: "The love and devotion of her husband brightened every avenue of her life, while her children filled her home with music, mirth, and sunshine" (72). The Leroy family home contains love, light, and contentment but they separate themselves from the surrounding culture.

Though some of Eugene's male friends visit, they disdain his marriage, and his female acquaintances are not even willing to enter the premises. In some ways, this isolation allows Marie's life to flow "peacefully on" away from the "social cares and anxieties" of the "busy world" of the American South that would reject her in racialized social circles (75). However, Eugene is very aware of the "social isolation and ostracism" that his wife and children suffer because of the community's knowledge of their black ancestry (70). He wants to eventually remove them from the situation, perhaps moving to the North or

France. Until that time comes, Eugene attempts to create a localized utopia by withholding his children's racial background from them to prevent their knowledge of prejudices against them.

However, their small utopia cannot withstand its numerous threats. Though the children may exist in the happy, ideal state that their parents create, Eugene and especially Marie know the risks that surround them. While racial prejudice and the continued practice of slavery serve as the primary threats to Marie and her children, diseases like yellow fever, which eventually kills Eugene, and untrustworthy family and community members, like Alfred Lorraine who sells Marie and Iola into slavery, cause the downfall of the Leroy's localized utopia. The surrounding racist society constantly limits the attempted utopia physically and socially. The family spends most of their time within their own home, until Harry and Iola leave for Northern schools, and their social interactions outside of the family are nonexistent. Eventually, the legal institutions of white culture that prohibited interracial marriage come crashing down on the Leroy family's seemingly idyllic home, leading to death, separation, and emotional anguish.

The threat of slavery serves as the unknown "doom suspended over [the] heads" of the Leroy children (67). The novel presents slavery as the dystopia of the American South, even though Iola and her siblings, children of a slave-holding plantation owner, initially support slavery. For instance, Captain Sybil, the leader of Marie's brother Robert's regiment during the Civil War, argues that slavery "was a deadly cancer eating into the life of the nation; but, somehow, it had cast such a glamour over us that we have acted somewhat as if our national safety were better preserved by sparing the cancer than

cutting it out” (108). Speaking as a typical abolitionist, Captain Sybil suggests that the institution of slavery was not only bad for black citizens, but for the entire nation, which had mistakenly tried to maintain the harmful cancer. Eugene similarly tells his wife Marie that “slavery is a sword that cuts both ways. If it wrongs the negro, it also curses the white man” (69). Repeatedly, the novel aligns with a common abolitionist argument that slavery negatively impacts all people, regardless of race, because of the institution’s immorality and injustice. Additionally, the text anticipates the counter-argument that black citizens were happy in enslavement when Marie explains to her husband that the “more intelligent [slaves] have so learned to veil their feelings that you do not see the undercurrent of discontent beneath their apparent good humor and jollity” (70). Given their perceived separation from the African American race, Eugene and his children have never really considered the horrors of slavery. As Iola eventually explains to her mother, “I used to say that slavery is right. I didn’t know what I was talking about” (89). Iola’s perspective undergoes a transformation; once she understands her own risk of enslavement, she better comprehends the atrocity of slavery. M. Giulia Fabi explains, “As Iola travels beyond the privileges of whiteness into the reality of chattel slavery first and segregation later,” she learns to see things differently (*Passing* 57). Fortunately, the society moves away from dystopic enslavement after the Civil War: “On the ninth day of April, 1865...on the brows of a ransomed people God poured the chrism of a new era, and they stood a race newly anointed with freedom” (112). The newly acquired freedom offers emancipated slaves the promise of a new day—even a christening or birth of the

race—that will usher them into a new and glorious existence. Iola moves from freedom to slavery to segregation, and she must navigate her changing sense of self at every stage.

Iola Leroy's racial identity is not visible, even to herself, in her physical appearance; amid the country's movement out of slavery, Iola must navigate her own racial and social status. Eventually, Harper reveals that, much like Rosa and Flora of Lydia Maria Child's *Romance of the Republic* (1867) and Claire of *The Curse of Caste* (1865), Iola Leroy was unaware of her African American ancestry until after her father died and his cousin sold her into slavery. Hazel V. Carby points out that this "fall," or radical shift in Iola's position, "was used by Harper to indicate the depths of social corruption represented by the institution of slavery; a woman who was socially accepted as white was, within the same society (and text), declared nonhuman and denied all protection and nurturance" (73). An old slave named Tom provides the first description of the protagonist; he comments on her "beautiful long hair," "putty blue eyes," and her complexion that looks "jis' ez white ez anybody's in dis place" (39). For Tom, Iola's Caucasian appearance indicates a certain social status; though she is a slave in Marse Tom's house, Tom explains, "...ef you seed dem putty white han's ob hern you'd never tink she kept her own house, let 'lone anybody else's" (39). In fact, he does not understand why his Master selected her for housework because "[h]er han's look ez ef she neber did a day's work in her life" (41). Iola's white hands do not evince labor, compelling Tom to help free Iola from her domestic servitude so she can become a Confederate army nurse. Iola's movement from privilege to slavery exemplifies the fragility of racial identity and divisions in the nineteenth century. Iola aligns with the

figure of the “tragic mulatta,” which Eve Raimon explains “functions both as an oppositional figure in her capacity to challenge existing racial boundaries and as a device that enables authors to work through their sometimes contradictory sentiments about pressing questions of national identity” (16). Because of her particular circumstances, Iola experiences life as a white woman and as a black woman; however, because of the education she received in the North, she is part of the intellectual elite and distanced from what Carby terms the black “folk” characters (78). Iola’s racial history is at first unknown to her and later confusing to Tom, highlighting the complicated and brittle boundaries between racial groups.

Iola Leroy’s Movement Toward a Localized Utopia

The dystopian reality of slavery fractured family units when slave owners sold individual members to different plantations; thus, the first step toward utopia for the characters in *Iola Leroy* is to locate their beloved blood relations.³⁴ In the beginning of the novel, many characters profess this desire for reunification. For example, Iola tells Dr. Gresham, “I have resolved never to marry until I have found my mother. The hope of finding her has colored all my life since I regained my freedom” (98). Iola’s separation

³⁴ Iola’s family’s situation differed from many in the aftermath of the Civil War. Iola and her mother were enslaved not long before emancipation, and unlike most families, were able to relocate each other. For many freed black families, the opportunity to dwell in a familial home, assured that their kinship unit would not be torn apart by slavery, was a new and profoundly satisfying experience. As Jacqueline Jones explains, “For most black women, then, freedom had very little to do with individual opportunity or independence in the modern sense. Rather, freedom had meaning primarily in a family context...Freedwomen derived emotional fulfillment and a newfound sense of pride from their roles as wives and mothers” (58). However, Iola’s positionality differs significantly from what Jacqueline Jones describes because she was a single, educated woman who for most of her life had the domestic comforts that were new to many black families. As a result, Iola’s independence and freedom are strongly tied to “individual opportunity,” as well as the advancement of the black community as a whole.

from her mother influences every aspect of her life and prevents her utopia. She explains that she will “never be satisfied till [she] get[s] tidings of her” (99) and she will “advertise for her in papers, hunt for her in the churches, and use all the means in [her] power to get some tidings of her and [her] brother Harry” (116). Iola’s desire to locate her mother and brother becomes her main priority; she is “willing to go anywhere and do anything to find her” (117). Similarly, Marie’s brother Robert, whom Iola meets while working as a nurse with wounded soldiers, is searching for his mother, i.e. Iola’s grandmother. As the narrator explains, “To bind anew the ties which slavery had broken and gather together the remnants of his scattered family became the earnest purpose of Robert’s life” (120). For both Iola and Robert, locating family members provides the driving force and purpose for their lives.

Iola’s family members miraculously locate each other, and given the historical rarity of this circumstance, this reunification serves as a—if not the—major source of the family’s utopia. Robert eventually finds his mother, who, “overflowing with joyous excitement...threw her arms around him, looking the very impersonation of rapturous content” (144). Marie also reunites with her ill son Harry, and his mother’s “presence was a call to life” for the soldier (150). The reunions continue when Iola finds her brother Harry: “Iola raised her eyes to his face, so flushed and bright with the glow of recognition, rushed to him, threw her arms around his neck, kissed him again and again, crying: ‘O, Harry!’ Then she fainted from excitement” (152). Overwhelmingly emotional, these reunions communicate the distress of separation, as well as the joy of locating loved ones. Given Iola’s understandable preoccupation with finding her mother

throughout the narrative, the reunion between mother and daughter is the most anticipated. Harry and Iola, once they reconnect, return to their mother, and “Marie rushed forward, clasped Iola in her arms and sobbed out her joy in broken words” (153). The next time that she sees Dr. Gresham, Iola tells him that her search for her mother has been more than successful; she explains, “I have found my mother, brother, grandmother, uncle, and except my brother, we are all living together, and we are so happy” (167). The reunification of this family extends generations; though slavery separated everyone, they come together again, even meeting some of their relatives for the first time. As Hazel V. Carby explains in *Reconstructing Womanhood*, Iola’s journey toward reunion allows her to find “her real self,” unite her with her “legitimated matriarchal kinship,” and “travel throughout the South and ‘discover’ a black community previously unknown to her” (77). In her progress toward utopia, Iola connects with family and other members of the black community, which solidifies her own sense of self as a black woman. Given the devastating reality that most emancipated slaves never located their separated loved ones after the Civil War, this feature of Harper’s text emphasizes its break from reality and its utopian qualities. Locating family members is the critical piece needed for Iola’s utopia to begin. Given how uncommon reunification was, this truly was a utopian vision.

Throughout the text, shadow metaphorically alludes to slavery and familial separation while sunshine signifies love and reconnection. Scriptural metaphors inform this language; for instance, the well-known Psalm 23:4 references the “valley of the shadow of death,” and Matthew 4:16 quotes the prophet Isaiah: “the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light

has dawned.” Harper similarly employs this metaphor of movement from shadow to sunshine; for the Leroy family, the “shadows of slavery” create the most significant darkness in their lives, but additional factors contribute to their fear and sadness (119). For instance, Marie feels that Lorraine was like “a shadow...upon [their] home, hushing its music and darkening its sunshine” (77). Marie is accurate in her assessment of her husband’s cousin, as he is the driving force behind the family’s separation, though Eugene’s inability to secure his wife and children’s emancipation prior to his death allows this tragedy to occur. When he dies, Marie feels “all the bright sunshine of her life fading into the shadows of the grave” (80). Eugene’s death correlates with not only familial separation, but also the threat of slavery and oppression. Iola reflects on these experiences; upon her father’s passing, “the shadows of death mingled with the sunshine of her life” for the first time, and she describes enslavement as being “in the shadow” (87, 95). However, once the family begins to locate each other, they move out of the shadows and into the sunshine. Not only are they no longer enslaved, but recreating their familial unit brings joy, happiness, and security back into their lives. One of the first glimpses of sunshine occurs when Iola meets Aunt Linda, who reminds the protagonist of “the bright sunshiny days when she used to nestle in Mam Liza’s arms, in her own happy home” (135). This reference to sunshine refers to a present moment that evokes the past when Iola still believed that she was white and was bonding with her black caretaker. Once Harry, Iola, and their mother are all gathered under one roof, they create new happiness rather than reminiscing on the past. The children “were passionately devoted to their mother, and did all they could to flood her life with sunshine” (155). Similarly, Iola lends

“additional sunshine” to her grandmother who she only recently met (159). As the title suggests, the novel depicts a movement from shadow to sunshine.

For most of the text, shadows reference fear, especially tied to slavery, while sunshine correlates with family togetherness. Later in the novel, though, the narrator applies the metaphor to the black community’s role in the nation’s future. The narrator explains that Dr. Latimer, Iola’s husband,

has great faith in the possibilities of the negro, and believes that, enlightened and Christianized, he will sink the old animosities of slavery into the new community of interests arising from freedom; and that his influence upon the South will be as the influence of the sun upon the earth. As when the sun passes from Capricorn to Cancer, beauty, greenness, and harmony spring up in his path. (216)

In this explanation, recently freed African Americans not only experience sunshine but become a source of light and growth for the country.³⁵ Dr. Latimer thinks that with religion and education, the black community can unify and enhance the South. This utopia of sunshine, then, is not only within the black community but includes the improvements they will make to the nation as a whole.

Lucille Delany believes in this possibility of sunshine and serves as an example of progressive womanhood in *Iola Leroy*. Her investment in education, both for children and mothers, inspires Iola’s interest in the same topics. Miss Delany is visionary, self-driven, and persistent, as evidenced in her idea to open “a school to train future wives and

³⁵ This positive and hopeful attitude that Harper expresses continues in the discourse surrounding the Harlem Renaissance. For instance, Alain Locke’s anthology *The New Negro* emphasizes the break from the past and the potential for African American’s future, especially the ways in which they will enhance the strength of the country.

mothers” (156). Though she started “on a small scale,” she soon “enlarged her quarters, increased her teaching force, and had erected a large commodious schoolhouse through her own exertions and the help of others” (156). Even after her marriage, Lucille heads a “large and flourishing school” with Harry, and she is unwilling to stop her work; “she was too devoted to resign” (216). This decision—Gabrielle Foreman points out—was “an act then sure to be viewed as a controversial assertion of independence” (343). Even more than Iola, Lucille “becomes the representative of the professional black woman who moves freely but with dignity in the public sphere of black education” (Peterson, “Further Liftings” 102). Though she is a supporting character, Lucille is like many of the New Woman protagonists that I discuss in this project because she improves her community, engages in personally satisfying work, and pursues a romantic partnership.

Lucille Delany offers Iola an example of womanhood that she, in many ways, eventually claims for herself. Their relationship is “very pleasant,” and though Iola is younger than Lucille, “their tastes were so congenial, their views of life and duty in such unison, that their acquaintance soon ripened into strong and lasting friendship” (157). Similarly positioned as young, single, educated black women, their friendship unsurprisingly flourishes. Like their romantic relationships founded on a common interest in aiding their community, Lucille and Iola share “power to be moral and spiritual forces among a people who so much needed their helping hands” (157). Because she is more experienced and established, Lucille ushers Iola into public work and service, appointing her as a teacher (even though she is unable to finish the year due to illness). Lucille is instrumental in Iola’s development because she offers not only an example of

womanhood but also a professional job that allows Iola to contribute to the black community.

In part modeling herself on Lucille Delany's example, Iola performs various forms of labor that are personally satisfying and that aid her community, which builds toward her eventual utopia. She tells her Uncle Robert her views on the benefits of women's work: "I think that every woman should have some skill or art which would insure her at least a comfortable support. I believe there would be less unhappy marriages if labor were more honored among women" (164). Iola sees benefits of women's economically profitable labor not only for individual women, but also for marriage relations as women would likely be more fulfilled and financially self-sufficient. While black women frequently worked at the turn of the century, this view is a radical shift from Iola's upbringing in the South where white women rarely worked outside of the home. Iola tries many types of labor to learn more about what she enjoys and how she can best benefit her community. For instance, after her teaching position in Delany's school, Iola tells Uncle Robert that her skill is nursing, and she takes on employment in that arena. Inspired by Miss Delany, Iola also develops a passion for educating mothers, which she correlates with the enhanced development of children and thus a better future for the race. She writes a paper called "Education of Mothers,"³⁶ and in her conversation

³⁶ Russ Castronovo points out that this paper mimics a speech that Harper delivered to the Brooklyn Literary Society in 1892 entitled "Enlightened Motherhood." Castronovo suggests that "it can be inferred that she has focused on republican motherhood" (239) in both texts, and that notably neither Leroy nor Watkins are "required to transcend her gender in order to take part in a democratic exchange about living on the color line" (238). This tradition of women writers educating mothers—even if they were not mothers themselves—stemmed from Republican Motherhood's emphasis on the role that mothers played in raising up the next generation. For example, Lydia Maria Child's *The Mother's Book* (1831) includes chapters

about the paper,³⁷ Iola argues, “We must instill into our young people that the true strength of a race means purity in women and uprightness in men” (197). Iola views moral development as a key element for African Americans’ progress, and she sees educating mothers as one way to work toward this objective.

Even after all her jobs and developing interests, Iola desires some greater accomplishment for the good of African Americans, and Harper frames writing as the best way to achieve that goal. Iola tells Dr. Latimer, “I wish I could do something more for our people than I am doing” (203). Dr. Latimer recommends that she write a “good, strong book which would be helpful” to the black race because “out of the race must come its own thinkers and writers” (203). Given her education and passion, Iola is well-positioned to write to advance the black community, much like Grace Noble in *Five Generations Hence*. Elizabeth McHenry points out in *Forgotten Readers*: “As Dr. Latimer’s advice to Iola Leroy suggests, authorship was one of the single most important roles a black woman could assume” (189). Thus, the task could not only satisfy Iola’s yearning to “do something more,” but also provide her with a well-respected and significant role within the black community. While Iola does not write and publish within the span of the novel, she establishes herself as an individual devoted to the betterment of

such as “Early Cultivation of Intellect” and “Beauty. Dress. Gentility.” Harper, and her character Iola, build on this tradition to educate mothers on the “proper” raising of children.

³⁷ This scene also highlights the importance of literary societies who saw literature (which they defined broadly) as “fundamental to the agenda of racial uplift and social reform and one potential avenue to the assertion of political agency” (188). Elizabeth McHenry points out the way in which *Iola Leroy* participates in literary culture on two levels; not only does Iola offer a paper and listen to others in her fictional literary society, but “the novel offers itself as a means of making that process [of transformation to race consciousness] available to its readers” (188).

African Americans, flexible in taking on various roles, including writing, as the need arises. Though it varies in form, her work both satisfies her and better the community.

In addition to familial reunification and Iola's labor, happy romance that respects an individual's racial ancestry and identity also serves a crucial role in the developing utopia. During the war, Iola met a white man named Dr. Gresham while working as a nurse. He thinks that Iola is "one of the most refined and lady-like women" he had ever encountered" (53); in fact, in her personhood "he saw realized his ideal of the woman whom he was willing to marry" and even saw her as a "heroic woman" (54). Iola reciprocates the admiration; she sees Dr. Gresham as "tall and handsome, a fine specimen of the best brain and heart of New England" and in him "she saw the ideal of her soul exemplified" (93). However, Iola wants to focus on finding her mother, not developing romantic relationships. She also recently developed "horror, aversion, and disgust" for the white race of which Dr. Gresham is a part, further reducing her desire for a romantic relationship with him (93). She knows that Dr. Gresham's friends and family would disdain her, and she is rightfully unwilling to hide her black racial ancestry or accept such mistreatment. Given all these factors, Iola rejects Dr. Gresham's advances and focuses on her personal development and the search for her family.

Iola's rejection of Dr. Gresham solidifies her identification with the black community. This crucial moment, often discussed in scholarly criticism of the novel, marks Iola's "growing race consciousness" (Fabi, *Passing* 58). Her rejection of Gresham demonstrates her "understanding of the connections between patriarchal power, sexism, and racial discrimination" and her unwillingness to accept "a situation of racial

invisibility, disavowing her genealogy and surviving family ties” (Fabi, *Passing* 58). Russ Castronovo similarly argues that though they are personally compatible, Iola “object[s] to him *impersonally* as a prosthetic figure who asks her to ‘disregard’ history and experiences remaindered by a contractual relationship with patriarchy, either embodied as husband or disembodied as nation-state” (227). Dr. Gresham becomes not just a suitor but a symbol of the life that Iola could have—but rejects—if she decides to pass as white. Carla L. Peterson sees Iola’s decision not just as a denunciation of white privilege, but as a means of resisting the “romantic elements of the tragic mulatta plot” that Iola’s mother succumbed to (“Further Liftings” 100). Thus, the decision impacts not only Iola’s individual character but the genre of the work. Elizabeth West also comments on Iola’s critical choice, proposing that like her brother who chooses to join the black ranks of the military, Iola understands “that marriage to Dr. Gresham would require that she forsake personal and community ties more valuable than the life of comfort and wealth that the doctor can provide” (98). Iola is unwilling to sever herself from her newfound connections in the black community. Though Iola and Dr. Gresham admire and respect each other, the sociopolitical climate at the time prevented their match. This romance would not contribute to a utopia because society would look down on Iola and Dr. Gresham’s marriage, which could lead to tension in their marital and other social bonds. Additionally, it would require her to deny her heritage, an antiutopian prospect for Iola. Her rejection of Dr. Gresham reflects her denunciation of the white world and its accompanying materialistic wealth, emphasizing the strength and goodness that Iola sees in the black community.

In contrast, Iola's relationship with Dr. Frank Latimer satisfies the movement toward utopia because they share not only a black racial ancestry, but also the desire to aid the African American race. To Iola, Dr. Latimer met her "ideal of a high, heroic manhood" (205) and conversely, Iola "was filling a larger place in his heart" each day (206). As with her friendship with Lucille Delany, Iola and Frank's shared values and goals form their connection: "Her noblest sentiments found a response in his heart. In their desire to help the race their hearts beat in loving unison. One grand and noble purpose was giving tone and color to their lives and strengthening the bonds of affection between them" (206). They share a commitment to assisting other African Americans, and this commonality not only draws them together but strengthens their affection. Eventually, Dr. Latimer proposes, telling Iola, "I am in earnest...In the work to which I am devoted every burden will be lighter, every path smoother, if brightened and blessed with your companionship" (208). Dr. Latimer clearly expresses admiration for Iola, but he also thinks they can help each other in their work. Their middle-class status and position in the black community may drive this component of their relationship. Christina Simmons explains that for black partners at the turn of the century, marriage was "not to be focused exclusively inward, on the heterosexual bond, but rather to serve as the central relationship in which partners could share work that was linked to race advancement or the larger community" (158). However, while their positionality may influence their marriage, Hazel V. Carby points out the "radical and unconventional nature of Harper's figuration of an egalitarian relationship" (80). Dr. Latimer is not saving or protecting Iola; rather, "Harper wanted to conclude her novel with the proposition that the life of

two young intellectuals would be based on a mutual sharing of intellectual interests and a common commitment to the ‘folk’ and the ‘race’” (Carby 80). Though Iola asks for time to consider his proposal, she eventually recognizes that unlike her relationship with Dr. Gresham, with Dr. Latimer there “were no impeding barriers, no inclination impelling one way and duty compelling another. Kindred hopes and tastes had knit their hearts; grand and noble purposes were lighting up their lives” (210). Not only is there nothing standing in the way of their union, but their marriage might enhance their chosen path. Frank supports Iola’s labor, whether she is doing wage-earning work or community service. In choosing Dr. Latimer, Iola “inherits a different fate than her mother and avoids becoming a white man’s wife/concubine, instead wedding a suitor of African American ancestry” (Castronovo 231-232). Iola and Dr. Latimer respect each other as equals, and they spur each other to better aid their community.

All these factors—the end of slavery, the reunification of family, the pursuit of satisfying and beneficial labor, and the development of satisfying romances—enable the localized utopia at the end of Frances E. W. Harper’s *Iola Leroy*. True to the novel’s theme of familial unification, Robert moves with his mother and sister near Iola where he buys land to create homesteads. Though Harry and Lucille do not live in the same town, they maintain a close relationship with Iola and Frank and contribute to their community’s wellbeing as the heads of “a large and flourishing school” that also lifts “up the homes of the people” (216). Iola and Dr. Latimer move to North Carolina, where he flourishes in his practice because of his “medical skill and agreeable manners” (212). He has “won the name of the ‘Good Doctor’” and has become a “true patriot and a good

citizen” (216). Their “cosy home” (212) reflects the utopian environment of their lives: “Over the cottage porch were morning-glories to greet the first flushes of rising day, and roses and jasmynes to distill their fragrance on the evening air” (213). The flowers beautifully and aromatically mark their home’s entrance where their friends Aunt Linda and Uncle Daniel greet them. Harper depicts a middle-class residence, signifying Iola and Frank’s economic stability. Their pleasant and comfortable physical environment, along with their relationships with community members, enhances their utopian existence.

Utopia also arises from Iola’s personal growth and satisfaction in her work and service. Iola explains that she will “teach in the Sunday-school, help in the church, [and] hold mothers’ meetings to help these boys and girls to grow to be good men and women” (214). While Iola does not have an economically profitable job at this time, she performs labor that benefits the African American community, especially by educating mothers. Carla L. Peterson astutely describes the ending of the narrative: “Iola works to redeem her race not by remaining by the hearth, but by mediating between private and public spheres within the black community—between home, church, and school” (“Further Liftings” 102). Moving between these spaces, she improves the lives of many individuals in their isolated black community. Iola successfully collaborates with the pastor of the church to plan “meetings for the especial benefit of mothers and children,” and she cultivates warm relationships with the impoverished families: “In lowly homes and windowless cabins her visits are always welcome. Little children love her. Old age turns to her for comfort, young girls for guidance, and mothers for counsel. Her life is full of blessedness” (216). Regardless of age, Iola’s acquaintances respect her and seek her

advice. By the close of the novel, Iola has successfully found a task that offers her satisfaction while benefiting those in her community. Not only does Iola's labor align her with other New Woman protagonists like Dorothy and Mildred, but it also contributes to the utopian quality of her situation.

Reflected in the novel's full title, *Iola Leroy, or, Shadows Uplifted*, the close of the novel emphasizes the family's movement into sunshine. The narrator explains, "The shadows have been lifted from all their lives; and peace, like bright dew, has descended upon their paths. Blessed themselves, their lives are a blessing to others" (217). Once again, the novel reminds reader that not only are Iola and all her family members now living a happy life, but they are also serving and aiding their community. Fabi suggests Iola can develop this "utopia" not despite the discrimination, but because of the values that she learns in the black community (*Passing* 63). Iola finds the "privileges of whiteness...to be based on dystopian inequality," but the "resilience and humanistic values" of blackness "hold the promise of a better future" (Fabi, *Passing* 63). Carla L. Peterson argues that at the close of the novel the characters return to "the economic model of Southern homesteading," which she sees as "Harper's retreat from any attempt as yet to construct a place for blacks within the political economy of the nation" (110). Peterson frames this withdrawal as a critique or a shortcoming of the novel, while I see it as an unfortunate consequence of its era. While readers may want to imagine an integrated utopia in which all people are happy and prosper, that dream was laughably disparate from reality in the Progressive Era. Harper's vision of an isolated and self-contained utopia in the black community was the best way, or perhaps the only way, to

maintain their wellbeing. Despite the pervasive and institutionalized racism surrounding them, the characters in *Iola Leroy* cultivate a localized utopia through finding security, contentment, and purpose in their lives.

The Rejection of an African Utopia in *Iola Leroy*

Iola Leroy emphasizes the possibility of utopia for African Americans within the United States. However, reignited by increased racial discrimination after failed Reconstruction efforts, some black leaders in the Progressive Era imagined relocating or returning to the African continent to establish a new society. These ideas had long circulated in American culture on both sides of the racial divide, even before the 1816 formulation of the American Colonization Society (composed largely of politicians and slaveholders) who wanted to relocate free and enslaved black individuals to the African continent. Matthew Spooner explains that despite the organization's attempt to express mutual benefit for white and black communities, the American Colonization Society's "rhetoric and premise—that black Americans do not belong in their home country—were overtly racist and deserving of the derision that has been heaped upon the ACS since its inception" (560). Largely because of the ACS, African Americans began migrating in large groups to the African continent in 1821, and Liberia eventually gained its independence in 1847.

While white leaders spearheaded these efforts, a "small but significant number of frustrated African-Americans had been advocating voluntary emigration since before the American Revolution" (Spooner 562). In the Progressive Era, some African Americans continued to view Africa, and particularly Liberia, as offering "a chance of a better life"

(Barnes 14). As Kenneth C. Barnes explains, “As it became increasingly clear that black Americans would not get a seat at the table, Liberia posed an alternative to integration, an escape to an all-black world” (14). In 1906, Rev. W. Creighton Campbell, a white, Southern, Presbyterian minister, confronted the issue in his article “Back to Africa” published in *Christian Observer*. Though he recalls positive childhood memories of interacting with black slaves in his Southern home, Campbell argues that the “present state of things is as unsatisfactory as can be well imagined” and that “the negro will never reach his destiny in America” (7). He directly states his own belief that “the American negro should and will finally go back to Africa,” highlighting the available water, potential for crop production, and surplus of rubber in the Congo basin (7). He believes the return to Africa will offer black men “possibilities that do not lie in the future in this land for him, and when the facts are placed before him, I believe he will not only be willing to go, but that he will want to go” (8). Campbell argues that individuals on both sides of the racial divide would benefit from African Americans’ return to Africa, a long-discussed idea in discourse surrounding racial relations. The racism within the Back to Africa movement also aligns with the more general anti-immigrant sentiments that influenced much of the social activism in the Progressive Era.

For black individuals, African migration promised a self-governed, equal society, while for white individuals it eliminated the difficult questions of post-slavery integration and removed a large portion of the populace that they held in such contempt. Even as late as 1914, Gold-Coast born Oklahoman Chief Alfred C. Sam convinced over 600 African Americans to buy stock in his Back to Africa scheme by spinning tales of “diamonds

lying on the ground after a rain, trees that produced bread, and sugar cane as large as stove pipes” (O’Dell). Sam’s hyperbolic and falsified descriptions present a utopian vision of the Gold Coast. Sixty people boarded his first and only ship to Africa, but many of the immigrants “suffered and perished from sickness, others were discouraged by the primitive agriculture, and all believed they had been misled” (O’Dell). Shortly after Sam’s failed attempt at relocation, Marcus Garvey emerged as a prominent proponent of the Back to Africa movement, which was a radical third option to the visions presented by Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. Though Washington’s “practicality” and “emphasis on self-help” inspired Garvey, he emphasized black nationalism and black separatism (Piott 202). Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Jamaica in 1914 and brought the organization to New York in 1916. Garvey’s “Africanist, nationalistic, separatist, and militant Universal Negro Improvement Association advocated that all black Americans go ‘home’ to Africa” (McHenry 18). He purchased the Black Star Line to transport black individuals to the continent. W. E. B. Du Bois criticized Garvey’s project because it rejected the possibility that black Americans could reach an equal status to white Americans in the United States. The federal government saw Garvey as a threat and eventually deported him, but his movement gained a lot of traction. Piott explains, “The UNIA claimed to have a million members by 1920, and even Garvey’s harshest critics conceded that his organization had at least half that number” (203). Piott argues that even more important than an actual relocation to Africa was “the way [Garvey] galvanized the black masses behind a program of hope in the midst of despair. He encouraged blacks to join together in a common cause and told

them that they should feel pride in their heritage” (203). In *The Blood of Emmett Till*, Timothy B. Tyson similarly explains that the UNIA “awakened the spirit of black pride and self-assertion on a scale unprecedented” (18). Through his dual focus on black nationalism and black separatism, Garvey painted a positive picture of the black community and their future. All these efforts taken together demonstrate that throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Africa—and especially Liberia—symbolized a utopian space of possibility for black Americans.

Frances E. W. Harper was aware of arguments that black individuals should migrate to Africa either to serve as missionaries or to create a new society, but she rejects the idea in *Iola Leroy*. The novel raises the question through a paper written by Bishop Tunster entitled “Negro Emigration.” Given the similarities in their title, name, and perspective, Harper likely intends this character to reference Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, a well-known Methodist minister who emphatically supported emigration to Africa and even organized ship voyages to Liberia in 1895 and 1896 (though some of the migrants were unhappy and returned). In *Iola Leroy*, when Dr. Latimer questions the bishop about where African Americans could go, he responds, “Go to Africa...I believe that Africa is to be redeemed to civilization, and that the negro is to be gathered into the family of nations and recognized as a man and a brother” (191). Though Bishop Tunster belittlingly describes Africa as an unredeemed, uncivilized space, he argues that a movement to Africa could be beneficial for both African Americans and Africans. African Americans would be free and removed from the unjust society in the United States, and they could redeem and civilize African individuals. Professor Gradnor agrees

with the latter idea, demonstrated when he states, “I am in favor of missionary efforts...for the redemption of Africa, but I see no reason for expatriating ourselves because some persons do not admire the color of our skins” (191). Gradnor sees potential benefits of missionary work in Africa but disagrees that migration will benefit black Americans, emphasizing the injustice of expatriation due to discrimination. Mr. Stillman takes the conversation a step further, disagreeing with Tunster’s assertion about the aid that black Americans could offer Africans. He argues, “I do not believe...in emptying on the shores of Africa a horde of ignorant, poverty-stricken people, as missionaries of civilization or Christianity” (191). Stillman suggests that, given their long-standing oppression, African Americans are not currently in a position to effectively help Africans. The characters are not able to reach consensus on the fruitfulness or necessity of missionizing efforts in Africa.

The conversation in response to Bishop Tunster’s “Negro Emigration” turns to the benefits of African Americans remaining in the United States and working toward a more desired and just society, which is consistent with *Iola Leroy’s* concluding depictions of a localized utopia in North Carolina. For instance, Miss Delany states, “America...is the best field for human development” (191) and Honorable Dugdale similarly suggests, “...as there are millions of us in this country, I think it best to settle down and work out our own salvation here” (192). Given the vast number of African Americans and the available resources in the United States, Delany and Dugdale contend that the nation offers the best opportunities for the race’s future. Dr. Latimer agrees, arguing that he does not want African Americans “to become restless and unsettled before they have tried one

generation of freedom” (192). Given the recent emancipation of many enslaved black people, Dr. Latimer contends that they should allow more time for the society to develop before leaving. Iola joins the conversation, agreeing with her companions: “I believe we are to be fixtures in this country. But beyond the shadows I see the coruscation of a brighter day; and we can help usher it in, not by answering hate with hate, or giving scorn for scorn, but by striving to be more generous, noble, and just” (193). Employing the metaphor of shadow and sunshine, Iola envisions her race moving toward a life of dazzling light. She is hopeful about African Americans’ future in the United States but emphasizes their role in creating societal changes by consistently acting justly and lovingly, even in response to hate. Iola foreshadows her role in her own utopia when she encourages individuals to help create a flourishing community. By rejecting the idea of a relocation to Africa, Harper reinforces her argument that African Americans can—and perhaps should—cultivate an isolated community within the United States.

Five Generations Hence

Like *Iola Leroy*, Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* advocates a localized utopia within America. However, Jones Horace presents the possibility of relocation to Africa as a more appealing alternative for a utopia than Harper. Grace Noble’s friend Violet Gray serves as a Christian missionary to African people and to cultivate a new society for African Americans. However, as she emphasizes in the novel’s title, Jones Horace is clear that Violet’s community will require arduous work and numerous decades to develop, whereas Grace Noble quickly actualizes her utopia within her familial home. Both Violet and Grace offer examples of New Women who

pursue occupations of interest that also aid the black community, though Grace’s narrative is particularly notable through her development of a utopia in Texas. Through her depiction of Grace’s cultivation of this utopia, Lillian Jones Horace suggests that a better life is possible for African Americans—even in the South—but that it may require extreme withdrawal from racist white culture into an individual family home.

Lillian Jones Horace, like her protagonist Grace Noble, was a strong female figure who pursued satisfying labor and improved her communities. Lillian “Amstead” or



Figure 11. Lillian Jones Horace. ULUA Simmons 2.2. Simmons Bible College Records, University Archives and Records Center, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. <http://digital.library.louisville.edu/cdm/ref/collection/simmons/id/257>

“Armistead” was born on April 29, 1880, in Jefferson, Texas, to Thomas Amstead and Macey Matthews. Several years later, the family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, where she eventually completed her secondary education at I. M. Terrell High School. From 1898 to 1899 she enrolled at Bishop College in Marshall, Texas, and concurrently began teaching in nearby schools. She married David Jones in 1900; the couple had no children and eventually divorced in 1919 (“Horace, Lillian B.”). In

1911, she returned to her high school alma mater where she taught English, worked as the dean of girls, established the school’s library and newspaper, and initiated its journalism

and drama departments³⁸ (“Horace, Lillian B.”). From around 1915 to 1917, Lillian briefly entered into a publishing business with James I. Dotson (Knight 157).³⁹ In 1916, she self-published her first novel *Five Generations Hence* through the Dotson-Jones publishing house; her work is “believed to be the earliest novel on record by an African-American woman from Texas” (“Horace, Lillian B.”) and “the first utopian novel by a black American woman” (Kolmerten 120). Additionally, Jones Horace is “one of only two black women,” along with Pauline Hopkins, “known to have owned a publishing company *and* to have self-published her work before the Harlem Renaissance” (Knight 153). She enrolled in various universities around the country to “further her education,” obtaining her bachelor’s degree in 1924 from Simmons University⁴⁰ in Louisville, Kentucky, where she became the Dean of Women for two years (Keeton).

³⁸ Jan L. Jones notes that Jones Horace played Esther as a “twenty-year-old soprano” in the 1906 community production of *Queen Esther* (285). Jones Horace played “a pivotal role in the promotion and development of theatrical activities and training in Fort Worth’s black community” (Jan L. Jones 286).

³⁹ Alisha Coleman Knight explains that Lillian’s involvement in this area of business was a rare endeavor for a black woman: “By working with Dotson to publish her own book, Horace actively sought out the publishing profession and assumed an active role as an agent of social change” (157). However, earlier black women writers, such as Phillis Wheatley (considered the First African American to publish a book when her collection of poetry was released in 1773) and Harriet Wilson (considered the first African American novelist when *Our Nig* was published in Boston in 1859), made concerted efforts to disperse their texts, even if they were not publishers themselves. Jones Horace joins a small but esteemed group of published black women writers.

⁴⁰ In 1879, the Kentucky State Convention of Colored Baptist Churches purchased four acres in Louisville to establish Kentucky’s first co-educational college for black students (“History”). Dr. William Simmons, a former slave who assisted in Howard University’s teacher training programs, was the second President from 1880-1890, and the institution was eventually named after him. In 2015, the U. S. Department of Education named the institution the 107th HBCU. Though the college has experienced relocations and shifts in focus over the last century, the 13th president, Dr. Kevin W. Cosby, has “reacquired its original campus” and “secured accreditation,” and the enrollment is “increasing at an unprecedented rate resulting in an expansion of class offering and degree programs” (“History”).

Jones Horace maintained her wage-earning and community labor throughout her adult life. In 1930, Lillian Jones married Joseph Gentry Horace who became a minister in Evanston, Illinois, though they divorced in 1946 because Joseph “had fallen in love with another woman” (Kossie-Chernyshev 75). Not only did Jones Horace serve as a preacher’s wife during this time, but she also “served as chaplain of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs in 1937; continued to serve as teacher and librarian in Fort Worth; and began working on her second novel, *Angie Brown*” (“Horace, Lillian B.”). In 1938, she started a biography of Dr. Lacey Kirk Williams, a well-known African American Baptist minister, upon his request. Jones Horace actively participated in clubs including “Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Alphin Art and Charity Club, Progressive Woman’s Club, and the Order of the Eastern Star” (Keeton). While she is not a well-known figure, she was celebrated in her communities in Texas. For instance, upon her retirement, “she was showered with accolades from students and colleagues, with at least two news articles lauding her accomplishments, especially her dedication to young women” (Kossie-Chernyshev 77). Though Lillian Jones Horace does not align with the stereotypical understanding of a New Woman as white, she embodies the figure’s movement into the public sphere and investment in social improvements. Like Harper, Lillian Jones Horace was committed to enhancing the wellbeing of African Americans.

Lillian Jones Horace’s novel is set in November 1899, seventeen years before its publication date but still within the Progressive Era; the slightly earlier setting suggests that Jones Horace’s visions for the African American community should have already occurred, mimicking Harper’s decision to set her novel during the Civil War. Though

unfortunately not distinct in American history, the years between 1899 and 1916 contained widespread, overt racism that manifested in white mobs' physical assaults on black people, racist laws limiting and constricting the rights of black citizens, and artistic and cultural texts that explicitly advanced white supremacist arguments. For example, Thomas Dixon's famous 1905 novel *The Clansman* argued for maintaining racial segregation, using fear tactics by portraying black men raping white women. The book was adapted into a silent film, *The Birth of the Nation*, in 1915; though some protested the film's portrayal of African Americans and the KKK, the movie contributed to a resurgence in the white supremacist organization. In 1906, during the Atlanta Race Riots, white mobs killed dozens of African Americans. In the same year in the Brownsville Raid, Teddy Roosevelt dishonorably discharged 167 black soldiers from the military because of the murder of two white men, though there was not sufficient evidence against the black soldiers. In 1908, the Springfield Race Riots erupted when a white woman, who later recanted, accused a black man of rape; as a result, a white mob killed eight black men and drove many more out of the city.

Because of the widespread racism and violent assaults, African American citizens formed new organizations to advocate for their rights, modeling self-advocacy for the black community, including writers like Jones Horace. For instance, W. E. B. Du Bois, along with Mary White Ovington and Moorfield Storey, founded the NAACP in 1909, Ruth Standish Baldwin and Dr. George Edmund Hayes established the National Urban League in 1910, and Ida B. Wells initiated the Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago in 1913. Thus, Jones Horace was not only witness to the horrific racist events of the Progressive

Era, but also to the mobilization of African Americans who sought to change society. In addition to Jones Horace's ability to revise the last seventeen years of racial oppression by setting the novel in 1899, Horace's setting significantly falls "at the end of the most active decade of emigrationist fervor when 'African fever reached its peak' in response to the institutionalization of segregation, economic subjugation, and political disenfranchisement of African Americans" (Fabi, "Of the Coming of Grace" 164). Therefore, setting the novel in 1899 allows Jones Horace to evoke the hope that emigrationism had stirred in African Americans, alluding to its possibility through Violet's narrative and offering an alternative within the United States. The year also significantly occurs on the cusp of the new century. In a sense, Jones Horace rewrites the trajectory of African Americans, ushering them into more fulfilling lives and supportive communities in the twentieth century.

The location of Jones Horace's novel in Texas is also significant given the continued discriminatory laws and customs across the American South after emancipation. Women transitioned into public spaces and joined reform movements much more slowly than in the Northern states, and this progress was exponentially more challenging for black women; as "white women increased their public presence, that of black women was forcibly constricted" (McArthur 5). Though Texas is a bit of an outlier in the South because of its distinct history, it shares a conservative culture that made it doubly difficult for black women to enter public forums because of both racist and sexist ideologies. However, not all black women wanted to pursue public work or service. Unlike white women, they labored as slaves in unbearable conditions for years. For

many, the ability to become homemakers and focus on the family was more desirable and a radical break from their previous roles. Though both Northern and Southern white citizens generally agreed that “black wives and mothers should continue to engage in productive labor outside their homes,” most black women wanted to remain in the home when economically possible (Jacqueline Jones 45). In this sense, it was not conservatism that kept black women in their homes but a desire for what they could not have while enslaved. For black women who *did* want to pursue professional work, though, the overwhelmingly racist landscape made it difficult, if not impossible. Additionally, the proportion of African Americans in Texas was shrinking as white citizens entered the state, making it even more surprising that Jones Horace would set the novel there. In 1890, the African American population in Texas made up 21.8% of the state, which was the smallest percentage in the Confederacy, and the number shrank to 17.7% by 1910 (McArthur 5). Jones Horace depicts a localized utopia in Texas, likely because of her familiarity with the region despite the decrease in African Americans’ proportion and the discrimination that they faced. Jones Horace, somewhat surprisingly, indicates a belief in the possibility of a good life in Texas isolated from white culture.

The Dotson-Jones Printing Company published Jones Horace’s text in 1916, though little additional information about the text’s publication or reception exists. As Alisha Coleman Knight explains, “Whether Dotson-Jones issued any other imprints, how many copies of *Five Generations Hence* were printed, how much they cost, whether and where Horace advertised her book...have yet to be determined” (156). Much like Lena Jane Fry, whom I discuss in the fifth chapter, Lillian Jones Horace was a relatively

unknown author in her own time and in ours; both women were outside of prominent social and literary circles. The Library of Congress and the Fort Worth Library hold the only known copies of *Five Generations Hence* (Knight 156). Despite this lack of publication information, the novel's status as the first known utopian novel by an African American woman makes it an important consideration for this project. Alisha Coleman Knight argues that the novel is "notable for three reasons":

First, for the way it presents book production as an effective tool for racial uplift, second, for the way it offers book production as a viable avenue for black women to achieve success and independence, and third, for the way it elevates books as tools for social and political change. (157)

The publication of *Five Generations Hence*, as well as Grace Noble's book within the text, highlights one avenue for a black woman's success and the ability of fictional texts to change the material world. *Five Generations Hence* suggests that localized utopias for African Americans are possible within the United States, obtainable within an individual family home that segregates itself from mainstream society.

Grace Noble: A New Woman Protagonist

Grace Noble's identity as a black woman forms an important aspect of her character from the start. Unlike Claire from *The Curse of Caste* or Iola from *Iola Leroy* who are unaware of their racial background,⁴¹ Grace is conscious of her African

⁴¹ All three of these characters would be considered mulattas because of their black ancestry and their ability to pass as white. M. Giulia Fabi explains that "mulattos and mulattas were popular literary figures" for antebellum white authors to employ, but they were also depicted in pre-Harlem Renaissance African American fiction (*Passing* 2). In the latter, "the passers are rarely tragic figures, and even when tragedy does befall them, it is most clearly indicated to be the result of virulent prejudice and discrimination" (Fabi, *Passing* 3). Thus, mulatta characters such as Iola Leroy and arguably Grace Noble given her light

American ancestry. She was born to freed slaves in the Reconstruction Era; her father fled after “defend[ing] his young wife against a band of white ruffians,” and her mother gained employment in her former owner’s home (20). However, like Claire and Iola, Grace’s physical appearance suggests mixed racial ancestry. The twenty-eight-year-old has an “olive complexion, a color dubbed ‘high brown’ by Master Edgar and his associates” (19) and her nose “form[ed] a compromise between the aquiline nose of the Caucasian and the expanded nostrils of the Ethiopian, not a classical nose, indeed, but a tolerably fair one” (19). This breakdown of facial features and complexion—the dissection of a woman to ascertain her racial background and thus her social standing—is common in Progressive Era descriptions of individuals perceived to be racially other. Jones Horace’s portrayal of Grace aligns with the descriptions of some of the flying women’s skin tones and facial features in Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin’s *Angel Island*, discussed in the following chapter. Grace’s physical appearance indicates that her ancestry is likely a mixture of European and African descent. The term high brown—reportedly used by Master Edgar, a symbol of white male patriarchy—captures the biases related to degrees of complexion by framing brown skin hierarchically above, presumably, darker skin tones. Jones Horace’s description is indicative of colorism, which is a particularly pernicious bias, especially for women who often endure more discrimination because of their specific skin tone. Though the notion of colorism also

complexion, offer authors the opportunity to explore the liminal space between white and black, including the discrimination they often faced if their black ancestry was public knowledge.

impacts Iola's narrative, Grace is distinct from characters like Miss Leroy because she always understands herself to be black, despite her light skin tone.

Grace initially works as a teacher, which was not her dream job.⁴² While her parents were certainly not wealthy, “[s]he was given the educational advantages then afforded to Negro boys and girls and at the age of sixteen was sent to Bishop College” (20-21). Through her advanced education, Grace cultivated the desire to become a scholar and studied many hours at the library. She also had literary talent, but shortly after she returned home from college her mother died, and she turned to teaching for income. Progressive Era citizens viewed teaching as an appropriate profession for middle-class women regardless of race, largely because they viewed it as an extension of domestic skills and responsibilities. As S. J. Kleinberg explains,

Female professionals succeeded best in those occupations which seemed most closely allied to the home and traditional female roles, such as teaching and nursing, but had greater trouble finding acceptance in medicine and law, which were perceived as authoritative and public. (*Women in the United States* 175)

Given the compounded discrimination that black women experienced, teaching represented an important opportunity because many “other white-color occupations were closed” to them (Woloch 246). Grace fills the position and economically supports herself for seven years, even though it is not her desired occupation.

⁴² While teaching was the most accessible profession, it was by no means the most common job. According to S. J. Kleinberg, 98 percent of black women worked in agriculture or service jobs in 1880, and by 1920 this number had only decreased to 92 percent (“Women’s Employment” 102).

Many middle-class black women, like Grace, became teachers because it was a respectable profession available to them, but it presented challenges like lower pay than their white counterparts. Nancy Woloch states that “[i]n 1900, almost 87 percent of all black women in professional jobs were teachers” (246). This role was challenging, as black teachers “taught more children than their white colleagues, in smaller schools, with less equipment, and for 45 percent of the white teachers’ salaries” (Schneider and Schneider 118). Thus, while teaching was a revered profession, it was a strenuous job with little pay, especially for black women. In fact, “until the 1940s, school districts routinely paid black teachers one quarter or one third of white teachers’ salaries” (N. Brown 249). Despite its shortcomings, the occupation was important to the individual and the community because, as Nikki Brown explains, “Black teachers became the epitome of respectability, the embodiment of the anti-menace” (246). Teaching offered black women the chance to not only become a professional with a steady income, but “to act on their larger goals for social justice and to hold a privileged place within an African American community” (N. Brown 247). Despite positive views of the teaching profession, the narrator in *Five Generations Hence* condescendingly explains that Miss Noble is a “backwoods teacher,” working with rural students in a remote location (19). In the same sentence, though, the narrator affirmingly suggests that Grace will “play no insignificant part in the destiny of a people” (19). Grace’s current role as a rural educator does not satisfy her. Though the income was necessary, she wanted to contribute to her racial community in a different way, potentially as a scholar or writer.

Restless and discontented in her current occupation, Grace frequently desires a different role in improving her community. The narrator explains that Grace has endured “seven years of single combat with life and the world, years of toil, of temptations and insults, sad years of loneliness and disappointment” (21). As a single woman whose parents have died, lonely Grace toils for seven years in her country school post-graduation. Grace begins to brood, which the narrator explains is “not strange” given that she is “without kith or kin” and must face “stern realities” of life (22). However, the narrator frames this season in Grace’s life as a time of preparation for a greater task yet to come. She cultivated a “passionate desire to do something more for her people” (21). In Grace’s case, these people are the members of the black community, but other New Woman protagonists have similar desires; Salome Shepard longs to help the mill workers and Mildred Carver wants to feed the whole nation. While these women are passionate about their work, Grace likely identifies more with the community she targets than someone like Dorothy in Knox’s novel who is outside the group of working class women that she aids. The narrator compares Grace Noble to “Mary of old at Jesus’ feet, learning more of Him and making ready to fulfill the mission of her life that God in his own time she knows will reveal to her” (22). Though the narrator employs religious rhetoric to explain Grace’s period of waiting, “[d]oubt and hopelessness were tugging at her heart and threatening to undermine the very religion she professed; she knew she must do something to quiet the surging in her breast” (23). Despite her discontent, Grace does not resign herself to her current job and status; rather, like the New Woman protagonist that she is, she intends (in God’s time) to better the lives of her fellow black citizens.

Grace Noble's current displeasure and desire to do something more stems from her passionate feelings about the mistreatment of African Americans. Even on a beautiful day when her students want to go outside, she does not notice the "beauteous landscape; rather, in her imagination she saw an appalling, seething mass of millions of human forms groping in ignorance and superstition" (19). The narrator employs extreme and negative language to describe Grace's vision of a frightful, angry, and uneducated mass of African Americans. Though she depicts them using such heightened language, Grace reflects that she may have "exaggerated the ills of her people" and does not hold them fully accountable for their current position, pointing out the "scoffs and humiliations imposed upon them" (24). She recounts abuses she has seen African Americans endure; she has witnessed "industrious Negroes...driven from their homes by ruthless mobs" and "beaten and cowed by superior numbers" (25). A train conductor injured Grace herself by intentionally signaling to start the car as she was trying to board. However, while she recognizes that white racists committed these abuses, she is frustrated by "well-bred Negro men and women" who "ceaseless[ly] attempt on scarcely subsistible incomes to mimic white folks' ways that were ever repugnant to her refined nature" (23). Grace is disgusted by their engagement in worldly affairs, poor economic decisions, and neglect of their needy fellow black citizens. She reflects that they are "heedless of the teeming thousands of hearts awaiting the uplift, be it no more than a clean, wholesome life" (23).⁴³ Grace recounts the abuses that African Americans endure and evokes the language

⁴³ Like many of the texts in this project, the narrator employs the language of uplift. However, because she is discussing the black community specifically, this discourse of uplift evokes figures like Washington and Du Bois, much like Iola Leroy. Grace pulls from Washington's ideas when she emphasizes the need for

of uplift to emphasize that wealthier black individuals should aid their working-class counterparts.

Black women's clubs offer a historical example of uplift in action. In *Forgotten Readers*, Elizabeth McHenry explains the relationship between social uplift and socioeconomic position: "As the motto of the black women's club movement, 'Lifting As We Climb,' implies, these middle-class women took it upon themselves to educate their poorer sisters in the values and the behavior associated with middle-class respectability" (233). In addition to behavioral and educational transformation, women's clubs often framed the desired improvement in moral and religious terms. As Josephine Ruffian of the New England Women's Club explained, the black women's club movement was committed to "the moral education of the race with which [they were] identified" (qtd. in Woloch 290). Like black women's clubs, Grace articulates a desire to help suffering black people. Though she negatively describes impoverished African Americans, she blames the unjust society rather than black individuals for their unfortunate condition.

Like Josephine Ruffian of the New England Women's Club, Jones Horace employs religious language in *Five Generations Hence*, suggesting that uplift would lead the black community "to Jehovah" (23). Horace again compares Grace to a religious woman, but rather than passive Mary at the foot of the cross, she becomes "like the Maid of Orleans"; Grace, like Joan of Arc, "brooded over the wrongs committed against her people and cried to God for a panacea for the evil times" (25). Though Jones Horace

black citizens to simply have a "clean, wholesome life," but ultimately aligns her view more closely with Du Bois when she encourages wealthier black citizens to assist and lift up those who are not as "well-bred" (23).

initially describes Grace's demeanor, her language also employs militaristic imagery that aligns Grace with Joan of Arc. In response to her mother's comment on the curse of being born black, Grace states, "No, mother, not so, God loves and cares for us, he will defend us and raise to us friends even in the camps of the enemy" (25). Immediately following this reply, the narrator outlines the horrors that African Americans face at the hands of "ruthless mobs" and "superior numbers," implying that within the United States, black people were in "the camps of the enemy" (25). Though she acknowledges these atrocities, she maintains the goodness of God who has not abandoned them.⁴⁴ Like Joan of Arc, Grace is a young, strong leader, and her shift from Mary to Joan of Arc reflects her movement toward action that will better the status and wellbeing of African Americans. She laments their current ill-treatment and believes in their potential.

Grace awakens to a clearer conception of her future role while she is communing with nature. Grace consistently found that nature offered a "tranquil spirit over her wrought nerves" (23). Unlike in *Mildred Carver, U. S. A.* when mill foreman John Barton persuades Mildred, or in *Dorothy's Experience* when Edes Hindlay spurs Dorothy to a new understanding of her duty, no men (or women, such as Lucille in *Iola Leroy*) aid

⁴⁴ This dual emphasis on God's goodness and the suffering of the black community also emerges in works like "Yet Do I Marvel" by Countee Cullen. The speaker states, "I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind" and suggests that God could explain the seeming injustices of the world if he stopped to do so (Cullen 3). From the blind mole, to the parched and starving Tantalus reaching for nourishment, to Sisyphus' meaningless and continual labor, the speaker names these various torturous circumstances that implicitly align with the hardships African Americans faced in the early twentieth century. The last line of the poem states, "Yet do I marvel at this curious thing: / To make a poet black, and bid him sing!" (Cullen 3). This final remark highlights the main idea of Cullen's poem: the surprising union of extreme suffering due to racism and the compulsion to compose art. Grace Noble similarly maintains the beneficence of God (and composes art in novel form), even amidst the suffering she has experienced and witnessed due to her racial ancestry.

Grace's process of awakening. Instead, nature provides a space for her transformation and communion with God. Grace becomes a symbol of the ages of suffering that African Americans have experienced. Her face exhibited "the sorrow and sufferings of her race from the time of the ancient world" and her eyes "bespoke the misery of the young mother who saw her child torn from her breast and sold into slavery" (27). This beckoning to the past emphasizes the ways in which previous racial injustices evolved and continued to impact African Americans. The narrator's descriptions of Grace in this moment of awakening position her as a strong and spiritual leader. Her lips move "incessantly," her unfastened cape blows in the wind, and her arms reach out "tenderly towards the hut beyond, where dwelt numbers of her race" (27). The narrator then explains,

...a strange thing happened; the features that a few moments before had looked pinched and drawn seemed suddenly to become illuminated with an almost holy fire, and she, all unconscious of her surroundings, of even her attitude or appearance, lost in God and nature, pleading for help and guidance and surrendering all to Him who sees the sparrow fall, looked like a bronze statue of Mercy pleading for the world. (27)

In this passage, Grace surrenders herself to a divine power. She becomes like a bronze statue; not only does this comparison suggest strength, but bronze is an alloy composed of multiple metals that could symbolize mixed racial ancestry. The narrator compares her to Mercy, a concept similar to her own name Grace, suggesting that she is not one to punish offenders, but to bring compassion and comfort to those who have suffered. After this experience in which "...her soul had wrestled with its God and her faith had passed

through the fire” (27), “there was a song on her lips and joy in her heart” (28); Grace “knew she had conquered life” (28). Her “light and joyous” attitude continued into the next day because her “despair and sorrow...had given way to hope and cheer” (29). Immersed in the natural landscape, Grace connects with a divine power and emerges not only with a jubilant demeanor, but also a deeper understanding of how she can better the lives of African American people.

Grace imagines an African utopia where black Americans could migrate and attempts to persuade people to join the proposed community by writing a book. She reveals to her friend Violet, who has become a missionary in Africa, that on that day of spiritual awakening she “saw a civilization like to the white man’s about us today, but in his place stood another of a different hue” (49). Grace explains, “the land was Africa, the people were my own, returned to possess the heritage of their ancestors” (49). A voice says to Grace, “Five Generations Hence,” suggesting that it may take time to reach this happy, peaceful state for African Americans (49). She explains her belief that “there will be a final exodus of the Negro to Africa, not a wholesale exodus like the moving of an Indian reservation, but an individual departing, an acquiring of property in that unexplored land and the building of a new nation upon the ruins of the old” (49). Grace argues that individuals and families will choose to relocate to “unexplored” Africa, a surprising description considering the European colonization on the continent. She imagines a new society that will set future generations up for success and happiness outside of the United States. Langston Hughes made similar assertions in his poetry in the 1920s; for example, in “Our Land,” the speaker suggests that African Americans should

have a land—presumably Africa—of “sun,” “fragrant water,” “trees,” and “chattering parrots” that would bring joy rather than a “cold,” “gray” “land where joy is wrong” (144). Like Hughes’ poem, Countee Cullen’s “Heritage” reflects on Africa:

What is Africa to me:
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?
One three centuries removed
From the scenes his father loved
Spicy grove and banyan tree,
What is Africa to me? (674)

In this first stanza, Cullen points to the speaker’s African roots, using positive language like “strong” and “regal” to describe the people in his ancestor’s “Eden[ic]” and desirable land. Much like the Harlem poets of the next generation, the protagonist Grace Noble in *Five Generations Hence* sees potential for a better future on the African continent.

The New Women protagonists employ their particular skills and passions to realize their utopia; for Grace, this means writing. Violet tells her, “’Tis not given us all to serve in the same capacity...No, our gifts differ...Have you ever thought to write, Grace, such a field for service, and such a vast audience?” (47). Violet recognizes Grace’s aptitude for writing, but she is unaware that this was her friend’s dream profession. Grace shifts between doubting if her plan will work and dreaming about its potential success. She moves to Holland, Texas, stays with her friends the Westleys, and starts writing her book. Because she had “lived economically,” Miss Noble “could afford

to stop teaching a year or so to devote all her time to her writing” (68). As Knight points out, “What makes Grace’s writing so interesting is that we do not learn much about the *content* of her book” (159). Readers only know that it connects to Grace’s missionary work and the potential of a future utopian community in Africa. However, the content of her book is less significant than the fact that, combined with her savings, Grace supports herself by writing, which was a difficult feat. Grace eventually views herself as a writer, an identity that many nineteenth-century women authors did not espouse so forthrightly. Grace secures a sufficient income and uses writing to persuade African Americans to migrate to their ancestors’ continent to improve their descendants’ lives.

Grace’s readers sometimes critiqued her emigrationist argument, mimicking Progressive-Era criticism of the Back to Africa movement. Some African American individuals responded by saying, “Eh, let her go and be food for the natives. America is good enough for us” (69). This response positions African individuals as barbaric, even cannibalistic, and dismisses Miss Noble’s ideas. Additionally, it rejects any ideas of kinship that African Americans shared with people on the African continent. Others more pointedly chastise Grace, calling her “a traitor to the land that had freed and educated her, a peacebreaker among her people” (69). Some critiqued the general restlessness of African Americans: “the Negro had better let well enough alone, that his growth had been rapid, his education was becoming general...that his was a bright future here if he would only grasp his opportunities” (69-70). These respondents point to the increased freedoms and opportunities for African Americans but ignore the persistent racism and hardships

that they experienced. They critique Grace's book, disagreeing with her portrayal of African Americans' situation and potential for improvement.

Viewed alternatively, Grace's book offers an instructional and hopeful vision for the future of the black community. Violet Gray, for example, praises Grace's efforts in the book, applauding her style and her focus on the hardships African Americans face. She writes to Grace, "You have handled the subject well, the argument is clear and reasonably convincing, and what pleases me very much is that you have told with the same quiet simplicity with which you told me so long ago" (90). Violet views Grace's text as well-written and accessible to readers from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, because Grace is African American, Violet finds her point of view compelling. As she explains to Grace in a letter,

There are those who write of the Negro from a theoretical point of view, even from an experimental, as pertaining to the few, but when the Negro himself, who knows the life of his people, pours forth the passions of his soul, it is as the startled cry of [*sic*] wounded animal lost in utter darkness. (90-91)

Violet points to the heightened pathos of Grace's book created by her own experience with the racism. This realistic quality enhances the work's persuasiveness; as in all reformist literature, the realism emphasizes that the issue needs reformed. Violet's "wounded animal" image suggests a lost, defensive, and reactionary position, but Violet thinks Grace's "wail" of her "stricken heart" (91) usefully conveys the "anguish of despair" (90) that black people face and that white people so often disregard. Like the

reviewers of *Iola Leroy*, Violet deems Grace's book a success because of its accessibility and emotional persuasiveness.

Grace Noble's Friendship and Navigating Her Own Identity

As Grace navigates what it means to be black in America, she also explores what it means to be a woman pursuing her dreams in both the public and private spheres. Much like Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening* who interacts with the vastly different Mademoiselle Reisz and Adèle Ratignolle, Grace Noble furthers her friendships with Violet Gray and Bessie Westley, who offer two distinct examples of womanhood. The former happily reconnected with Grace, years after their studies at Bishop, when she stopped at the Fenners' home on her prohibition lecture tour. Grace learns that "Miss Gray had given her life wholly to Christian work, that she...was only awaiting the action of the Board to give her work in a foreign field. She told Miss Noble in confidence that her highest ambition was to become a missionary to Africa" (31). Mission work, both domestic and foreign, was common in the Progressive Era. In an article published in *The North American Review* in 1896, Rev. Dr. Judson Smith, the Foreign Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, explains that "foreign missions are the effort of the church of our times to carry on and complete that spread of Christianity and Christian institutions which was enjoined by our Lord, and which has been an integral part of all Christian history" (24). Smith suggests that missionary work is a "primary and sacred duty of Christian discipleship in every age and in every land" (24). Smith roots the missionary tradition in a long history and emphasizes its importance as a Christian duty.

While many groups participated in missionary efforts, African American Christian communities around the turn of the century focused on mission work in Africa. Sandy Dwayne Martin writes, “black Christians in general and Black Baptists in particular actively engaged in an effort to evangelize Africa during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (1). The Christian sense of duty, combined with feelings of kinship with Africans, drove many to pursue missionary work on the continent. Though some, such as G. W. Gayles, president of the Baptist Missionary Convention of Mississippi, “called for women’s involvement in both domestic *and* foreign mission programs,” women more commonly organized missionary support at the local and state levels rather than participating directly themselves (Martin 132). Thus, though Violet aligns with the Christian, and particularly black Baptist, impulse at the turn of the century, her decision to move permanently to Africa was certainly atypical.⁴⁵ At the final church service before Violet Gray departs for Africa, not surprisingly at a First Baptist Church, the pastor praises her decision to “give her life to the heathen” (44). Grace reveals that she will not return to the United States but will “give the remainder of [her] life” to those she serves in Africa (46). She dreams of a day when “some native boy or girl whose soul [she has] helped to save” comes to Texas (46). While Grace admires Violet and the pastor sings her praises, high school graduates at the church criticize Violet Gray’s decision, saying that she is “throw[ing] herself away” and doing “something quite rash” (43). Their response indicates surprise and disdain that a single

⁴⁵ Though uncommon, this decision was not unprecedented by historical figures. For example, Betsey Stockton, a black woman and former slave, became the first single American woman sent overseas as a missionary when she accompanied the Green family to Hawaii in 1822.

woman would become a foreign missionary, even though missionary work overall was a large focus of the Christian Church in the Progressive Era.

Unlike the young critics, Grace admires and respects Violet, viewing her as an example of goodness and devotion, much like Iola Leroy's esteem for Lucille Delany. Grace had always viewed Violet "as a kind of superior being" who "possessed...more than ordinary character" (64). After her decision to become a missionary in Africa, Grace's admiration only grew; Grace saw her as "a being of another world" (64). Violet represents Grace's "ideal of gentle, self-sacrificing womanhood" and she views her as a "character worthy of emulation"; in fact, working toward Miss Gray's approval "spurred her on" more forcefully than any other "earthly power" (64). Grace admires Violet's spiritual and professional aspirations, as well as her uplifting personality. She is "[s]o gentle and pure," "so hopeful and uncomplaining," able to "cheer [Grace's] drooping spirits" and find real "joy in service for the Master" (32). Because of Violet's warm demeanor, Grace tells her old friend about her personal ambitions, and they debate the status and future of the African American race. Violet Gray serves as an example of a single woman who makes radical decisions about her profession and future, demonstrating her dedication to improving the lives of black people, both in the United States and on the African continent.

Bessie Westley presents a quite different model for a woman's life, as she is a wife and mother on a 40-acre Texas farm, but the novel frames both types of lives as viable, fulfilling options for black women in the Progressive Era. Bessie reminisces on her school days, explaining that she can exercise her personal strengths more in her

current roles. She tells Grace, "...it was not intended that I should become a scholar...I was ever a stupid, timid little soul, but do you know, I'm really a very fine cook and house-keeper" (58). Twenty-first century readers might want Bessie to pursue goals beyond marriage and motherhood. However, the novel consistently suggests that Bessie wants and enjoys these responsibilities. As Bessie explains to Grace, "...we are certainly very happy; I think it's Rosa Mae who brings the joy, [Mr. Westley] says it all comes through me. I don't agree; but I suppose he ought to know because he is older" (58). Though Mr. Westley is "ten years [her] senior," Bessie explains, "he is so brave and sensible and we have made each other very happy" (58). Bessie explains that that her child brings her bliss, just as her husband finds immense pleasure in his wife's company. Despite her domestic focus, Bessie argues that her husband's age, rather than his gender, establishes his trustworthiness. Bessie has a bright personality, "one of those lovable natures that delight to bring sunshine into the lives of others" (61). The Westleys' beautiful home reflects their happiness; it was a "cottage of seven rooms, surrounded by a spacious yard, where grew, in well kept beds, numerous pretty flowers" (59). Grace sees the sizable, landscaped home as a pleasant abode. In fact, "[t]he happiness of Mrs. Westley's home with her farmer husband told her of what happiness might have been hers" (61). Bessie Westley offers a different model for womanhood than Violet. Bessie's life is more focused on the home and family, but she finds it fulfilling and satisfying.

Through Violet and Bessie, Grace encounters two deeply spiritual, sacrificing women who differ in their life's work; one is a missionary in Africa while the other is a committed wife and mother. Grace, however, wants a combination of their lives. She

wants to pursue writing as a profession, but also longs for a happy home with a romantic partner. Though both Grace and Bessie are pleased with their own lives, Grace must navigate these possibilities, revising and combining them, to reach her own happiness.

Grace Noble's Romances

Along with her female friendships, professional aspirations, and efforts to improve the lives of African Americans, Grace Noble navigates romantic relationships, a necessary component for her utopia. Grace was attracted to one of her former pupils, Lemuel Graves, but she moved to Holland, Texas, to focus on writing, and he married another woman. She decides to write the newlyweds to offer congratulations, and the narrator explains that Miss Noble “felt better than she had for months; she had given him up. Now to her task” (63). Grace’s romantic attachment to Lemuel distracted her, but when her emotions finally dwindle, she refocuses on her “task” of writing the book. However, the tension between romance and work—or the desire for both—persists. After she begins publishing books, her “woman’s heart knew...that success could never fill the void caused by the [lack] of home and children. No one guessed her secret longing. They fancied her happy in her work and dreaming not of things other women loved” (71). Though Grace has achieved a major professional goal, her aspirations for other areas of her life continue. Her companions incorrectly assume that because she is a successful writer she must not want a husband or children. However, like other New Women protagonists such as Diantha or Mildred, for Grace to actualize her personal utopia, she needs a career and a family.

Eventually, Grace meets a man who supports her professional and domestic goals, and her happiness in both realms provides the full satisfaction necessary for her utopia. Through aiding a young, motherless girl named Pearlia who has meningitis, she meets a doctor, Carl Warner, with whom she instantly connects: “Their [eyes] met in one long, lingering glance, and by the...faint streak of sunlight that entered the room, it seemed that they pierced each other’s souls” (74). In this cliché depiction, Carl and Grace establish a deep, even spiritual, connection in their very first glance. Carl is very close with his mother, and he tells her when he returns home that he has found his future bride. She warns him not to be “captivated by a pretty face,” but he says that her “soul...peeps from the depth of her tender eyes” (77). Dr. Warner starts visiting the Westleys’ house where Grace was staying once or twice a month, but she does not realize for some time that he was coming specifically to see her. Eventually, Dr. Warner tells Grace, “I love you so deeply, I cannot think that you do not care for me; it seems often to me that we were made to love each other, and be companions. Grace, dear, stately Grace, will you not share my home?” (80). Because of the depth of his own feelings, Carl assumes that Grace will quickly reciprocate his profession of love, and indeed “the fire of passionate love was again racing through her blood, and exhilarated every fiber of her being” (80). However, Grace asks for a week or ten days to consider the proposal; because she has not seen Lemuel, she has some lingering attachment to him. She returns to her old town, visits Lemuel and Sadie, and learns that they will be turned out of their home because of the crippling mortgage he inherited. Grace’s book inspires Lemuel, and she buys his land to prevent their eviction. She returns to Holland, and when she finally sees Dr. Warner

again, “all the world was forgotten, all the pent-up tenderness of a lifetime was set free, and Miss Noble was nestling in her lover’s arms” (89). Carl supports Grace’s writing career, though as Christina Simmons explains, support in the black community for “spousal equity rested on a firmer foundation than that of many whites due to economic realities requiring a higher level of employment for black wives” (153). While the novel does not discuss the details of Carl and Grace’s economic situation, they seem financially stable. Carl and Grace get married in Mrs. Westley’s parlor at Christmas time, and eventually they have children together. The narrator explains, “‘Twas only love and the care of little ones needed to make Mrs. Warner’s nature truly superb” (94). Though nature had been her comfort and inspiration during her years of teaching, she now relies more on her family and career for her joy. Grace Noble Warner becomes a wife and mother, on top of a professional author and advocate for the African American people, giving her all of the elements she desired and making her a “truly superb” woman.

A Localized Utopia

Due to her professional success as an author, as well as her blissful home with Dr. Warner and her children, Grace is fully satisfied with her life. She only had to find a few people “who really understood” her ideas to go on “peacefully,” such as Mrs. Westley, Pearlina, and eventually Dr. Warner (70). But even before she meets the doctor, “a sweet calmness that well became her years was hers” because she had given up “teaching to follow the work she loved best” (70). Grace’s work is not only personally satisfying to her, but also theoretically benefits other African American individuals. As the narrator explains, “She loved to write, and her simple style began to appeal to the masses and her

books were widely read and appreciated” (70). Jones Horace’s description of Grace’s “simple style” suggests that her writing is accessible and persuasive, particularly for the working class. As uplift movements targeted this demographic group, the book’s “appeal to the masses” enables its success. Becoming a published author offers Grace personal benefits as well, presumably including economic stability. Additionally, her newfound success “had not made her proud but simpler in her tastes; more reverent to God, and [with an] increas[ed sense] of responsibility toward those she loved as herself” (70). Grace grows spiritually and interpersonally through her writing career, and her happiness continually increases. At the close of the novel, after their marriage, Grace asks Carl “if there is anything that can make [them] happier” (94). He says, “not anything...but a sweet kiss at this very moment” (94). Grace and Carl’s interaction suggests that they successfully meet each other’s romantic needs and desires, which enables their utopia.

What is notable about Grace’s utopia is its containment. She can write from her home, but still engages in the public sphere by sharing her publications with a wide audience. Though she may face discrimination from publishers or readers, she does not have to face racism or sexism in the workforce on a daily basis. Through her book, *Miss Grace Noble Warner* argues to remove African Americans from mistreatment in the United States, but at the novel’s close the discrimination still occurs across America. Grace avoids engaging in the racist public sphere by writing in her home near her husband and children. In other words, part of what creates Grace’s utopia is her lack of engagement with white persons who would harass and discriminate against her, her husband, and her children.

The African Utopia of *Five Generations Hence*

Though *Iola Leroy* rejects the benefits of relocating to Africa, Lillian Jones Horace's *Five Generations Hence* presents the possibility of a utopian community on the African continent. Jones Horace does not offer a particular location or context for the imagined utopia, in part because the protagonist Grace never leaves Texas. As Fabi articulates, "Africa is passionately but generically presented as a motherland that mourns and waits for the return of her children who were taken by slave traders" ("Of the Coming of Grace" 165). In this way, Jones Horace presents Africa as an ideal rather than a tangible location. Due to Grace's lack of knowledge about the continent, the protagonist's friend, Violet Gray, delivers the information in the novel about the missionary work in Africa. Violet presents the community as a destined locale of freedom and opportunity for African Americans, writing that a "poor old heathen woman" told her about "a prophecy common to them that the Negroes will return to Africa" (67). Though Violet uses three degrading adjectives to describe the African woman, she employs the woman's prophecy as support for her argument that African Americans should return to the continent. She writes to Grace, "I shall never be able to impress you, dear, you, who understand so well, with the spirit of freedom that permeated my very soul, when my feet were placed for the first time upon African soil" (65). Much like Grace experienced her awakening in nature, the sense of freedom overwhelms Violet when she reaches the African continent, and she anticipates that other black folks emigrating from America will feel the same. Violet argues that African Americans will flourish when they return to their native land: "As a flower transplanted in other soil will thrive best when returned to

soil to which it is indigenous, so the Negro, once here, will feel a spirit of manliness and patriotism that he has never known before” (91). Violet suggests that returning to the African continent will cause a substantial change in black individuals’ demeanors.

In contrast with Grace’s quickly-formed utopia, Violet’s African community will be a long-term project. Though Violet argues that Africa will offer immediate benefits, she also acknowledges that enduring success and happiness will require substantial work:

He who succeeds here, as elsewhere, must do so by the sweat of his own brow, the exercise of his own brain or muscle tissue, or he is doomed to greater want than in bustling, hustling America. But here, with the spirit of hope and faith permeating his breast, every field he reclaims from the jungle, every mind he helps develop, is to him as so much personal wealth stored away to comfort the lives of future generations of the race. (91)

Violet acknowledges multiple forms of labor—physical and intellectual—that could be useful and necessary in developing the utopian community. However, she argues that the energy expended toward that labor will return greater rewards on the African continent than it would in the United States because it would contribute to greater comfort and happiness for not only the individual, but also their children and their children’s children. Phrases like “reclaim[ing fields] from the jungle” gesture toward the colonization of Africa, but Jones Horace largely overlooks these politics; she focuses on the hopeful potential of the land but does not address the complicated line between reclamation and recolonization. In five generations, the novel implies, African Americans could develop their own productive and satisfying society, separated from the oppressive environment in the United States and returned to the land of their ancestors.

While Grace Noble is not in Africa, she collaborates with Violet on the utopian project by writing and publishing about their vision in the United States. Grace Noble feels deeply that African American people could benefit from emigration to Africa, but she surprisingly decides to stay in Texas. As the title suggests, Grace thinks that it will take generations for the community to reach its utopian status in Africa, perhaps influencing her decision to stay in the United States. Through its presentation of both Grace's and Violet's utopias, the novel suggests that black Americans can create utopia in the United States or in Africa. These utopias do not exist at the start of the novel, but individuals create them, requiring active and focused characters who can actualize their visions for a better world. Grace's localized utopia in Texas differs because she quickly and fully realizes it, whereas Violet's African utopia will require years of toil. Though Grace remains in the United States, she wrestles with the decision and even feels guilty that she has "remained home rich and happy" while Violet is laboring in Africa (96). However, Violet supports Grace's decision, telling her that they need her "intelligence and refinement" in the United States and that her "genius is needed [in America] to point the way" (95). Violet writes to Grace, "We need the sons and daughters that pure, educated women like yourself will rear to found a nation here. Continue to write; the seed of your first book is sown, and it will grow" (95). Though Violet focuses on how Grace's work can contribute to the utopia in Africa, she demonstrates appreciation for Grace's labor. Grace is successful, evidenced by her book persuading Lemuel Graves to "set sail from the port of Galveston, bound for Africa" (95). Though she remains in Texas, Grace

is a part of both utopias: her own, localized utopia with Carl and her children, and the one that Violet is developing in Africa.

Scholars disagree on whether the ending of *Five Generations Hence* contains a victory or defeat for the protagonist. For instance, Carol Kolmerten argues,

...we leave Grace with no personal freedom; the only freedom fiction's conventions allow her is freedom to direct her daughters to be like her single friend. The woman who has envisioned a utopia for blacks cannot participate herself because she is a wife and mother. Her private life negates the public life that she has lived and advocated as utopia. (120)

Angela Boswell similarly asserts, "Grace Noble dreams up plans for building an independent and self-determining civilization free from white oppression in Africa. But...Grace Noble cannot participate in her own utopia because her husband's job keeps them in Texas" (198). Both Kolmerten and Boswell suggest that Violet finds her utopia while Grace does not, and imply that her marriage—namely, Carl's job—restrain her. As I have discussed, Grace struggles with the decision to stay in Texas, but she finds utopia in her happy home, isolated from outside culture. The novel consistently suggests that multiple lifestyles—such as Bessie's and Violet's—can be fulfilling and appropriate for women. The text does not shift from this argument at the close; though Grace says that she will teach her children to be like Violet, her statement does not negate her own happiness or the creation of her own utopia. Instead, it reiterates that multiple trajectories for women's lives are acceptable. Grace sees Violet's bravery and vision—characteristics that have inspired Grace's own work—as useful traits for her daughters to acquire.

While I contend that Grace cultivates her own utopia, I also acknowledge that readers could interpret the ending as a resignation to the domestic sphere, especially given her focus on her utopian vision in Africa that could seem abandoned at the close. M. Giulia Fabi addresses the complicated ending when she explains that, on the one hand, “in granting Grace fulfillment in love and in family Horace was affirming the full humanity of her heroine against stereotypes of the intellectually gifted woman as a sexless spinster” (“Of the Coming of Grace” 179). I agree with Fabi that Jones Horace establishes marriage and intellectual or professional endeavors not as mutually exclusive pursuits, but rather compatible goals for black women in the Progressive Era. On the other hand, Fabi argues that despite the sentimental ending, Jones Horace “succeeds in devising an ending that accommodates the independent individuality of her heroines and salvages the female community of her woman-centered utopia” (“Of the Coming of Grace” 179). Jones Horace affirms Violet *and* Grace by showing both individuals controlling the direction of their lives and ending in a happy place, not only because of their unique positions as a missionary and a writer, but also because of their mutually affirming friendship. Grace *does* cultivate her own utopia—albeit distinct from Violet’s—in her Texas home through her roles of writer, mother, and wife.

Of One Blood

In contrast with the localized utopias in *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence*, Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood; Or, The Hidden Self* (1903) attempts to rewrite the history of the African race and raises the possibility of a utopian society—a lost Eden—in

Africa for black people.⁴⁶ *Colored American Magazine* serialized the novel from November 1902 to November 1903, during which Pauline Hopkins was the editor. The civilization in *Of One Blood* is not one that individuals would establish, but one that they could rejoin after centuries of separation. The protagonist Reuel Briggs discovers the Ethiopian people of Meroe who have lived in seclusion in the city of Telassar for many years. The society's isolation and secrecy protect it from the colonization and enslavement that many Africans faced. The novel describes Telassar as an ancient city that has maintained the riches of Meroe from its days as the center of civilization. While the novel does not present all of Africa as prosperous, it frames the hidden city as an incredibly desirable civilization for black Americans, like Reuel, to call home. Reuel proudly calls Telassar home because the city's magnificence reverses the racial hierarchy, positioning black people as the possessors of the richest history and fantastic gold and jewels. Unlike the isolated, reformist utopias of *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence*, *Of One Blood* describes an imagined utopia—apart from the United States and rooted in Africa—where black people might prosper. However, because Reuel inherits rather than creates the spectacular civilizations, his narrative does not present a model for readers to cultivate their own better world in their present time and place.

Telassar is a utopia for Reuel because it removes him and his grandmother from oppression in the United States, but the ideal community is not available to all African

⁴⁶ Pauline Hopkins (1859-1930), an important African-American woman in the Progressive Era, produced novels, plays, and articles, many of which centered on themes of social issues, especially regarding race. Hanna Wallinger writes that her “fiction, journalism, historiography, and work as editor of the *Colored American Magazine* show her to be passionately committed to righting the wrongs done to her race, investigating the past, and envisioning a better future” (2-3).

Americans. Like the familial restoration in *Iola Leroy*, Reuel reunites with his grandmother and returns to the Hidden City. His grandmother, referred to as old Aunt Hannah, moves from a one-roomed “typical Southern Negro cabin” to a city of immense wealth and security (174). Reuel “spends his days in teaching his people all that he has learned in years of contact with modern culture” (193). Thus, in his position as instructor Reuel moves from a leader appointed through blood and prophecy to a guide for “his faithful subjects,” teaching them more about the world beyond their city (193). Additionally, he continues his relationship with Candace and “his days glide peacefully by in good works” (193). Though not a New Woman protagonist, Reuel similarly finds romance and productive labor for the community in his utopian ending. However, Reuel is less instrumental in the development of the utopia. Instead, he stumbles upon this long-established city awaiting his arrival. The utopian Telassar offers a place of refuge for Reuel and his grandmother from discrimination in the United States where they can live exceedingly comfortably amongst the ancient riches of Meroe, but the utopia does not extend these luxuries to other African Americans.

Pauline Hopkin’s *Of One Blood* highlights the tragic circumstances of many African Americans by contrasting their plight with the magnificent lives of black individuals in Meroe. Despite the fact that Hopkins bases the city in historical fact, it does not exist in Africa in 1902, and because its greatness depends on its maintenance of its people and riches through centuries, no one can create the world that Hopkins describes. While emphasizing a grand history of black civilization could alter perceptions of African Americans, the city of Meroe offers little tangible benefit to African

Americans beyond Reuel and his mother within the novel, let alone for readers of Hopkin's work. Unlike the reformist utopias I describe in this project, *Of One Blood* contains no New Woman heroines modeling how to create a better world in their local community. However, Iola and Grace model progressive womanhood and disseminate their ideas through literary production.

Emphasizing Literacy

Both *Five Generations Hence* and *Iola Leroy* emphasize the importance of literary interactions, which were often seen as a means toward personal and social progress for the black community in the Progressive Era. The period saw a substantial increase in literacy within the black population from 30 to 70 percent between 1880 and 1910 (McHenry 5). However, literacy rates differed significantly by region. According to Frances Smith Foster, even as early as 1850, “the census reported that 86 percent of Black Bostonians were literate. By 1860 the number had risen to 92 percent” (Introduction xxi). Thus, while white leaders in government and society forbade some African Americans from learning to read or write, not all black people in nineteenth-century America shared this experience. The ability to read served many practical functions, including greater access to information both present and historical. In *Forgotten Readers*, Elizabeth McHenry asserts that “interaction[s] with print—producing it, reading it, and allowing it to direct their social and political conversation—was a potential vehicle for constructing identity and regulating social change that carried with it the power to elevate and enlighten the race” (188). Black communities encouraged individuals to produce, read, analyze, and debate texts to change their self-perception and

their public image. For instance, at the First Congress of Colored Women in 1895, Victoria Earle Matthews argued that literature would allow “black Americans to represent themselves in more accurate and nuanced ways” and “would also inspire pride in black people by allowing them to see themselves in a positive light” (McHenry 192). Frances Smith Foster explains that this “commitment to African American literacy and literature was one not simply of individuals but of institutions” (Introduction xxv). Black leaders and organizations engaged in typical Progressive Era activities such as establishing schools, newspapers, publishing houses, and magazines, as well as reading clubs in places such as YMCAs and women’s clubs across the country, which offered African Americans opportunities to participate in literary practices. While they worked to gain knowledge about canonical texts, they also explored writings by African American writers that other communities typically dismissed.

In addition to reading and discussing literary texts, the black elite encouraged African Americans to write articles and books that they could distribute for reading and discussion. Both *Five Generations Hence* and *Iola Leroy* capture this emphasis on textual production and distribution because they are not only novels themselves that white and black individuals could consume, but they also depict female protagonists who engage in literary practices, such as writing club papers and books. A black woman wrote each text, and both depict black female writers, mimicking the task that the authors themselves undertook to produce their novels. While wage-earning work was common for black

women in the Progressive Era⁴⁷ and literary clubs encouraged many women to write and read texts, it was rare for a black woman to become a self-supporting professional writer. Additionally, black women often did not view their employment status as a crucial part of their identity. Instead, they “tended to view themselves as self-sacrificing mothers, wives, aunts and sisters or as race uplifters rather than as workers” (Harley 48). By emphasizing their identities in relation to family and community, black women celebrate their roles that were often difficult to maintain in enslavement. Many black women had long been laborers; after emancipation they could more fully realize their identities within the domestic space. Black women often prioritized other aspects of their identity over their wage-earning labor, and many saw their community service as an important feature of their personhood. Thus, Grace Noble is particularly notable in her pursuit of writing as a profession and as a prominent aspect of her identity. While education and writing were two of the most esteemed tasks for African Americans, Grace Noble’s transition from being a teacher to an author signifies a move from the most common professional occupation for black women to a rarer and even revolutionary task. Pursuing a profession like writing moved Grace into a space that white, middle and upper-class writers in the Progressive Era predominantly occupied. By depicting their characters writing, and by

⁴⁷ In the Progressive Era, black women were much more commonly employed than white women; across all jobs, 1/5 of white women and 2/5 of black women worked for pay in 1900 (Woloch 223). This disparity was typically not due to more progressive ideals held in the black community, but out of financial necessity. As Sharon Harley explains, “Black men were generally more ‘supportive’ of their wives’ employment than were men in other ethnic and racial groups, as fewer black men could make ends without their wives’ financial assistance” (46).

offering novels themselves, Harper and Jones Horace reinforce the importance of African American literary production as a means of social progress in the Progressive Era.

Harper and Jones Horace chose to publish their arguments in novel form, a popular and lucrative genre at the time. Though their ideas about separating the black community from violent and oppressive forces was not unique for the era, the style of presentation is distinct. *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence* are the only two known reformist utopias published by black women between 1890 and 1920. By narratively presenting their arguments about possibilities for black communities and families, Jones Horace and Harper imagine, alongside their readers, how isolated communities could function. Not only could the novels offer readers some escape from harsh realities, but they also allow black women readers to visualize how they could change their lives and help other African Americans. Unlike essays or speeches addressing racial issues, Jones Horace and Harper translate their theoretical ideas into narrative form, making their arguments more tangible and potentially persuasive. Jones Horace's and Harper's novels contribute to the literary culture of the era, producing and distributing culturally relevant arguments about possibilities for African Americans.

Conclusion

Like the other reformist utopias discussed in this project, the imagined societies within the United States depict a revised version of a community within which the characters are happy and successful. Jones Horace and Harper both write their novels during the Progressive Era, a time of widespread discrimination, even lynchings and violent riots, against African Americans. Thus, the quality of isolation in their utopias is

not surprising. Though slavery had ended, Elizabeth Dowling Taylor argues against the narrative of continuous development for black people after the Civil War. She explains, “The historical reality reveals a temporary rise in status followed by a disastrous suppression, forced by white supremacists and reinforced by government” (411). Eventually, many African Americans—including the black elite—became disillusioned and “lost faith in assimilation, nurtur[ing] their exclusiveness among themselves” (Taylor 408-409). Taylor communicates the discrimination, exclusion, and abuse that African Americans faced at every level of educational and social achievement. Frustrated by this lack of acceptance despite their advancement, they insulate their utopias from white culture in the United States. Hazel V. Carby explains that the plot of *Iola Leroy* moves “toward a complete separation of the black community from the white world and thus implicitly accepted the failure of Reconstruction even in the glow of its promise” (93). Though the nation’s attempts at integration and equalization had failed, the novel emphasizes the strength and potential of the black community by arguing that it should “look towards itself for its future” (Carby 93). The isolated utopias of *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence* are empowering for black communities because they highlight their shared bond and dedication to supporting each other. Rather than imagining worlds where assimilation and integration are complete, they depict the potential of happiness—even perfection—within their own families and black communities. Though they may not be able to persuade white people during the Progressive Era of their worth, they hold the power to make their own communities into the types of places that Jones Horace and Harper describe.

Taken together, these novels present two visions of utopias for African Americans in isolated communities in the United States. These communities emphasize separation from dominant white culture that, in the Progressive Era, was extremely hostile and violent toward black people. Thus, these authors suggest that utopia is immediately possible when removed from these destructive forces. Though the utopias differ in this regard from the other texts discussed in this project, *Iola* and *Grace*, like all the New Woman protagonists, find fulfilling work, improve their communities, and pursue romantic love. These two protagonists define their community as African Americans, and they work toward envisioning and improving their lives, especially through education and literacy. In *Iola Leroy*, Miss Delany says, “I wanted to be classed among those of whom it is said, ‘She has done what she could’” (156). Miss Delany references Mark 14:8, in which Jesus defends a woman who pours expensive perfume on him because she did what she was able. Like Miss Delany, *Iola* and *Grace* do what they can to improve not only their own lives, but also the lives of black individuals who suffered severe discrimination during Reconstruction and the Progressive Era. Through their labor, they build utopias for themselves, their families, and the African American community. Like the other reformist utopias discussed thus far, though, they do not consider women’s domestic work and responsibilities for childcare. Surprisingly, utopias for black women were more conceivable than utopias free of women’s domestic responsibilities. To offer revisions to these societal customs, the women authors I discuss in the following chapter imagine worlds that enable women to work, marry, and serve their community without the burdens of domestic labor.

CHAPTER V

“THERE IS ONLY ONE DUTY BEFORE US”: REVISING SYSTEMS OF DOMESTICITY AND CHILDCARE

As white and black women pursued wage-earning work and satisfying marriages while improving their communities, they had to negotiate their domestic roles given their newfound responsibilities in the public sphere. The *Michigan Farmer* published a paper that Bertha M. Wheeler presented at a 1908 Antrim County Grange meeting⁴⁸ that dramatizes the risk of women’s shift into the public sphere. Wheeler suggests that women should not go to the polls, but should rather focus all their efforts in the home:

...the home must come first, for God instituted that. Sisters, when the home duties are attended to there isn’t room for anything else, and you never find a happy home without a woman in it. That’s her place, for it’s the little corner in the great world that God intended she should fill. And it’s there she can do more to abolish the evils of the world than in any other place. (Wheeler, “Woman’s Duty vs. Woman’s Rights,” *Michigan Farmer*, vol. 53, no. 15, 11 Apr. 1908, 403)⁴⁹

Wheeler argues that the home must be women’s top priority, even calling it God’s place for women, representing a continuation of nineteenth-century separate spheres discourse.

⁴⁸ Founded in 1867, the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry is a national organization invested in agricultural and rural communities. Much of their programming centers on developing young female and male leaders in the local community, though they are also invested in broader issues. As their national website explains, “The Grange has been instrumental in bringing about avenues for rural access from rural mail delivery to electricity; supporting social reform including women’s suffrage; and assisting groups such as the deaf and hard-of hearing through financial contributions and awareness campaigns” (*National Grange*).

⁴⁹ Hereafter the citations for Wheeler’s two-part article will be shortened to Name, Date, Page for conciseness. For example, the shortened version of this citation would read: (Wheeler, 11 Apr. 1908, 403).

Though she calls it a “little corner,” she emphasizes the potential impact of domestic devotion when she says that in the home women can “abolish the evils of the world.”

Wheeler draws a comparison between two example homes: one with an attentive mother who creates a peaceful, comfortable environment, and another with a mother who leaves her home to join women’s clubs. Wheeler uses fear tactics to scare women away from public labor. The second imagined mother’s son becomes “a cigarette fiend...loafing on a street corner near the backdoor of a saloon somewhere down there in the crowd” (Wheeler, 18 Apr. 1908, 435). The daughter—though left in the care of a “faithful nurse”—“meets a man who entices her away with his wooing...tho but a child in years, she becomes the wife of a villain. When a bride of less than a year she finds herself deserted, homeless and penniless, the mother of a tiny babe, alone in the city’s slums” (Wheeler, 18 Apr. 1908, 435). Wheeler suggests that even though this mother aids the temperance movement—perceived by many (especially conservative, religious women) to be a social improvement—she neglects her “duty” to the “three who should have been the dearest to her on earth” (Wheeler, 18 Apr. 1908, 435). Rhetors like Wheeler employed these fear tactics to keep women in the private sphere. Wheeler argues that women should focus on the home and raise their children—especially their sons—to advocate for the social reforms that they desire.

In the Progressive Era, many individuals maintained that women were best suited or divinely charged to remain in the domestic sphere, aligning with Coventry Patmore’s

estimation of “The Angel in the House”⁵⁰ and drawing from the concept of True Womanhood. In *Disorderly Conduct*, Caroll Smith-Rosenberg explains that the latter “prescribed a female role bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid with piety and purity, and crowned with subservience” (13). This docile, pure woman is firmly located in the home, and conservative families maintained this perspective on women’s duty through the Progressive Era. However, some women began to move into public spaces, not in spite of their motherhood but using it as a justification for their involvement in public matters. Barbara Antoniazzi explains that the New Woman “brought the suggestions of the early female reformers into the twentieth century by shifting the focus further away from the event of biological motherhood, in favor of an enlightened maternal function extended to society at large” (86). Women sought to “mother the nation” by protecting the vulnerable and bettering the moral fortitude of public institutions (Antoniazzi 102). Their engagement “in civic and intellectual initiatives” was often “predicated on the trope of maternity” (Antoniazzi 102). Kleinberg contextualizes this shift as a third phase in the development of motherhood:

Female roles in the family had developed from republican motherhood to true womanhood at mid-century, and now entered the social motherhood phase, in which women gave birth to fewer children, looked after them more intensively, and expanded their maternal horizons to embrace a wide range of social and political issues. (Kleinberg 150)

⁵⁰ Though written by an English poet, this poem coined the term in its title and was instrumental in understandings of women’s role in life and marriage on both sides of the Atlantic. For instance, in his discussion of women’s responsibility to please their husbands, Patmore writes, “She loves with love that cannot tire; / And when, ah woe, she loves alone, / Through passionate duty love springs higher, / As grass grows taller round a stone.”

This concept of social motherhood allowed women's increased participation in public issues, aided by the decreased number of children in an average family.⁵¹ Many argued that their unique mothering skills would be useful—even necessary—in the public sphere, working on issues like labor laws, urban reform, and temperance.

Many utopian women writers at the turn of the century celebrated women's movement into public spaces. Their female protagonists successfully undertake profitable and satisfying work while also maintaining or developing a romantic relationship. But their movement into the workforce raises questions about the home: What is a woman's responsibilities? Who will do the domestic labor? Who will take care of the children? As historian Carl N. Degler explains, "To all feminists, as to [Charlotte Perkins] Gilman, the most stubborn obstacle to the equal participation of women in the affairs of the world was the ineluctable fact that women—or someone, at least—had to take care of the home" (20). Utopian texts often address these issues by explaining new methods of domestic labor and childcare that are more communal and thus lessen women's home-related workload. For instance, Lena Jane Fry's self-published *Other Worlds* (1905) depicts an anti-trust society established by the Vivian family that builds and shares wealth amongst the community. Individuals who express interest in childcare receive extensive training for the position, transferring the responsibility from families to professionals. Mira Vivian Moberly's story emphasizes the need for a non-familial network of childrearing support. This young mother and her three children nearly die when her husband no longer

⁵¹ The average native-born white woman had five children in 1860, four in 1890, and three or less by 1920 (Kleinberg 140). Similarly, the average African American woman had seven children in 1860, 4.6 in 1890, and 2.9 by 1920 (Kleinberg 1920).

supports them, but Mira saves them by returning to the society. Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island* (1914) presents a disrupted utopia, where five flying winged women succumb to traditionally domestic lives after five American men capture them. Under the leadership of Julia, they reclaim their children's right to fly and modify the structure of their microcosm of American culture. Both Mira and Julia are heroic because they actively better their own lives as well as the lives of their children. While Fry's work emphasizes the benefits of child-rearing by professionals within a supportive community, Gillmore Irwin's novel stresses that motherhood requires advocacy. Taken together, *Other Worlds* and *Angel Island* suggest that mothers can be heroic New Women who actively participate in the community and workforce, especially within societal systems that transfer responsibilities of domestic work and childcare to professional and passionate individuals.

I have selected *Other Worlds* and *Angel Island* for this chapter because they differ from most reformist utopias by emphasizing the post-marriage bond and household tasks including childcare. The six novels that I discuss in the preceding three chapters do not thoroughly investigate the women's roles as mothers and housekeepers, often ending before this life stage. Though I argue that Julia and Mira are heroic New Women, these novels focus less on one individual and more on a broader community, as is apparent from the difference in the novels' titles. Rather than naming a woman, the titles of these novels—*Other Worlds* and *Angel Island*—emphasize place. Additionally, the titles underscore otherness and reflect that the novels depict societies located on another planet or a remote island. Revising systems of childcare was a radical and challenging change,

causing the authors to move their fictional worlds outside of the United States. However, the societies approximate American culture closely enough that I still classify them in the reformist utopia category. These texts wrestle with early twentieth-century conventions, especially related to women's responsibilities in the home including childcare, and create new structures that give women greater autonomy.

Given the obscure nature of these authors, I first offer some biographical background to contextualize their novels. The author of *Other Worlds*, Lena Jane Fry, was born on March 6, 1850, in Ontario, Canada,⁵² and was of English descent.⁵³ Some reports indicate that her mother, Jane Machel, and father, Gabriel Hawk, were born in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, respectively,⁵⁴ while others suggest that they were both born in Canada.⁵⁵ She married an Irish flour and feed merchant named Stephen Fry, and together they were members of the Church of England. Lena and Stephen had four children, and at some point the marriage ended, either due to his death⁵⁶ or from divorce.⁵⁷ In 1888, she immigrated to the United States and by 1900 lived in Chicago, Illinois, as the head of her household with five other members.⁵⁸ In the 1910 census, she

⁵² On the *1881 Canada Census*, her birth year is listed as 1845, but because all other records list 1850, I have deferred to this birthdate.

⁵³ Census data citations have been moved to footnotes to aid readability. "Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947."

⁵⁴ "Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947."

⁵⁵ *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*.

⁵⁶ "Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947."

⁵⁷ *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*.

⁵⁸ *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*.

identifies herself as an author, though her novel *Other Worlds* is her only extant novel, aside from the short work *Planet Venus* included in the same book.⁵⁹ She may have moved to Miami, Florida, for a period,⁶⁰ but she reportedly died in Cook County, Illinois, on October 26, 1938, and is buried in Graceland Cemetery.⁶¹

Inez Leonore Haynes Gillmore Irwin was a much more prolific author and recognizable figure than Fry in the Progressive Era. She was born on March 2, 1873, in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Her parents, Gideon and Emma Haynes, moved to Brazil to join the coffee trade, but they soon returned to Boston to run hotels (Showalter 368). Her family led interesting lives; as Elaine Showalter points out, “Her father had been an actor, politician, author, and celebrated prison reformer; her mother had worked before her marriage in the Lowell Mills” and her descendants traced back to the Mayflower (368). Collectively between her father’s first and second marriages, Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin had seven sisters and four brothers, and she was very aware of the different opportunities afforded her male siblings. She explains in her autobiographical essay, “The Making of a Militant,” that she “could not have been more than fourteen when [she] realized that the monotony and the soullessness of the lives of the women [she] knew absolutely appalled [her]” (39). In 1887, Inez graduated as valedictorian from the Bowdoin Grammar School in Boston and continued her education at Girls’ High School and Boston Normal School

⁵⁹ *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1930.*

⁶⁰ *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1950.*

⁶¹ “Illinois Deaths and Stillbirths, 1916-1947.”

(Showalter 368). Inez explains that her family was “genteelly poor” but that she “received the education typical of the upper middle-class in Massachusetts” (Irwin, “The Making of a Militant,” 35).

Once an adult, Inez Haynes married newspaper reporter Rufus Hamilton Gillmore and studied at Radcliffe College from 1897-1900. Showalter explains Gillmore Irwin’s interest in suffrage cultivated during her time at Radcliffe: “At a time when few undergraduates were suffragists, her closest friend was Maud Wood Park, later a leader of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and the League of Women Voters” (369). Showalter emphasizes Gillmore Irwin’s unique political investment at an early age. With Maud Wood Park, she cofounded the Massachusetts College Equal Suffrage Association, which later expanded into the National College Equal Suffrage League (Masel-Walters and Loeb 370). The primary goal of Park and Irwin’s organization was to get younger women invested in the suffrage movement and ultimately involved in NAWSA. Marjorie Spruill explains that white suffragists in NAWSA “largely turned their backs on African American women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and, in the South, excluded them totally from white suffrage organizations” (13). In fact, NAWSA attempted to recruit support in the South by arguing that women’s vote could maintain white supremacy, despite the enfranchisement of black men (Wheeler 13). *Everybody’s*⁶² first published Gillmore

⁶² In 1899, the New York branch of Wanamaker’s department store—under A. T. Stewart’s ownership—launched *Everybody’s Magazine* (Mott, V: 71). In 1903, it was purchased by a firm headed by Erman Jesse Ridgeway (Mott, V: 73). One of its most famous articles was the muckraking “Frenzied Finance,” which “dealt with many financial operations, gave details of many ‘deals,’ and brought the reader behind the scenes to meet famous and infamous financial and industrial leaders” (Mott, V: 75).

Irwin's fiction in 1904, after which she became a frequent publisher of short stories and novels. Much of her fiction focused on female heroines and dealt with issues including "conventional moralities women have been forced into, as well as the unconventional, even 'immoral,' ones women have chosen for themselves" (Masel-Walters and Loeb 371). Inez was also the biographer and a member of the National Woman's Party's (Masel-Walters and Loeb 371) and a participant in the Heterodoxy club—a "lively feminist society organized in 1912" (Showalter 369). The "luncheon club for 'unorthodox women'" met biweekly, drawing women from diverse political views—including Charlotte Perkins Gilman⁶³—to Greenwich Village for speeches and conversations. Judith Schwarz explains, "All of Heterodoxy's members were ardently pro-women supporters who knew the vital necessity of strong female friendships as well as the importance of sharing information with other women outside the narrow confines of friendship circles" (*Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy* 2). Of the one hundred twenty known members, most of the women "were Anglo-Americans; one member was African American, and several members were Jewish or Irish" (Schwarz, "Heterodoxy" 254). This racial make-up suggests that the organization was not adamantly segregated, but still

⁶³ Correspondence in the Schlesinger Library Online Collection for Charlotte Perkins Gilman includes letters between the two women. For instance, a 1921 letter from Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin to Gilman tells her about Scituate—where Mr. and Mrs. Irwin reside—and pleads with her to come visit. She writes, "...I'll expect you on the Fifteenth or the Sixteenth to stay for two weeks and don't you dare say NO to me. Will Irwin and I are looking forward to it with joy. You'll have the time of your young life." She ends the postscript by saying, "Come or I'LL MURDER you" (Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 1860-1935). Gilman responds with a verse-letter that states, "And will I come? O Dame, what friend of thine / Could miss a chance at visit so divine... Your guest's delight in in what your letting her win, / A prize; A visit with dear Inez Irwin" (Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, 1860-1935). Their playful exchange indicates a warm friendship that lasted some time, as they were still sending correspondence in 1935.

overwhelmingly white. Gillmore Irwin's participation in Heterodoxy demonstrates her commitment to female relationships for both social and political purposes. Many of the organizations Gillmore Irwin associated with, from Radcliffe to NAWSA to Heterodoxy, were nearly exclusively white. Though her views on race are not clear from her other writings, her associations with these organizations suggest that she was very invested in suffrage, specifically for white women.

In 1913, Inez divorced her first husband in California and in 1916 married a California journalist named William Henry Irwin (Showalter 396). Showalter explains that this marriage "was profoundly satisfying" because "the couple shared a deep affection and many professional interests" (369). Gillmore Irwin did not have children with either of her spouses. With William, she traveled to Europe during World War I and reported on the war for "various American magazines" (Showalter 397). In following decades, she published books on women's history, including *The Story of the Woman's Party* (1921), in which she outlines the organization's history, and *Angels and Amazons* (1933), which describes the history of American women's organizations (Masel-Walters and Loeb 371). Amongst her other fictional publications, she wrote fifteen books about a schoolgirl named Maida whose mother died and whose father is very wealthy. Later in her life, Inez "served as the president of the Authors Guild (1925-28) and of the Author's League of America (1931-33), and as vice president of the New York chapter of P.E.N. (1941-44)" (Showalter 369). After her husband's death, Inez moved to Massachusetts where she died in 1970 from arteriosclerosis (Showalter 369). A death notice published in *The New York Times* identifies her as an "author and suffragette" and outlines her

participations in women's movements, including her role as "an active campaigner for women's right to vote" ("Inez Haynes Irwin, Author, Feminist, 97" 44). Given the article's inclusion in such a prominent publication, her life still merited attention even in 1970. Clearly a New Woman herself, much of Gillmore Irwin's fiction and public service related to the politics and personal lives of women.

Fry's and Gillmore Irwin's biographies and writing styles differ substantially. Many of the details of Lena Jane Fry's life are unclear or unavailable, though she was clearly outside of the dominant literary and political circles of the Progressive Era. In contrast, Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin was well-connected, able to publish in major periodicals like *American Magazine*, and engaged in a range of well-known organizations. The women's distinct social statuses likely impacted their success as authors. The lack of reviews or subsequent editions of Lena Jane Fry's *Other Worlds* suggests that it did not circulate widely. She offers her readers ideas about the way an alternative, socialist society could operate in Progressive Era America. Though she addresses other issues, her anti-trust sentiments spur her creation of the novel and its imagined society. Because of her explicit political intentions and message, *Other Worlds* presents as propaganda in novelistic form. *Angel Island* also engages in political topics, especially women's position and imperialism, but the allegorical novel is comparatively well-written and less propagandistic. Inez Haynes Gillmore Irwin is not widely read today, though she was much more well-known in the Progressive Era than Fry and was significantly more prolific, writing in a variety of genres including novels, children's books, and historical records. Despite the women's distinct social positions and

approaches to their writing, both grapple with women's role in relation to the domestic sphere and childcare.

In this chapter, I first describe the connections of *Other Worlds* to Progressive Era America through its anti-trust arguments. The novel contrasts the bleak depictions of Mira Vivian Moberly's life outside of communal support with the happy portrayals of families in the colony. I argue that the society revises systems of childcare and domesticity that improve the lives of all family members. I then analyze Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island's* utopic qualities, the impact of imperialist ideologies on the exoticism of the winged women, and the myriad ways they are distinct from American women. Despite these differences, the men forcibly persuade them to conform to traditional American gender roles. The novel moves from fantasy to domesticity, reinforced through fantastic images and domestic advertisements in the original serialization. The women eventually decide to reclaim power by learning to walk so they can advocate for their children, eventually producing both boys and girls with the superhuman ability to fly.

Other Worlds

Lena Jane Fry's novel *Other Worlds* depicts a "Wealth Producing and Distributing Society" established by the Vivian family. Mira Vivian Moberly's miserable life in poverty married to Jack Moberly contrasts sharply with her happy, comfortable life when she returns to the colony, suggesting its success. Mira acts as a heroic New Woman in an unconventional but still progressive fashion when she bravely leaves her marital home to secure safety and happiness for herself and her children. The society's revised systems of childcare and domesticity better the lives of the Vivian family and all who

become members of their society. Ultimately, Fry argues that professionals should care for children and that families should have options for domestic arrangements that lessen women's workload. Fry unapologetically attempts to persuade readers that they should join her alternative society; she emphasizes propaganda at the expense of literary merit.

The Bully Trusts: An Anchor to America in the Progressive Era

By my definitions, the society in *Other Worlds* could be a revolutionary utopia because it exists on another planet: Herschel. However, aside from this name change, the Vivian family seemingly presides in the United States near a major city such as Chicago. Lena Jane Fry opens her book with her concern that many in the Progressive Era shared about the growth of trusts, corporations attempting to create a monopoly in the market. She roots her story in her contemporary location and moment when she explains,

All thinking people know that we are in the midst of the most awful crisis that this world has ever known; that the Trusts have us hemmed in on all sides, that we seem to be helpless. I say 'seem to be,' for we are not helpless, only stunned by the immense power which money has enabled the Trusts to use against us in taxing our necessities. (6)

Lena Jane Fry writes to "all thinking people," suggesting that her audience may be those who analyze and consider the structures of society, especially the problematic trusts. Rather than resigning to the trusts' mistreatment of American citizens, Fry argues that common people have the power and ability to change their economic circumstances.

Fry's focus on monopolistic corporations was certainly a timely concern as she was writing and self-publishing the text in 1905, fifteen years after the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act. The law states: "Every contract, combination in the form of trust or

otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States, or with foreign nations, is declared to be illegal” (15 USCA). However, the issue persisted after the declaration of this act, with more than 100 trusts formed in 1899 after the depression, doubling their number which grew again to 300 by 1903 (Piott 142). Many progressives pointed out the monopolistic corporations’ disregard for the common people. For example, cartoonist Frederick Burr Opper published a book entitled *An Alphabet of Joyous Trusts: How They Rob the Common People. Is it not time to Stop It Now?* (1904), in which he depicts examples of the trusts as bullies to the commoners for each letter of the alphabet. For the letter A he depicts a giant bully of the Asphalt Trust holding a man labeled “the common people” upside down, shaking out the much smaller man’s change into his top hat. The caption reads: “This is the way He shakes down the People and makes the thing pay” (Opper). Similarly, muckraker Ida Tarbell serialized a nineteen-part investigative report on John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company, in which she calls the company a “monopolistic trust,” a “leech on our pockets” and “a barrier to our free efforts” (Tarbell 672).

Lena Jane Fry agrees with progressives like Tarbell and Opper and exaggerates the extent of the trust problem when she calls it “the most awful crisis that this world has ever known” (6). She explains that she wrote this book to “give some practical ideas that will help win the battle that is going against us as a people” (6). Fry posits the common people against the trusts in a “battle” that she intends to win. She even questions the need for money: “It was money that gave the Trusts their power over us, and it was money that has been the root of evil in all the ages...It rules our lives, and is it necessary after all? Is

the subject upon which I have written” (6). Through depicting a society with different methods for exchange and wealth-building, Fry offers an alternative to the capitalistic society that allowed corporations to gain so much wealth and power. Though she assigns a different name to the Wealth Building and Distributing Society’s planet, the problems, the people, and the landscape all seem identical to the United States in 1905. Thus, I still consider Fry’s fictional world a reformist utopia because she depicts small clusters of communities outside of capitalistic America that will help everyday people.

The Vivian Family—Developing New Methods for Wealth Distribution

Fry delivers her ideas about the trusts and alternative options primarily through the Vivians, a well-to-do family with a good reputation: “They were known all over the country for their hospitality, wealth and their beautiful daughters. For generations the name Vivian had been associated with brave deeds, honest lives, and intellect. The girls were even known as ‘those very clever Vivian girls’” (8). Fry chooses not a disadvantaged family, but rather a historically wealthy and intelligent one, suggesting that alternative methods can benefit even those who are comfortable in the status quo. Interestingly, the Vivian women in particular stand out as “beautiful” and “clever.” The matriarch Mrs. Vivian, “her eldest son Geron and his family,” and her youngest daughter Mira all reside on the Vivian estate. True to the urbanization of the Progressive Era, the “rest of the family had gone to the city to live, after their father died” (10). Due to a decrease in their wealth, members of the Vivian family obtained alternative means of income: “Tom was a lawyer; Libra had married a banker, and Scoris and Helen had employment” (10). Fry’s fictional family has a history of good social standing along with

a good work ethic. This combination gives them the clout and the determination to fight against current systems and establish a society that would benefit all members.

Tom Vivian and his wife Nellie seek to help others by creating a society that frees them from capitalistic systems that allow trusts to accumulate so much money while the common person suffers. Tom explains to his brother Geron, “The object of the society is to secure homes for its members, then food at first cost, while it aims to give them employment as nearly as possible according to their talents and the society’s needs” (18).

Tom plans to meet the members’ immediate needs, then find them work that contributes to the community and offers personal satisfaction. He tells his mother that she would not “imagine how many poor souls were glad to get the work to do, especially when they knew they were not expected to work more than six hours each day

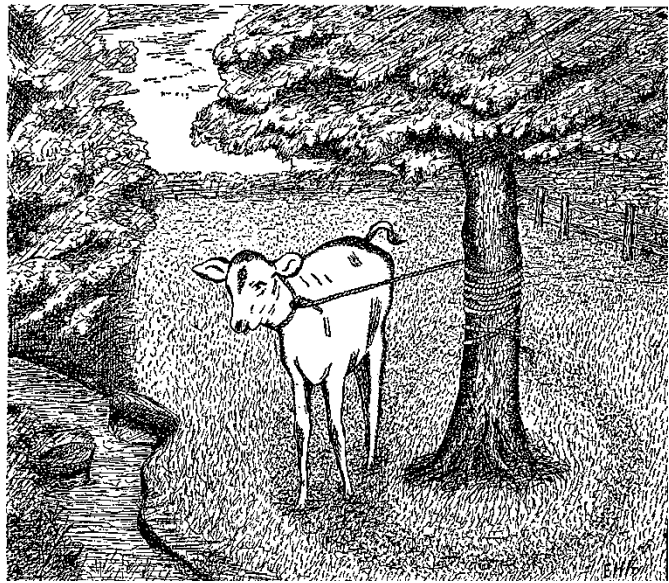


Figure 12. *Other Worlds* by Lena Jane Fry, pp. 15.

and that they were provided with shelter and food besides being able to save for the future” (21). Tom does not create the society for his own financial gain; rather, he identified a problem in his world—the trusts—and developed a society that will secure the financial wellbeing of all who become members. He explains to his mother that he and Nellie are fighting against the trusts who “absorb [their] income” and that they

“intend to work together to free [them]selves and all who join [them] from their tyranny” (10). Tom frames the trusts as oppressive and the society as positive and liberating. In case her readers do not understand her criticism of the trusts, or to emphasize the point further, Fry offers a metaphor for the trusts’ cruelty. Nellie and Tom stumble upon a calf that has twisted itself around a tree with a rope (see fig. 12) and Nellie comments, “Such a look of resignation...It reminds me of the people in the cities. They, too, are tied by the rope that the trusts and customs have wound them up with” (15). Nellie imagines the people in the city constricted by the trusts, resigned to “suffer and die” without fighting against the forces oppressing them financially. The Wealth Producing and Distributing Society intends to bring individuals together to support each other and build wealth amongst its members rather than relinquishing profits to the trusts.

Tom and Nellie’s relationship fluctuates between an equal partnership and a leader/follower dynamic. Tom’s sister Scoris explains that people have “been waiting for a leader” to “free themselves from the trusts” and that “Tom is that man” (20). Scoris’ use of the word “man” implies that leaders are male. Scoris neglects her own contributions and Nellie’s commitment to the society by framing Tom as the lone leader. Nellie admires Tom, and the narrator explains that she has “some one to love, honor, yes, almost worship, in Tom Vivian” (32). The verbs increasingly move toward a clear power differential between Tom and Nellie. Their relationship mimics that of Mildred and John, as well as Dorothy and Edes, discussed in the third chapter. In all three partnerships, the male casts a vision that the female eventually adopts, or revises, for herself. Nellie’s narrative differs from Mildred’s and Dorothy’s, though, because she is married at the

start of the novel. Thus, Fry does not explain how autonomous and self-actualized Nellie was before the nuptials, and she is not a developed character within the text. While the novel often emphasizes Tom's position as the leader, the narrator also draws attention to the society members' equal acknowledgement of Tom and Nellie when they visit the city:

...Tom and Nellie arrived in the city on a visit and were astonished at their reception. They had intended seeing their old friends and enjoying a quiet time, but instead were rushed from one place to another and were constantly told that "of course you must see so-and-so, for they are such good workers in the cause, don't you know, and will be encouraged if you will only see them." (72)

This depiction establishes Tom and Nellie as partners in founding the society. The plural references to "their reception" and "their" supporters suggest that members recognize both as leaders in the society. Tom similarly uses plurality when he tells his mother that he and Nellie "intend to work together to free [them]selves and all who join [them] from [the trust's] tyranny" (10). Though their relationship shifts between power differences and equality, Tom presents himself and Nellie as a united front, working together to better their own lives as well as their fellow humans'.

Though I later argue that Mira is an unconventional heroic New Woman, her employed and clever sisters Helen and Scoris align with a more typical understanding of the New Woman. Scoris is the "eldest unmarried sister" of the Vivian Family who, along with Tom, "had been the means of starting the society" (17). Though Tom and Nellie become the recognizable leaders, Nellie praises Scoris and acknowledges the immense contributions that she has made, especially during the colony's initial development:

Do you know, Tom, what Scoris Vivian is like? A beautiful diamond—a continual surprise; the setting is so simple, so unobtrusive, but the gem is always seen. To me her life is one continual sparkling ray of love that is never hidden. Just think of it! Here we have been feted and given receptions by members who were so glad to honor us for what you have done, and she had as much to do with this movement in the beginning as you had and a great deal more than I, yet no one seems to realize it. (72)

Nellie admires Scoris's unassuming, loving demeanor and the effort that she puts into the society, even without any recognition. But Scoris not only contributes to her family's plan; she is also "an artist, employed by an illustrating firm," and her sister Helen "had a position in a large department store" (51). They live together "in the flat they had shared with Tom before his marriage" and balance their jobs with aiding the colony through garnering interest in the city (51). Even when they eventually move to the newly developed community, they do not stop working: "Scoris still did drawings for illustrations and Helen was doing well at writing for magazines and the society paper" (104). Like Salome, Dorothy, Diantha, Mildred, Iola, and Grace, they prioritize their work, focus on ways to assist their surrounding community, and remain open to romantic possibilities. Passionate, skilled, and hard-working, Helen and Scoris exemplify the New Woman of the Progressive Era.

Mira's Hardships as an Example of What to Avoid

The character most critical to discussions of domesticity and childcare is Mira, whose marriage demonstrates some of the institution's worst potential outcomes. At the start of the story, she is an attractive sixteen-year-old; she "was a bright, winsome girl, tall and graceful, with large hazel eyes, a pink and white complexion, and an abundance

of golden hair” (9). Mira reveals her wanderlust when she says that she wishes she could “go with” the birds she sees flying above because she is “weary of always staying in one place” (10). As the youngest daughter of the Vivian family, she has witnessed her older siblings move to the city, get married, and find work, and Mira grows very restless staying on the family farm. Mrs. Vivian demonstrates her awareness of Mira’s agitation and maturity when she comments, “I’m afraid, like the birds, [Mira] will be leaving me alone” (10); she tells Tom, “[Mira] is quite grown up. I have never realized it till now” (10). Mira is entering adulthood and her mother fears the day when Mira will leave the family home like her other children. An “old acquaintance” named Jack Moberly asks Mira to get married and go with him “nearly two thousand miles” away where his uncle offered him a position (12). He tells Mira he cannot leave her, and she “in her inexperience thought she couldn’t live without him” (12). The narrator’s phrasing suggests that Mira is wrong about her own inclinations; because of “her inexperience” she thinks that she cares more deeply and fully about Jack Moberly than she actually does. Knowing that her family would not approve, she does not consult with them about Jack’s proposal, but rather relies on her own emotions. Mira leaves, though her mother “had never thought of the child marrying so young, nor did she suspect the attachment” between her daughter and Jack (24). This secretive beginning of their relationship foreshadows their rocky future.

Mira’s family is shocked and saddened by her sudden departure and lack of correspondence. Eventually, after “winter had passed,” Mira writes to her mother, “asking forgiveness, and the depression on her account had ceased, for [Mira] had

declared that she was happy” (51). Readers do not know the details of Mira’s life at this point, but her request for forgiveness indicates that she knows her actions slighted her family and that she seeks to reconcile with them. Time passes, and her family does not know anything regarding her wellbeing or whereabouts. When the society is in its sixth year, Tom tells Nellie, “I have just found out that our sister Mira has signed away her legacy that she should receive now on her twenty-first birthday...two years ago. I wish we could find out where she is, for mother is grieving herself to death” (77). This new information about Mira’s inheritance, combined with the lack of correspondence, heightens the family’s concern. Mrs. Vivian suffers as if her daughter has died, and in fact they have so little knowledge about Mira and her situation that she is virtually dead to them.

Eventually, Fry describes Mira’s life and the hardships that marriage and motherhood, outside of a supportive community, have wrought. The narrator depicts Mira’s life being overtaken by her duties of motherhood: “The first year passed, then the baby took up her attention. The third year came and two babies claimed her. The fourth year found her a sad-faced matron with more cares than she knew how to bear” (89). With each year—and nearly the same number of children—Mira’s domestic tasks and the responsibilities of caring for her children Nellie, Freddie, and Little Baby increasingly consume and overwhelm her. Through the omission of names or descriptions of childrearing’s joys, the narrator frames each child as an additional burden in Mira’s life. To add insult to injury, “Jack had changed. He was no longer the loving husband, but was becoming bloated and reckless with drink, so that even his little children shrank from

him” (89). Stressed by the financial burdens of providing for a family and overtaken by alcoholism, Jack is no longer a satisfactory husband or father. Mira reflects on the course her life has taken: “This was what she had left home, mother and plenty for. This was the man she had promised to love, honor, and obey” (89). She questions, “Could she love a man who neglected her children as well as herself? Could she honor this drunkard gambler? Could she obey such a specimen of manhood?” (89). Mira left her family who could offer her emotional support and assistance in childcare. She comes from a family of “plenty,” one with sufficient wealth to overcome the current hardships she is experiencing, making her situation even more difficult to endure. She questions whether she can love, support, and obey a man who has neglected his duties, and eventually decides that she cannot.

Through the narrator’s repeated descriptions of Mira’s desperation, Fry warns her readers to avoid Mira’s position, cautioning them against depending too much on individual men rather than a community. The narrator maintains some emotional distance from Mira’s situation to encourage readers to consider Mira’s situation in the larger framework of the society. Mira becomes increasingly aware that Jack is not a reliable source of support for the family; the firm where he worked “changed hands and he lost his position” and he was not able to hold down any subsequent jobs (90). Mira “felt weak and helpless, for now she saw that Jack was a wreck, incapable of looking after them” (90). Having never “earned her own living,” and with the piano already “gone for the mortgage,” Mira does not know how to secure her livelihood (90). Her children’s pitiful faces add to her stressful situation: “Oh, the misery of it all as she remembered the little

faces that had looked so appealingly to her when she could only give them sufficient food to keep them alive” (92). Continually hungry, they look to their mother for comfort, but she was unable to provide any additional sustenance. The narrator enhances the drama of the scene by describing Mira “implor[ing] God” for help and “cr[ying] in her misery” (93). At only twenty years of age, Mira reaches a breaking point when she learns that Jack has taken the legacy she thought she would receive when she became twenty-one. She intended to return to her family at that point, if she and her children were able to survive that long, but now even that hope is gone. As she looks at her huddled children who have cried themselves to sleep, Mira contemplates filicide-suicide when she asks, “What is the use of it all? These children may have to do the same as I when they grow up. I would sooner see them dead than go through it. I don’t wonder at people taking the lives of those they are responsible for, as well as their own, and yet how could they?” (96). Mira reveals her anxieties that there will be no end to their current suffering except death. Her statement also indicates how bleak she views her current circumstances: she would rather her children die than live as poverty-stricken adults. While the narrator depicts Mira’s situation as tragic and bleak, the passage does not affect the reader as emotionally as similar scenes, such as Cassy’s depiction of her decision to kill her child in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. The novel’s propagandistic qualities produce this effect; Fry intends readers to pity Mira, but primarily uses her narrative to persuade readers that her ideal society is necessary and beneficial. Mira eventually dismisses the possibility of filicide-suicide and decides to find an alternative solution. Mira’s poor mental, physical,

and emotional state cautions readers against relying too much on a husband figure rather than a community of friends and family.

Though Mira does not have her familial support system nearby, twice female strangers help her when she is most in need, providing timely aid but not solutions to the larger issues in her life. For example, one day Mira is so exhausted that she is unable to care for her children: “she was ill in bed, her baby cried and there was no one to care for them, all was confusion, and a neighbor [Mrs. Carr] called and offered help” (93). In a desperate time, Mrs. Carr aids Mira and recommends ways to provide basic necessities for her children, namely to sell her “best furniture” and take in boarders (93).⁶⁴ She puts Mrs. Carr’s advice into practice and has her “rooms rented to gentlemen” within a few weeks (94). However, “they only stayed one week at a time” because the children could be disruptive, especially when they “would cry at night” (94). Though it offered minimal income, renting space in her home did not resolve her issues:

One evening one of the roomers found her sitting with her baby in her lap, her elbows on the table, her hands holding her temples, while her poor little baby was trying to nurse her dry breast, tugging and pounding it with his little fists, kicking, and occasionally giving vent in a disappointed, pitiful cry. (94)

The narrator’s bleak description highlights Mira’s mental exhaustion and physical deterioration; her “dry breast” is unable to provide sustenance for her child because she

⁶⁴ According to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* article, “Plumbers Hold Up Woman,” in October 1912 Jane Fry reportedly “decided to divide her house into apartments for rent” in order to make money (2). Like many in the Progressive Era, Fry views taking in boarders as a way to make additional income. While Mira faced difficulties because of her crying children, Fry encountered obstacles when plumbers refused to add additional baths and she had to secure “the consent of owners of adjoining property” (2). This experience did not impact her depiction of Mira, though, as the article was published seven years after the novel.

has had none herself. Once again, a kind woman assists her; one of her female roomers tries to speak to her, but she “was unconscious from the pain in her head, caused by starvation” (94). The female boarder “took the baby and fed it and got it to sleep, then did what she could for the mother, working over her all night” (94). Twice Mira receives assistance from strangers when she is most in need, but her situation remains the same, suggesting that charity and kindness from individuals is not enough; Mira needs a revised societal system that offers more continuous, substantial support.

Mira progressively takes ownership over her life and makes difficult decisions to provide for herself, Nellie, Freddie, and Little Baby. As boarders continue to leave because of her crying children, she decides to go to a nearby colony (a branch of her family’s society over 2,000 miles away from their initial location). The narrator’s descriptions of the “misery” (93) and “helpless[ness]” (90) she experienced on her own are sharply juxtaposed with her life in the colony: “That spring found her living comfortably among green fields and free to earn a living by renting tents to those who only wished to stay in the country a few weeks at a time” (97). The landscape is brighter, and she can support her family. Her children are in a much better position because the two-year-old stays “in the nursery” and the other children attend “boarding school” (97). She can “attend to her business” while her children receive premium care and support from professionals employed by the colony, and she sees them when she is not working. Even in the colony, though, the threat of her husband persists because he lives nearby. He appears one day asking to see the children, saying that he will leave once he has spoken to them. Jack expresses particular interest in Freddie, wanting to take his son with him,

but Mira refuses. She realizes that to be completely free of Jack's harm, she and the children must leave the region altogether. She decides to "get away to her relatives as soon as possible" so that he will not be able to bother or harm she and the children (100). By moving out of the family home, and then out of the region, Mira attempts to safeguard her children against the threat of Jack by moving them closer to her family and their colony. Given the rare occurrence of separation or divorce in the early twentieth century, Mira's decision to leave is brave and potentially even heroic.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, Jack successfully steals Freddie away from Mira on their journey, but with her family's assistance, Freddie eventually returns to his mother. Her sisters commit to economically support the children until adulthood, and the broader community of the society offers resources for the family's wellbeing.

In case Mira's story does not persuade readers that childcare should be a communal effort, Fry presents an additional comedic scenario that reinforces her radical argument. The narrator explains that some members of the society debated "the idea of having children under a system of government," aligning with Fry's readers who would likely resist the idea (113). One woman, Mrs. Holmes, had "pronounced it a breaking up of homes, and her father had written several articles about it in the paper" (113). One day, Mrs. Holmes' father visits his daughter and grandchildren before his meeting to discuss the question of childcare. When his daughter must leave to try on a dress, he tells her that he will watch the children. The grandkids ride their grandpa like a horse and they play

⁶⁵ Divorce rates were increasing but it was still relatively uncommon. In 1880, one out of twenty marriages ended in divorce, while in 1916, one out of nine marriages resulted in divorce (Woloch 273).

hide and seek, but he quickly realizes that “he is not so young as he used to be and laid back in the big arm chair to rest” (114). He falls asleep and his granddaughter May braids his hair and ties it with colored wool pieces. The society members arrive to discuss where children receive the best care, and the narrator explains, “It is needless to say that there was no meeting. Their arguments were answered before begun. Children are safer when certain people are responsible for their care and welfare. The society heard no more about families growing apart” (117). Though the children were not harmed under their grandfather’s care, the embarrassing situation demonstrates that he was not well-suited to care for them. The scene gives the topic a humorous spin, but the message remains the same: even if some family members like well-intentioned mothers or endearing grandfathers are eager to care for their offspring, other individuals are typically better suited—through their personal interest or professional training—to care for them. Given the popular perception that families best handle the care of children, Fry’s argument is fairly radical, even by today’s standards.

Children at the Society

If Fry sets up Mira’s situation as the problem, then she frames the colony’s arrangements as the solution. By the time Mira reaches the society, Tom, Nellie, and the other members have established the systems of childcare. Before she arrives, the reader learns about the childcare arrangements through Mrs. Vivian’s observations; though she is skeptical at first, she eventually praises the advantages of the system, modeling this acceptance for readers. Initially, Mrs. Vivian is curious about the “children’s department, but thought that the idea of having them in a public nursery might be all right as long as

the parents were in constant communication” (78). She did *not* think it “best to separate them,” likely aligning with readers’ resistance to this radical notion (78). Tom responds, “But, mother, we are not separated. We can have them here as we like, only the advantage to them is greater” (78). Witnessing the children’s care and behavior quickly persuades Mrs. Vivian. She goes to the nursery and “was there long enough to be convinced that this kind of place was the best on earth for children” (78). The clean room offers tools for children to practice developmentally appropriate skills; for instance, the infants’ department focuses on standing, walking, and other forms of bodily control. Older children attend kindergarten, and those even older learn “industrious habits” (79). That evening Mrs. Vivian says,

Well, I am surprised...I never thought of having children all in one place and special people to take care of them. Certainly the children are the better for the good system it necessitates. I was impressed with the graceful bearing of the girls and the manliness of the boys. All speak to each other in such a polite, kindly way. (79)

Mrs. Vivian points to the specialization and professionalization of childcare when she comments on the “special people” assigned to care for the society’s youth. The children’s successful performance of gender roles especially impresses Mrs. Vivian; the girls are “graceful” and the boys are “manl[y].” Mrs. Vivian celebrates their behavior, as would many conservative readers. Though the system of care revolutionizes the current model of tending children in individual homes, it produces outstanding specimens of girlhood and boyhood, rather than radicals. The clean and caring environment, tailored to children

at each stage of development, convinces Mrs. Vivian that the society offers a good system for its children.

The behaviors exhibited by the socioeconomically diverse children surprises Mrs. Vivian; while this framework reinforces the concept of the middle class lifting up the working class, the society also provides equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of class status. Mrs. Vivian comments, “When you consider that some are born of parents who are ignorant of the refinements of social life, it is surprising. At the table particularly they handled their knives, forks and spoons as if bred and born in a social atmosphere of ease and refinement” (79). The society’s childcare system operates as an equalizing force amongst the children, setting them up for equal opportunities in the society. Mrs. Vivian



Figure 13. *Other Worlds* by Lena Jane Fry, pp. 82.

learns that the caretakers very intentionally coach the children in preferable forms of action; when new children arrived they are “placed at a table behind the screen until the nurses see how they behave” and the children “who have been there a long time are not allowed to see the little strangers until they are taught to behave properly” (81). In figure 13, the caretakers separate some children “like chickens in a coop” until they learn “to be tidy” (82). Mrs. Vivian’s, and the society’s, focus on the children’s behavior suggests a class elitism that believes that middle or upper-class habits and customs

represent the best way to function in the world. Regardless of an individual's economic position, the Wealth Producing and Distributing Society seeks to enhance its members' cultural capital, as Pierre Bourdieu would phrase it, by helping them emulate those with multiple forms of capital, like the Vivian family. The newly arriving children acquire new mannerisms and habits that become "an integral part of the person" (Bourdieu 244). Like Dorothy in Knox's *Dorothy's Experience* who initially considers how to change the style and behavior of the working women in Seabury, Mrs. Vivian sees teaching the children the expected manners of the middle and upper class as productive. While modern readers may have qualms about this hierarchical structure of preferred actions, middle class readers of the Progressive Era would likely praise the society's ability to raise up—as they so often phrased it—the working-class individuals. The emphasis on social uplift pervades Progressive Era discourse and motivated much of the political action of the time, including settlement houses and working women's clubs. This perspective of raising up individuals to certain moral and behavioral standards certainly shapes Fry's depiction of children's education in her imagined society. Though the process of assimilation is problematic, the society is positive in some ways because all the children receive the same care, food, and education that creates a happy childhood and sets them up well for the future.

Appealing to the readers' investment in children, Fry depicts beneficial arrangements for the youth and their caretakers. Vivian explains that she learned that the nurses "must be in good health, patient and bright, for the future of these children demands it" (80). The society applies the "science" of zodiacal signs to determine who is

“capable of teaching children and have the natural patience necessary” (83). Additionally, they recruited “women who were not only educated, but adapted to teaching, guiding, and nursing” (80). This statement strikingly suggests that some individuals are particularly skilled in these areas, but that not all mothers are effective teachers, guides, and nurses. However, it also explains that the children’s caretakers are women. While progressive in its proposal to move childcare from the home into a communal space, the society reinstates some established gender norms, such as the idea that women are best suited for childcare. The society creates a sustainable livelihood for the nurses by giving them “eighteen hours for themselves in their own homes and six in the nursery” (78). The narrator explains the benefits of this system: “These short hours made them much more patient than mothers who have usually from two to six children to take care of, besides cooking and taking what time they can get to rest at night” (78). The narrator sharply contrasts the nurses in the society with the average mother in America who must balance domestic duties and childcare. Even in this explanation of why the nurses work shorter hours, the rationale returns to the children’s benefit. Though manifested differently across the political and social spectrum, care of children was a unifying force in the Progressive Era. By emphasizing the unconventional system’s better outcomes for children, Fry attempts to appeal to a wide range of readers.

The parents also profit from the new system of childcare because it frees them up for satisfying and productive work. Carol Kolmerten describes the nursery as part of the “‘plan’ for human liberation on the planet Herschel,” and primarily parents experience

this newfound freedom (113). Rather than mourning the increased separation from the children, Tom says,

It is a comfort to have such intelligent women to take charge of them while we are busy attending to the affairs of the society. Not only ours but every child has everything to make them happy and contented, and all are bright and healthy. Such a contrast to the homes shared with grownup people! (85)

By creating a space specifically designated for children, the children's department better suits their needs than family homes. Knowing that the youth are well-cared for and happy allows the adults to manage "the affairs of the society" (85). Though the text establishes women as the best caretakers for children, the society frees up both mothers and fathers for work outside of childcare. This system benefits all involved: the children receive the best care and support, the nurses are passionate and skilled in their area of work, and the parents can focus on their own interests outside of parenting.

Progressive Era citizens debated *who* was best suited to raise children. Some reformers argued that "nurturing would preferably be done by parents, not outside institutions," because they wanted to obtain mother's pensions for widowed women, which would allow them to continue caring for their children rather than sending them to orphanages (Cohen). Other reformers, most notably Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "questioned the very organization of society based on the private household, arguing that both housekeeping and childcare could be done better in collective settings, which would free women to pursue other occupations" (Cohen). Gilman expresses her ideas about new systems for community-wide housekeeping in *What Diantha Did* discussed in the second

chapter of this project. She similarly tackles the issue of childcare in her short story “A Garden of Babies” (1909), in which the speaker’s sister Jessie loves children. After Jessie loses her own husband and children in a mill disaster, she tends the speaker’s twins. Jessie soon develops a full-fledged childcare institution with her mother teaching a mother’s class, her brother working as a doctor, and the speaker tending to a garden. The story emphasizes that this system benefits both people like Jessie who can specialize in her passion, as well as parents who can pursue their own interests while professionals care for their children. Gilman also presents these ideas in her nonfiction; for instance, she explains in *Women and Economics* (1898) that not all women are “born with the special qualities and powers needed to take care of children” (293). In her book *Concerning Children* (1900), Gilman asserts that as society develops, it moves from more individual systems to collective systems, such as public education. She argues that childcare should shift from an individual mother’s duty to the responsibility of a trained professional.⁶⁶ Unlike other reformers who emphasized women’s inherent maternalism, Gilman strongly advocated the professionalization of childcare, suggesting that not all women were naturally skilled or passionate about caring for children. Fry depicts this professionalization in *Other Worlds*, a feature that Val Gough emphasizes: “Members of

⁶⁶ The argument to move toward more communal systems of childcare assume distinct homes that focus on the nuclear family. However, this arrangement was more typical for white, middle-class families than for working-class or black families. As Frankel and Dye explain, “Unlike white, middle-class women, whose norms for domesticity encompassed nuclear households, economic self-sufficiency, and a clear separation between home and work, black women and white working-class women did not experience domesticity within isolated, nuclear households. Instead, they relied upon collective networks and strategies in their struggle to, in the words of a Lawrence Massachusetts millworker, ‘piece together a livelihood’” (Frankel and Dye 5-6). Though likely unintended on Gilman’s part, especially given her racist beliefs, her argument for more communal childcare systems ironically implies that white families should revise and adopt a system of support that black and working-class families often already had in place.

The Colony make use of its nursery where professionally trained staff care for the children, ensuring that childrearing is competent and allowing women a measure of economic independence by freeing them for work” (199). Fry aligns with Gilman on the idea of making childcare a profession. *Other Worlds* suggests that children benefit from a communal approach to childcare in which professionals provide the young persons with the most advantageous environment.

Revising Systems of Domestic Labor and Women’s Status

Not only does the Wealth Producing and Distributing Society develop new systems of childcare, but it also creates new arrangements for homemaking, changing women’s roles within these realms. When Tom’s friend visits twenty-five years after the society’s launch, he comments on the variety of home options—apartments, houses, or hotels—that are all “arranged so as to give those of small means as much comfort as those of large money interests” (160). Thus, regardless of income, everyone has a comfortable place to rest and reside. He points out that the houses have “every provision made for comfort,” which shows “clearly what a keen eye [Tom] had on the domestic situation” (160). However, Tom explains that it was not always him, but “oftener...the men and women who occupy” the homes who developed the new provisions, emphasizing that the colony is not Tom’s vision of utopia, but the shared dream of a better world, even down to an individual family’s home (161). His friend explains, “after we secured a suite of rooms in the apartment hotel, my wife had no further care in the housekeeping for she objects to keeping help” (161). The society becomes a utopia in part by giving the citizens options, including in their home situation. Though his wife

opposes “keeping help,” she is still relieved from cleaning and cooking because they live in hotel-style accommodations (161). If individuals did not want to live in the hotel, they could also reside in an apartment, some of which “had small kitchens so as to meet the demands of all the people, but many used the public ones, for each could have their own stoves, etc., and the persons in charge kept them clean” (174). Most families, though, “bought their food already cooked or left their orders each day with the cooks in charge” (174).⁶⁷ Unlike the childcare workers who are described in some detail, the cooks are only briefly mentioned, emphasizing their labor in a dehumanizing fashion. This passage focuses on the society members benefiting from the workers’ labor rather than the wellbeing of the cooks themselves. The society members have options and flexibility in how the families access food. In sum, the society resists the assumption that the female adult is solely responsible for purchasing the food, preparing meals, and cleaning the kitchen. Instead, the family can choose between preparing meals in their own apartment, cooking food in a shared kitchen, and obtaining already prepared meals from the cook. Not surprisingly, most choose the last option because it is convenient, well-prepared food. The society provides families with options for their domestic circumstances, but everyone has access to services that lessen the workload, particularly for women.

⁶⁷ The Progressive Era also saw a push for public kitchens. Nancy Woloch explains that Ellen Richards and Jane Addams “endorsed more limited collective schemes, such as public kitchens for working mothers” (295). For example, Ellen Swallow Richards—the first female MIT graduate and instructor—demoed a kitchen that she felt could aid the poor and improve school lunches. Not surprisingly, Charlotte Perkins Gilman also supported this idea, becoming “the best-known advocate of collectivist plans,” including public kitchens (Woloch 295).

By creating new arrangements for childcare and traditional domestic duties like cooking and cleaning, women can pursue new occupations in the society. Early on the society allowed men and women the “opportunity to learn more about each other” which raised “the standard in each sex” (60). Because the women work and save money, each sex “became independent of the other financially, therefore real love matches were the result. Men’s responsibilities were being shared by their wives, and they were not so afraid to venture on the matrimonial journey” (60). Fry emphasizes a major point that I discuss in the third chapter; if women can be economically self-sufficient, they can develop “real love matches.” Additionally, the society confers honors and titles on its citizens that they maintain even after marriage. Fry writes:

It gave women a better title than Miss or Mrs., for marriages were not always a mark of honor in those days. Then, besides, women did not lose their identity as they did before in marriage. It was considered that titles were a step higher for them. Each man and woman was known by their own merits and if the names were changed it was a combination of both names, or they kept their own; or if they wished to keep the old custom it was no one’s business. Still the wife was the Hon. Mary, etc. (166-167).

Bestowing honors on men and women for their “good morals and honesty” recognizes individuals’ merits and maintains their identities through keeping their birth names. The designation “Honorable” is not gendered or based on an individual’s marital status. Once again, Fry creates her utopia by generating options for citizens. If a married couple wants to combine their surnames, or if they want the woman to adopt the man’s name, all options are available to them. Just like in the domestic arrangements, the standard conventions of the twentieth-century are de-normalized, giving families options and

women more autonomy. The society's structures lessen women's domestic labor and frees them up to work, which allows them to develop true romantic connections and maintain their identity after marriage.

Fry's Dreams and Mira's Heroism

Fry demonstrates her desire to implement her ideas in early twentieth-century America when she encourages her readers to write to her. At the end of the text, she includes a notice that explains, "There are a number of people in Chicago who are about forming a Wealth Producing and Distributing Society" (200). She invites anyone "wishing to join them or learn the particulars concerning said Society" to write to her address which she provides (200). Unfortunately, I have been unable to uncover whether the Wealth Producing and Distributing Society ever gained any momentum. Did interested parties write to Fry? Did anyone ever experiment with initiating such a society? An article about Mrs. Lena Fry published in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1913 (*Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1930*), seven years after the novel's publication, suggests that the society did not successfully launch because she is living alone in a bleak setting: "There is no furniture, only a small gas stove, a built in folding bed, a table of rough boards, and a discarded rocking chair" ("Plumbers Hold Up Woman" 2).⁶⁸

However, Fry's notice in her 1905 novel indicates that she is one amongst a "number of people" interested in this endeavor. Additionally, it reveals that she does not just want to

⁶⁸ The article reports that eighteen plumbers have refused to work on her home because she got second-hand supplies. Fry views herself as a victim because of the plumbers' refusal to cooperate and because her house is repeatedly vandalized. She suspects that the treatment stems from the Chief of Police Thomas Kern who she asked "to vacate her rooms when, she said, he refused to pay his electric light and gas bills" (2).

present a fictional tale about an alternative world, but actually establish such a society in Chicago. She was so passionate about the topic that she decided to self-publish the novel. Her decision to convey her ideas through a novel rather than an essay suggests that the power of narratives to persuade individuals compelled her. Though the book's main purpose is the propagandist argument about an alternative society, couching it in novel form softens the radical suggestions and humanizes the political ideas by showing how they impact individual characters. Through Fry's descriptions of characters from diverse backgrounds and various ages, readers can likely relate to someone in the story who benefits from the Wealth Producing and Distributing Society. The closing notice suggests that Fry explicitly intended her novel to persuade readers to join her anti-trust society.

Lena Jane Fry's *Other Worlds* describes a society that profits everyone, not only economically but also personally and socially. Mira Vivian Moberly heroically flees from her negligent husband to secure a better life for herself and her children. The narrator sharply contrasts Mira's hardships with the comfort and security of the Vivian family's Wealth Producing and Distributing Society, in which all children are well-cared for and adults can contribute to the society using their own particular skills. Though the anti-trust propagandist argument dominates Fry's novel, her society also considers ways to revise domestic life and childcare. Fry encourages the specialization and professionalization of childcare workers, arguing that communal support during childrearing years can benefit both children and parents. Additionally, the society offers a range of domestic systems—from hotels with room service to homes with individual kitchens—to provide options and reduce the workload if desired. Fry's world becomes utopian by enhancing its members'

wellbeing and offering options for their domestic arrangements. Fry challenges conventions of childcare and domesticity in the early twentieth century, encouraging more communal systems of support.

Angel Island

Like Fry's *Other Worlds*, Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island* argues that America's standard systems for childcare and domestic life are not sufficient. However, unlike the other texts discussed in this project, *Angel Island* allegorically interrogates gender relations and imperialism in the Progressive Era. Though once utopian for the winged women, the island is no longer a safe place because the shipwrecked American men exoticize, capture, and domesticate the women. Despite its remote location, *Angel Island* replicates traditional American gender roles through the shipwrecked men's enforcement of these norms. Initially, John Rae's illustrations in *American Magazine* emphasize the women's majestic beauty and ability, but the increasing number of domestic ads as the serialization continues reminds readers of their responsibilities in their home. However, within the story, Julia represents the New Woman, initiating the process toward the women's liberation. She persuades the women to learn to walk so that they can advocate for their children's ability to fly. Gillmore Irwin suggests that women should advocate for improvements in children's lives, which will enhance the lives of men *and* women. More broadly, the work suggests that women contribute to their subservient position but should revise the confining expectations of women and the domestic space.

American Magazine serialized *Angel Island* in 1913; thus, Gillmore Irwin's novel certainly had more readers than *Other Worlds*. Frank Luther Mott describes *Frank*

Leslie's Popular Monthly—which would eventually become *American Magazine*—as “cheaper in price and of lower literary grade than *Harper's* and *Scribner's*” (III: 36). With impressive illustrations, though, the publication “quickly built up a large circulation” (Mott, III: 36), reaching 60,000 after three years in 1879 (Mott, III: 510) and 125,000 by 1887 (Mott, III: 511). In 1905, the name changed to *American Magazine*, though the company quickly dropped the second word. In 1906, a group from *McClure's* including Ida M. Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Ray Stannard Baker, Finley Peter Dunne, and William Allen White bought the magazine so that they could run a publication “to suit themselves” (Mott, III: 512). Mott explains, “The magazine seemed to drive a tandem: an interest in the simple and homely affairs of the average man and woman, and a high-minded interest in civic reform” (III: 514). In some ways, *Angel Island*, published in 1914, bridges both elements of the publication, as it allegorically portrays the home life of Americans while advocating for reforms in childcare and domesticity. When the Crowell Company purchased the publication in 1915, the magazine had a respectable circulation of 400,000 (Mott, III: 515).

Angel Island's reprintings suggest that the novel has continued to capture readers' attention throughout the twentieth century. After its serialization in *American Magazine*, Henry Holt published Gillmore Irwin's novel in book form in 1914. By 1910, Henry Holt was shifting into retirement (Tebbel 315). Holt primarily focused on the quality of the literature published by the company, but Alfred Harcourt, who became the manager of the trade department in 1910, pushed for the company to make more sales. Harcourt obtained authors such as John Dewey, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg for the company,

so Gillmore Irwin was in good company under this publishing house (Tebbel 317). *Angel Island* has been reprinted several times since then: in February 1949 in *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, in 1978 by Arno Press, and in 1988 by Plume with an introduction by Ursula Le Guin. Gillmore Irwin's novel also relates to more well-known texts; Charlotte Rich argued that *Angel Island* may be "a previously unconsidered inspiration for [Charlotte Perkins Gilman's] *Herland*" ("From Near-Dystopia to Utopia" 155) and Jill Lepore proposes that *Angel Island* may be an influence on the Paradise Island Origins of Wonder Woman (86-87).

Angel Island: A Women's Utopia

The island described in Gillmore Irwin's novel is a utopic space for the women for two primary reasons: their collectivity and their ability to fly. Though the narrator does not explore their history in-depth, the women moved to the island from their native land because of their shared difference: their ability to fly. They demonstrate their unity in the flying performances as "a group inextricably intertwined, a revolving ball of vivid color. . . as if seized by a common impulse, they stretched, hand in hand, in a line across the sky" (59). Their intertwined bodies, joined hands, and shared impulse demonstrate their tight-knit bond. As the women continue their dance, "[d]etail of color and movement vanished" and they move as a collective force (60).

Their ability to fly is also utopic; it allows them to travel easily and view the earth from exhilarating heights, but more importantly, the women can control the situation when the men arrive. They can decide when they want to approach the men and how close they want to get, and they always have a quick means of escape. Honey comments

on his interactions with one of the women who approached him, saying, “I couldn’t touch her, of course. If I stopped for a while and kept quiet as the dead, she’d come much closer. But the instant I made a move towards—bing!—she hit the welkin” (97). The woman can control her proximity to Honey, even if she is curious and wants to interact with him. The women eventually choose to touch the men when a shark approaches; Lulu flies down to help Honey when the three other women (excluding Julia) join her. They do not entirely oppose close interaction with the men, but through their ability to fly they do so on their own terms.

The Exoticization of the Winged Women

The men disrupt the utopic elements of the women’s island, largely because of their oversimplified, exotic views of the women that align with imperialist and civilizationist discourses of the era. Gillmore Irwin’s publication appeared sixteen years after the United States’ imperialist invasions into Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines. Historian William E. Leuchtenburg explains that Progressives “did not oppose imperialism but, with few exceptions, ardently supported the imperialist surge or, at the very least, proved agreeably acquiescent” (483). For example, “Many of the progressive members of Congress voted for increased naval expenditures and for Caribbean adventures in imperialism” (Leuchtenburg 483). Under the leadership of Teddy Roosevelt, a supporter of imperialism, many Progressives saw the missions of progressivism and imperialism as compatible. Leuchtenburg writes, “At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War few men saw any conflict between social reform and democratic striving at home and the new imperialist mission; indeed, the war seemed

nothing so much as an extension of democracy to new parts of the world” (485). Just as progressives reformed domestic matters, many sought changes on an international scale, perceiving that their democratic system was the best model for all countries and that they had a responsibility to convert foreign countries to American ways.

Relevant to America’s emphasis on imperialism is Derrick P. Aldridge’s argument that Civilizationism, along with Victorianism and Progressivism, were the “dominant intellectual currents” of the era (416). Societies who practiced Civilizationism “considered themselves civilized, and considered others to be barbarians” (Aldridge 420). By the Progressive Era, Civilizationism and Social Darwinism were closely connected; proponents argued that “civilized” societies—and thus white culture and persons—were superior. Aldridge explains, “part of the civilizing mission for whites and Western societies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to conquer, civilize, and assimilate ‘less civilized’ societies and peoples” (422). The Progressive Era conceptualization of whiteness, though, differs from the current understanding. Matthew Frye Jacobson explores the concept’s evolution through American history in *Whiteness of a Different Color*. He explains that “the Irish, Armenians, Italians, Poles, Syrians, Greeks, Ruthenians, Sicilians, Finns, and a host of others...became Caucasians only over time” (3-4). In the nineteenth century and into the Progressive Era, whiteness often referenced those with an Anglo-Saxon background, and anyone outside of this narrow conceptualization was often a target in the Civilizationist mission that Aldridge describes. The historical context of imperialism, along with the ideological construct of

Civilizationism, emerges in Gillmore Irwin's *Angel Island* through the exoticization and domestication of the winged women.

The exoticism of the winged women in *Angel Island* is crucial, not only because it subtly critiques imperialist relations in the early twentieth century, but also because the narrator employs exoticism to exaggerate the differences between men and women. These women are not just from a different land; they can fly, and the narrator describes them ambiguously in terms of gender and race. However, the men still successfully capture and domesticate the women. Metaphorically, the winged women's domestication emphasizes that women easily take on subservient roles and neglect or forfeit some of their intrinsic, magnificent power. Eventually, the women fight back against the exoticization under the leadership of Julia. In *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*, written between 1904 and 1918, Victor Segalen asserts that exoticism is "the feeling which Diversity stirs in us" (Segalen 47). He further explains,

I agree to call 'Diverse' everything that until now was called foreign, strange, unexpected, surprising, mysterious, amorous, superhuman, heroic, and even divine, everything that is Other;—that is to say, in each of those words, emphasize the dominance of the essential Diversity that each of those terms harbors within it. (Segalen 67)

Segalen's definition of diverse, or exotic, aligns well with the depictions of the women in *Angel Island*; not only are they strange and foreign through their wings and ambiguous appearance, but they are also exotic because they are superhuman women who eventually act heroically on their children's behalf.

The most apparent form of exoticism occurs when the men discover that what they first thought were large birds are in fact flying women. The narrator initiates the exoticization by explaining, “They were not birds; they were winged women!... Their wings, like enormous scimitars, caught the moonlight, flashed it back” (59). The image of the scimitar emphasizes an exotic quality given the sword’s Middle Eastern origins; it also implies power and even connotes violence. However, the women are also graceful and beautiful, making them appear even more exotic because they clearly present as women, not as birds. As Charlotte Rich points out, their flying is a “metaphor for female autonomy” (“From Near-Dystopia to Utopia” 163), which is ironic because “the image of wings might otherwise connote the submissive Victorian Angel in the House. [But o]n another level, Gillmore’s metaphor is apt, for in the genre of New Woman fiction at the turn of the century, a bird’s power of flight is often invoked to suggest a woman’s freedom” (Rich, “From Near-Dystopia to Utopia” 163-164). As a common metaphor for women’s abilities and rights, the wings both satirize Victorian ideals of angelic women and represent women’s power. But while the wings may hold a metaphoric quality for the reader of *Angel Island*, for the men within the narrative they are simply a source of confusion and interest.

While the narrator advances the winged women’s exoticization, the men more dramatically other the women in their conversations. For example, because of the women’s wings and impressive flying abilities, they become the subject of humanistic and biological scientific interest, a common approach to peoples and places viewed as exotic. One of the men, Frank Merrill, is a sociologist, so he primarily espouses this

perspective. He conjectures that the flying women are “left over from a prehistoric era” (55) and that the men have “made a discovery that will shake the whole scientific world” (56). Frank approaches them as a topic for research rather than as humans, though their ambiguous identity leaves him confused about their status. He explains, “The great question in my mind is their position biologically and sociologically” (87). He then questions their species: “I mean, are they birds...free creatures of the air, or women, bound creatures of the earth? And what should be our attitude toward them? Have we the right to capture them as ornithological specimens, or is it our duty to respect their liberty as independent human beings?” (88). He raises the possibility of their human status, though he is unsure if they align more with animals or people. Frank also establishes specimens and humans as distinct classes of species, one of which deserves “liberty” while the other does not.

The shipwrecked men not only exoticize the women, but also demonstrate their perceived power through naming and establishing themselves as hosts for the island. They name the island after realizing that they are seeing winged women: ““The name of this place is ‘Angel Island,’” announced Billy Fairfax after a long time. His tone was that of a man whose thoughts, swirling in phantasmagoria, seek anchorage in fact” (65). The ability to name a location indicates an assumption that no other group has a name for that place or that their name is not significant. The women never challenge the men’s name for the island or offer an alternative. The naming indicates a sense of ownership that the men emphasize by framing themselves as hosts. The narrator explains that the men “agreed that they must get to work at once on some sort of shelter for their guests, in case

the weather should turn bad” (69). By describing the women as guests, they establish themselves as hosts which indicates a sense of ownership of the land. However, the women were on the island before the men’s arrival (making them, if anyone, the hosts), and they have long cared for themselves, making the men’s desire to build shelter for them unnecessary.

After the men start interacting with the women more closely, the men begin naming them, demonstrating their possessiveness over not only the land but also the women. Honey names Lulu, and Pete names Clara, though “[t]o Ralph she was ‘the cat’; to Billy, ‘the poser’; to Honey, ‘Carrots’” (106). While Lulu’s naming places the power with Honey rather than in herself or the collective of women, the myriad names for Clara suggest an even more unstable identity; not only does her name not come from her own people but she does not even have a consistent designation from the men at first. Though Pete and Honey haphazardly name the women, Billy is more intentional:

His first secret names for her were Diana and Cynthia. But there was another quality in her that those names did not include—intellectuality. His favorite heroes were Julius Caesar and Edwin Booth—a quaint pair, taken in combination. In the long imaginary conversations which he held with her he addressed her as Julia or Edwina. (121)

Billy associates Julia with Roman and Greek goddesses and leaders, along with an esteemed American actor. Though Billy rather than Julia still bestows the name, Billy takes what he knows about her, channels it through his cultural knowledge, and comes up with a name indicative of her intellectuality and heroism. The men demonstrate their perceived possession of the women through naming them.

Not only do they impose names on the women, but the men also select which woman they want to claim as their own. Even the first time they see the flying women, Ralph makes his preference known. He says, “They were lookers all right...I’d pick the golden blonde, the second from the right” (64). The narrator is aware of Ralph’s problematic claiming of the woman in the sky, commenting that he “spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, as though he were selecting a favorite from the front row in the chorus” (64). Just in case the men do not understand his initial proclamation, he reminds them the next time they encounter the women: “I now officially file my claim...to that peachy one—the golden blonde” (76-77). Pete, despite his disagreement with Ralph’s plan to capture the women, similarly declares, “Me for the thin one!” (77). Ralph supports his decision when he comments, “I’d like nothing better than the job of taming her, too” (77). The plot development does not challenge their claim on the women; Ralph and Peachy get married and have children, just as Pete ends up with the “thin one,” Clara.

The narrator posits some of the women exotic because of their facial features and skin tones that align them with racial minorities. For instance, the narrator remarks that when introducing Lulu, “you might have called her gipsy, Indian, Kanaka, Chinese, Japanese, Korean—any exotic type that you had not seen. Which is to say that she had the look of the primitive woman and the foreign woman” (101). This description even uses the term exotic, which it goes on to align with primitive (further supported by Frank’s idea that they are from a prehistoric era) and foreign (which emphasizes a Eurocentric perspective of people of color as exotic). Lulu’s beauty deviates from American norms and lacks specificity, making her an exotic everywoman; the text deems

her specific ancestry or ethnicity less important than the fact that she is different, both from the other women and the shipwrecked men. Charlotte Rich points out that though two of the women “are described as being of color,” the other three are Caucasian, which may be “an implicit point in Gillmore’s text. While white women were unquestionably in a position of privilege in comparison to women of color in the ‘real’ world at that time, in the dystopic, fantastic world of Gillmore’s text they might indeed suffer equally at the hands of a patriarchal system run out of control” (“From Near-Dystopia to Utopia” 166). Though the men draw attention to the women’s facial features that align them with particular racial groups, their treatment of the women does not differ on these lines.

Not only are some of the women depicted as racially other, but the narrator also describes them as androgynous, furthering their exotic status because the men view them as less feminine varieties of women. In fact, the discourse of androgyny aligns with Progressive Era notions of New Women as less traditionally womanly. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains that starting in the 1890s, male professionals went as far as to call single or politically engaged women an intermediate sex, stripping them of full femininity. For many, the women’s lack of alignment with gender expectations became “the embodiment of social disorder” (Smith-Rosenberg 265). *Angel Island* often describes the women’s bodies in an androgynous fashion: “just short of heroic size, deep-bosomed, broad-waisted, long-limbed; their arms round like a woman’s and strong like a man’s” (61). Their hands and feet also appear masculine and feminine, respectively: “their big, strong-looking, long-fingered hands; their slimly smooth, exquisitely shaped, too-tiny, transparent feet; their strong wrists; their stem-like, breakable ankles” (61). The

women have both masculine and feminine physical features. Frank describes Lulu's back as "muscular" (97), Clara has a "piquant quality of boyishness" (155), and Peachy "had, at the same time, the untouched, unstained beauty of the virgin girl, and the hard muscular strength of the virgin boy" (110). The women's androgynous features arise from their physical strength they acquire by flying. The ability to fly, then, not only exoticizes the women because of its superhuman quality but also because it decreases their daintiness and femininity. Gillmore Irwin wanted women to improve their physical abilities. In an article in *The New York Times* discussing "The Girl of To-day," Gillmore says that girls of today are "much more strong and athletic looking than the girl of the last generation." Gillmore sees this shift reflected in fiction: "The novelist who wrote fifteen or twenty years ago used to lay such stress upon physical frailty and the delicacy of the complexion. This generation has put in much more of enduring strength and color." Gillmore Irwin celebrates women's increased physical ability, both in reality and fiction, which may make them appear less traditionally feminine and thus more androgynous, just like the women in *Angel Island*.

The women's virginal appearance or status also positions them as exotic. Victor Segalen proposes that "the young girl is as far as can be from us," largely because of her virginal status, and "therefore incomparably precious for all the devotees of diversity" (45). Segalen deems the young girl exotic because of her inexperience, especially sexually. The Americans see no other men on *Angel Island*, which, in addition to the women's youthful quality, leads them to think that the women are virgins. The narrator suggests that Peachy has the appearance of being "untouched" and "unstained" by men

(110). Julia's face is "virginally young" and "the very sublimation of virginity"—indicating not only youthfulness but also a lack of sexual experience (122). Billy exemplifies the men's view on the women's virginal appearance when he describes his first close-up interaction with Honey. He asks the men, "did you ever come across a lonely mountain lake with high reeds growing around the edge? You know how pure and unspoiled and virginal it seems. That was her eyes. They sort of hypnotized me" (49). Just as exotic, untouched lands are often appealing to discoverers, the men depicting the women as virginal indicates their eagerness to introduce the women to male/female relations, including sex.

The women's perceived virginal status aligns with the men's frequent references to them as angels. In a debate over how they should treat the flying women, a frequent topic for the men, Pete says, "They're neither birds nor women...they're angels. Our duty is to fall down and worship them" (88). Pete represents one view of women as morally superior to men, worthy of praise and worship. The women do not only take on this social role of an angel, but also a mystical and spiritual one. The narrator describes Julia as "something white and nebulous" that "came floating out of the dusk"; "It became a silver cloud, a white sculptured spirit of the air. It became an angel, a fairy, a woman—Julia" (122). The dehumanizing usage of "it" contributes to the narrator's exoticization of the women. Julia moves from an indeterminate haze of silver to herself, not so different from scriptural depictions of angels as light and bright. But Julia is not only angelic because of her coloring and beauty, but also because of her power. After the men cut their wings, Ralph explains that Julia sat up in the middle of the night: "She was as white as marble

but there was a light back of her face. And with all that wonderful hair falling down—she looked like an angel. She called to them one by one. And they answered her, one by one...it was like birds answering the mother's bird call" (201). Julia is angelic, superhuman, a leader; she has a surprising beauty and power over the other women.

The men mutilate the women by removing their wings, representing a violent masculinity that maims and limits women. Though Gillmore Irwin depicts them as angelic, the men do not hesitate to align the women with animals to hunt, capture, and tame. Honey refers to them as "critters" when they are unsure what type of being they are interacting with (53). When they make their plans for capture, they set a trap and imprison the women in the clubhouse. When the men approach the building, unsure at first, the "look of irresolution went like a flash from Billy's face, from Honey's, from Pete's. The look of the hunter took its place, keen, alert, determined, cruel" (193). The men enter the clubhouse and treat the women as animals by tying them down and forcibly removing their wings. Though Billy confesses that he "feel[s] like a mucker" and Pete remarks that he "feel[s] like a white slaver," they convince themselves they are taking the right course of action (180). The women are terrified, evidenced by the "pandemonium of cries and sobs and wails" emerging from the Clubhouse (182). Julia leads the women in resisting their capture, but the "men closed in upon them" (186). The men tie the women "to the walls, their hands pinioned in front of them" (187). The men get their shears, and Clara "f[ights] like a leopardess," Lulu "struggle[s] like a cage eagle," and Peachy "beat[s] herself against the wall like a maniac" (188). The narrator again compares the women to animals, in this case to emphasize their wild attempts to escape. To quiet

Peachy's unceasing shrieking, Ralph knocks her out, and she "lay over a chair, limp and silent" (189). Chiquita does not resist and Julia faints "at the first touch of cold steel on her bare shoulders" (189). The shearing is incredibly violent, assaulting the women's bodies by removing their wings. Rich identifies "the mutilation" as a "metaphoric rape"; the men tie down the women and, despite their protesting screams, enact physical violence against their will (161). The attack evokes practices like foot binding or genital mutilation that impact and limit women's physicality. Beyond the sexual connotations and physical violence, the wing removal also has psychological impacts, as it eliminates a crucial aspect of the women's identity and bond. Metaphorically, the violent wing removal represents patriarchal violence and societally-imposed limitations on women.

The men's impulse to tame and control the flying women arises not only because of the bird-like, animalistic quality of their wings, but also because they are women. Just as he calls the unknown being a critter, Honey refers to women generally using the same term shortly after their shipwreck. He tells the other men, "They're a different kind of critter, that's all there is to it; they're amateurs at life. They're a failure as a sex and an outworn convention anyway. Myself, I'm for sending them to the scrap-heap" (42). While he may be convincing himself that they will survive without females on the island, Honey depicts women as inexperienced failures who should be discarded. In contrast, Ralph does not want to get rid of women, but he wants to exert power over them. When they debate their relationship with the flying women, he says, "They're females...our duty is to tame, subjugate, infatuate, and control them" (88). Ralph continuously positions himself as an impatient misogynist. As their time on the island continues, he

grows increasingly frustrated that they have still not interacted closely with the women. He remarks, “What I’d like to know is,” and he slapped his hand smartly against a flat rock, ‘coming down to cases—as we must sooner or later—what is our *right* in regard to these women’” (126). Ralph positions his own wants above those of the women; he is not concerned with the women’s rights, but his own in relation to them. In other words, how far is he able to go ethically to “tame” and “subjugate” the women? But the men are not a monolithic force; they disagree about how they should treat the women. For instance, Billy tells Ralph that he prefers “duty” to “right” (126), Pete says he likes to discuss it as “privilege” (126), and Frank says that if they become friends, they would “have the only right that any man ever has, as far as women are concerned—the right to woo. If he wins, all well and good. If he loses, he must abide by the consequences” (128). Ralph tells them not to be so “high-brow and altruistic” (127) and that “[i]f these girls don’t come to terms, they must be made to come to terms” (129). However, the other men reinforce their difference and opposition to Ralph’s perspective when Billy tells him he’s like “an Apache or a Hottentot” and Pete calls him a “cave-man” (129). For various reasons, though, all the men eventually agree to capturing the women. While both the narrator and the men use exoticizing language, the sexist rhetoric stems largely from the men’s dialogue, emphasizing their demeaning view of women.

The Winged Women’s Domesticity

The men perceive the women as something that they can claim, capture, and name, then put to their own use by making them labor in their homes. When they first arrive on the island, Ralph thinks that if they must go three months without women, the

men will turn into “savages” (12). This possibility appalls Ralph because he fears the lack of heterosexual intimacy and womanly domestic comforts. Ralph posits women as a civilizing force, aligning women with the domestic space as nurturers and ironically, tamers of men. Frank Merrill says, “Women keep up the standards of life. It would have made a great difference with us if there were only one or two women here” (13). Frank espouses his desire for women to maintain his accustomed “standards of life.” Though these views on women may be more pleasant than the desire to tame, claim, or dispose of women, they also idealize women as the moral, stabilizing force of culture and aligns them with domestic labor.

The men capture the women and cut their wings, which become symbols of their newly acquired domestication and western femininity. Julia inquires what the women have done with their wings. Lulu says that one day, she “got them out and cut them into little brooms for the hearth” (288). The wings—once a symbol of strength, ability, and uniqueness—transform into a tool for one of the most menial domestic tasks: sweeping up ash and dirt. Chiquita reveals that she has often mended her fan “from month to month with feathers from [her] own wings” (288). She explains to the other women, “The color is becoming to me—and Frank likes me to carry a fan” (288). Chiquita embedded the feathers in the fan, which not only symbolizes the men’s understanding of femininity, but also evokes their capture because the men laid out fans to attract the women. Clara also finds a domestic use for her wings. She explains, “I made my wings into wall-decorations...I know that it gives Pete a feeling of satisfaction—I don’t exactly know why (unless it’s a sense of having conquered)—to see my wings tacked up on his

bedroom walls” (289). Though not put to a functional use like the broom and fan, the wings become decorations, indicating the women’s integration into the domestic space. Their position on the walls also connotes trophies, like animal heads, signifying the



Figure 14. Rae, John, illustrator. *Angel Island*. By Inez Haynes Gillmore. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 2, Aug. 1913, pp. 16.

men’s satisfaction that they have successfully exerted their influence over the women, both physically through the forced wing clipping and ideologically through traditional, American views of gender roles.

Through the women of *Angel Island’s* domestication, the men disrupt their utopic space. Before the winged women’s capture, the men’s arrival causes disagreements among the women regarding whether and when they should approach. The men suspect that the women are arguing, though the men are doing the same. Ralph comments, “It’s just the disorganization that always falls on women when men appear on their horizon. They’re absolutely without sex-loyalty, you know” (133). Though Pete gets upset with him about this comment, Ralph suggests that

women cannot remain cohesive when men are around. The women’s flying shows—once a demonstration of

their unity—are also no longer possible. In fact, they can only crawl, not walk, because they consider walking on the earth taboo and their feet lack the necessary strength. The

removal of their wings has thus eliminated their ability to control their relationship with the men. Metaphorically, the winged women suggest women's innate power that, in a patriarchal society, is severely limited. In fact, to reach the lake where the men are constructing a village, the men must carry them. Though the women enjoy some elements of their new lifestyle—such as the goods from the ship and their children—the utopic space of freedom and superhuman ability has transformed into a dystopic space of confinement.

The Images in *American Magazine*

The images in *American Magazine* emphasize the women's utopian space, exoticism, and domestication. At first, the journal includes fantastic images of spectacular women with majestic wings, which highlights one element of their utopia and their exoticism. The first image of a winged woman occurs when the men realize what they are. One woman appears alone in black-and-white, making it unclear which woman she is (see fig. 14). She flies alone with her wings surrounding her, pictured above the moon, which the novel aligns with virginity. Her stance appears both beautiful and powerful; her arms and legs indicate strength and grace, and the flowers on her head and wrapped around her body add a sense of femininity. Another image depicts Chiquita kissing Frank with her wings

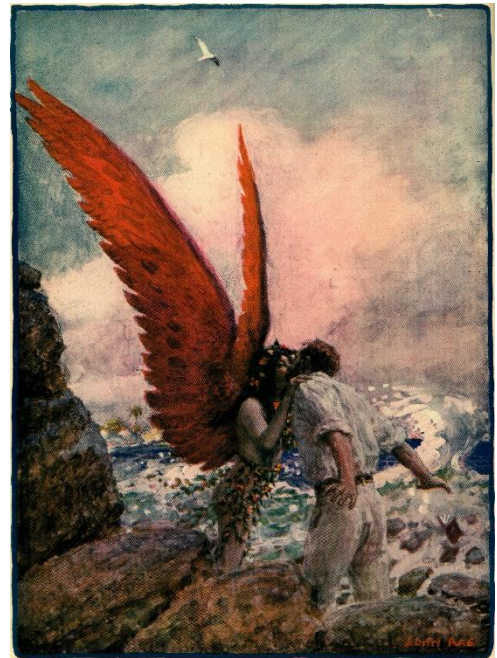


Figure 15. Rae, John, illustrator. *Angel Island*. By Inez Haynes Gillmore. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 3, Sep. 1913, pp. 11.

soaring above her head, emphasizing their majestic quality (see fig. 15). Frank throws his hands behind him as Chiquita grabs his shoulders, placing her in a position of power. The images also convey the women's cohesiveness that builds their utopia. *American Magazine* juxtaposes figure 16 against the men's debate about how they should capture the women, enhancing the women's elusiveness and unity by contrast. Their position on the waves with the birds in the background make them appear not only one with each other, but one with the world around them. Curiously, the wings in this



Figure 16. Rae, John, illustrator. *Angel Island*. By Inez Haynes Gillmore. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 4, Oct. 1913, pp. 65.

image appear *much* smaller. While the illustrator likely decided to depict the more cherub-like wings to keep the other women's faces visible, the smaller wings also emphasize their collective bond rather than their individual strength and glory.

As the story continues after the men clip the women's wings, the images of the women disappear, suggesting the journal only included initial pictures because of the women's exotic, winged quality. The journal also excludes images of the men, but it had previously pictured them in their normal, non-winged state and their status does not change throughout the text. Not only do the images of the women decrease, but the advertisements, many related to domesticity, increasingly crowd the story. I am not suggesting that this feature is an anomaly; images often decrease, and advertisements

typically increase, as serialized stories progress. However, this feature functions specifically in this work to transition the reader from the utopia back to reality. While the



Figure 17. Advertisement for Arco Wand Vacuum Cleaner. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 3, Sep. 1913, pp. 73.

fantastic tale of superhuman women may sweep readers away, the winged women's domestication and the increasing advertisements remind women readers of their position in the

domestic space, the chores they must accomplish there, and their role as domestic consumers. For example, vacuum cleaner ads remind women of their cleaning duties. The Arco Wand advertisement appeals to a desire

for a healthy, clean home and emphasizes that the vacuum cleaner reduces labor; it “makes ‘light housekeeping’ for those without help—a boon to delicate women” (see fig. 17). An

advertisement for Eskay’s Food reminds readers about their childcare responsibilities (see fig. 18). It includes a quotation from a mother who used the product with her own child

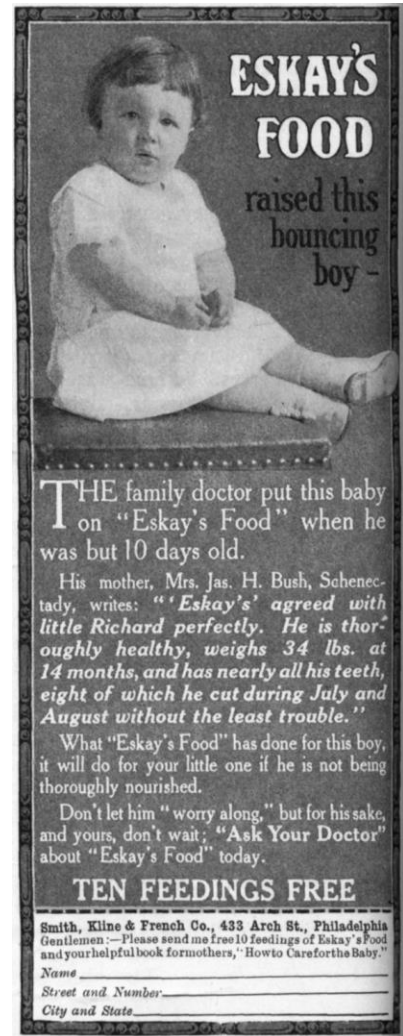


Figure 18. Advertisement for Eskay's Food. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 4, Oct. 1913, pp. 98.

and saw fast developments in his growth. The ad indicates that “[w]hat ‘Eskay’s Food’



Figure 19. Advertisement for Cuticura Soap and Ointment. *American Magazine*, vol. 76, no. 5, Nov. 1913, pp. 102.

has done for this boy, it will do for your little one if he is not being thoroughly nourished.” Additional home products, such as furniture, glassware, and varnish, appear alongside *Angel Island*. In addition to cleaning and childcare, the advertisements remind women of beauty standards they should maintain. A woman looks at her appearance in a hand mirror in an advertisement for Cuticura that prevents “unwholesome conditions of the skin” (see fig. 19). The advertisements reflect expectations that women will maintain feminine beauty standards while successfully managing a household by cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. These images move the reader from the fictional space of *Angel Island* back into their own homes. Not until the winged women’s triumphant resistance against the shipwrecked American men are the readers reminded of women’s potential.

Labor on *Angel Island* and Julia’s Leadership

Angel Island does not address work as much as other utopian texts, largely because the labor on the island is so distinct. They work on community-building through planning, construction, and repopulation, but there is no existing workforce to enter. The women have few

responsibilities or enjoyments and the men work on building the New Camp. Thus, the women must not only navigate their feelings of neglect, but also determine how they should spend their time. Clara is unhappy with how little time she is now able to spend with her husband Pete, who tells her that their labor “is the expression of [their] love and admiration” (272). Clara does not accept this explanation and tells him that they are “building it to please [themselves]” (272). In response, Pete says, “But you are an inspiration, just the same. It is the chief vocation of women” (272). Unlike Pete, most people would not consider it a form of work. The men enjoy working on their project at the New Camp while their wives stay in their homes, but the women grow increasingly discontent with this arrangement.

Julia emerges as a guide for the other women, explaining why the men have shifted their attention to their labor: “We don’t change and grow. Their work does change and grow. It presents new aspects every day, new questions and problems and difficulties, new answers and solutions and adjustments. It makes them think all the time. They love to think” (258). Julia points out that the construction of the New Camp is a constantly changing, challenging, and enjoyable task. In contrast, the women’s labor as homemakers and mothers proves to be an easy task in their island locale, not offering challenges that require in-depth thought. Though it may make twenty-first century readers cringe, the other women say they do not like thinking, but Lulu notes about Julia, “She likes to think. It doesn’t hurt, or bother, or irritate, or tire—or make her look old. It’s as easy for her as breathing. That’s why the men like to talk to her” (259). Julia demonstrates her leadership through her ability and desire to think and communicate with both the men and women.

The reader soon learns that the New Camp was actually Julia's idea, unbeknownst to anyone but Billy (302). After they start their initial construction, she continues devising ways to expand and better their living space, and Billy takes her plans to the men. Billy fears idleness when the work is done, but Julia explains, "I'm working on a plan to lay out the entire island. That will take years and years and years" (274). Julia is the driving force behind the improvements in their community. At first, she is not able to physically contribute to the construction, perhaps representing the social limitations imposed on women in the Progressive Era. However, she becomes an architect for their island, indicating not only her ability to cast a large vision, but also her tenacity.

Though Julia has taken up a secret occupation, the other women's labor in the domestic sphere, which is predominantly childcare, does not fulfill them enough to satisfy them long-term. Julia comments that "the root of evil was only one thing—idleness." Thus, the children were a blessing because they occupied the women's time. However, that form of labor soon dwindled. Julia remarks that the labor at the camp with the children "is a little constructive work—not a great one" (304). On their "beautiful, safe island," the children do not need much protection or guidance. Julia laments, "here we sit day after day, five women who could once fly, big, strong, full-bodied, teeming with various efficiencies and abilities—wasted. If we had kept our wings, we could have been of incalculable assistance to them. Or if we could walk—" (304-305). Gillmore Irwin implies that in a more populated space such as American cities mothers may have more work to raise and protect their children, but the island contains few threats to their wellbeing. Julia contrasts the women's previously powerful, utopic existence with their

currently limited position. The novel allegorically describes the role of Progressive Era women, suggesting that childcare is not an occupation that is life-consuming and/or fully satisfying for all women.

The Women's Resistance and Advocacy for their Children

Julia does not accept the women's position, but she waits to resist until the other women want to fight the men's dictatorial authority over their lives. Ralph tells Peachy that when their daughter Angela turns eighteen, he will cut her wings because flying is charming for young girls but unnatural for women. The women are outraged that the men will cut their daughters' wings and tell each other the lengths they will go to prevent their children's mutilation. Peachy says, "I'll throw myself into the ocean with Angela in my arms before I'll consent to have her wings cut" (283). Clara says she would strike her son Peterkin dead before she let him clip Angela's wings (285). Peachy calls the earth-men "devils" (285). Twenty-first century readers may be disappointed that the women only reach this level of rage when the men threaten to cut their children's wings, not when the men mutilate their own. However, this account reflects a common narrative of women prioritizing their children and their increased likelihood to flee instances of abuse when their children are under threat. For instance, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza flees for her son Harry's wellbeing rather than her own. Similarly, the men's promise to remove the children's wings in *Angel Island* finally motivates the women to fight back. Julia tells the women, "Rebel!...Refuse to let them cut Angela's wings...Rebel in secret. I mean—they overcame us once by strategy. We must beat them now by superior strategy" (286). Julia refers to the men's violent capture and mutilation of the women against their will. Now

she develops a plan to reclaim some of that stolen power for the women and their children.

Julia encourages the other women to move forward with a plan that will ensure their children's wellbeing. She says, "We must stop wasting our energy brooding over what's past. We must stop it at once. Not only that but—for Angela's sake and for the sake of all girl-children who will be born on this island—we must learn to walk" (201). The women of *Angel Island* had previously left their native people because of their difference and now confront a new group who eliminates their ability to fly. In this case, their decision to learn to walk is a simple but powerful means of reclaiming some of their power. The women express their worries about walking being beneath them, or losing their appeal of helplessness, but Julia says that the benefits will overcome these concerns. She writes, "We were innocent and ignorant of earth-conditions because we were too proud to learn about them, because we always assumed that we lowered ourselves by knowing anything about them. Our mistake was that we learned to fly before we learned to walk" (295). Charlotte Rich points out the figurative moral significance of the women's decision to walk: "Julia criticizes her companions' subscription, in metaphoric terms, to the nineteenth-century myth of women's moral superiority to men, an ideology that affirmed the socialization of young women to be passive, dependent, and above all 'innocent'" ("From Near-Dystopia to Utopia" 161). While I agree with the challenge Gillmore Irwin presents to the standard views of morality, I also contend that the women's decision to increase their physical ability is a literal argument. Their desire to walk reflects discourse of New Women who proposed that "education, exercise, and

careers would strengthen women's bodies and minds" rather than diminish their femininity (Smith-Rosenberg 262). New Women wanted to push the boundaries of women's opportunities, not just to remove women from the limiting perception of superior morality but also to strengthen their minds and bodies. Julia is similarly asking the women to challenge their notions about walking and to practice the skill that will bring them more freedom and power.

The women agree to adapt their view on walking and incorporate the skill into their comprehensive plan of resistance. They practice walking in secret while the men are away working at the New Camp, and by the end of three months they have successfully mastered the skill. The women then approach the men, shocking them with their new ability, and when Ralph asks Peachy what their walking means, Julia explains,

It means that we have decided among ourselves that we will not permit you to cut Angela's wings. It means that rather than have you do that, we will leave you, taking our children with us. If you will promise us that you will not cut Angela's wings nor the wings of any child born to us, we in our turn will promise to return to our homes and take our lives up with you just where we left off. (332)

She goes on to suggest, "There is another kind of happiness of which when you cut our wings we were no longer capable—the happiness that comes from a sense of absolute freedom. We can bear that for ourselves, but not for our daughters" (338). The men say that they will not allow the children to keep their wings, so the women take them to a remote cave. They return several times, asking if Angela will fly. The men repeatedly say no, so the women capitalize on their primary value to the men: their presence, as companions, mothers, and homemakers, and threaten that they "will leave Angel Island

forever” (346). The men initially disregard their threat, not understanding how the women would even be capable of traveling off the island. However, their resistance, advocating for the rights of their children, restored their utopia; they reformed into a cohesive, unified group and the time away from the men’s shears allowed their wings to regrow. Reminiscent of their earlier performances, Julia suddenly “spoke in the loud, clear tones of her flying days and she used the language of her girlhood. It was a word of command. And as it fell from her lips, the five women leaped from the top of the knoll. But they did not fall into the lake. They did not touch its surface. They flew” (347). Gillmore Irwin forthrightly communicates the women’s triumphant success, allegorically suggesting that Progressive Era women could overcome obstacles to reach their full potential. The women are not as graceful as they once were, but they can successfully fly to the other side of the lake. Julia’s position as the leader of the women, their unity in flight, and the use of their native language are all reestablished. The women restore their utopia by reclaiming their flight, which gives them the power to control their relationship to the men and leave the island if they so desire. The men concede to Angela keeping her wings, which partially restores the women’s previous utopia.

The winged women’s advocacy for their children aligns with women’s efforts to improve the wellbeing of children in the Progressive Era—a time that saw a “surge of child-centered activism” (Kleinberg 147). The National Congress of Mothers was founded in 1897, and Kleinberg suggests that the organization “epitomized what Molly Ladd-Taylor has described as sentimental maternalism, a desire to preserve traditional gender roles while improving child welfare and professionalizing motherhood” (146).

The organization, which would eventually become the Parent-Teachers Association, advocated for improvements for children and youth. Progressive Era women also frequently promoted mother's pensions, which provided funds for "widowed mothers with dependent children" (Kleinberg 147). The mother's pension allowed mothers without income from a male figure to care for their children in their own home. This program demonstrates the perception that a mother's care of her own children enhances their development. In 1912, the Children's Bureau was formed, which "operated as the women's branch of the federal government in the 1910s and 1920s" (Boris 110). Eileen Boris explains that the Bureau was "an important symbol of federal interest in child welfare, but its limited budget and small staff suggest that Congress intended it to be merely symbolic" (Boris 111). However, the women fought diligently, first to improve infant health (an issue appealing to a wider range of women), then to reform child labor laws. Many of these reform movements related to children—such as the Maternity and Infancy Act that provided funds for education on maternal and infant health—"brought together suffragists and club women, many of whom would have been in different political camps in the debate over suffrage" (Pierce 70). Women from both conservative and progressive frameworks collaborated to improve children's lives—both in their own homes and broader communities—making the emphasis on children in both novels appealing to a wide audience. In Fry's *Other Worlds*, the children's improved wellbeing and maintenance of traditional gender roles would likely appeal to conservative readers. Similarly, in *Angel Island*, the winged women's fight to obtain more freedoms and rights for their flying children could appeal to a wide range of mothers and women activists.

The birth of Julia's child—a son with wings—highlights that their new utopia benefits men and women. After they agree to allow Angela's wings to remain, Julia asks Billy to marry her (a significant shift from the other partnerships) and they have a child. Just after the birth, Billy approaches and Julia says, "My husband—our son—has—wings" (351). Though the island's first sons were born without wings, once the men and women restore harmonious relations, both genders benefit because all the new children can fly. From a twenty-first century standpoint, the text's ending invites criticism because the women do not advocate for their own rights to fly. While readers may rightly critique this feature of the text, the women's adaptability is notable; rather than giving up when they can no longer fly, they learn to walk. Gillmore Irwin may be claiming that women should abandon their perceived moral superiority to labor with men in public and private spaces. The flying women are comfortable being on an equal footing with their partners, while allowing future generations of men and women to equally share the freedom of flight. The text has also received criticism because just after the birth of her child, "Julia's eyes closed for the last time" (351). Though they obtain utopia, heroic Julia does not get to fully enjoy it. Charlotte Rich explains, "Julia, the feminist leader of Gillmore's winged women, dies at the end of the novel after giving birth to the first male child born with wings, thus relapsing into a conventional, sacrificial feminine role" and the novel does not reveal whether Gillmore Irwin depicts Julia's death "in earnest or ironically" ("From Near-Dystopia to Utopia" 165). Unlike most heroines of reformist utopias, Julia dies after she realizes her goal for future generations, now including her own son.

Reviews and Responses to *Angel Island*

Many reviewers thought the novel was strange, but Gillmore Irwin intentionally employs fantasy to present her ideas about gender roles in an accessible and captivating fashion. One reviewer explains, “Part allegory, part fairy tale, part realistic portrayal of several by no means extraordinary types of men and women, it is a decidedly unusual book” (Review of *Angel Island*, *The New York Times*, 45). The reviewer emphasizes the novel’s transgression of genre boundaries as it depicts flying women who allegorically represent women in early twentieth-century America. Another reviewer similarly comments:

There can be no question that Mrs. Gillmore’s new volume is a very unusual experiment, an impressive and rather daring allegory, yet treated in a vein of such poetic imagery and shown through such a rainbow mist of shimmering light, that one scarcely realises until sober second thought that it says things in regard to feminism which it would not be easy to say in print in any less indirect way. (Review of *Angel Island*, *The Bookman*, 76)

The reviewer underscores the novel’s uniqueness and praises Gillmore Irwin’s language and imagery. Through its fantastic qualities, the novel presents its argument about women in a more palatable fashion. Gillmore Irwin was intentional about this strategy, as she sees the genre as “the most telling way of convincing the unconvinced” (“Noted American Story-Writer: Out for Suffrage in Her Latest Fiction” 2). Though the novel is atypical and difficult to categorize, Gillmore Irwin writes the allegory of the flying women to present her argument regarding women’s position.

Contemporary readers of *Angel Island* often commented on women's resignation to their inferior position—both in the novel and in early twentieth-century America. For instance, one reviewer in the *New York Times* explains that “heroic, clear-sighted Julia...realized that the unsatisfactoriness of the general situation was quite as much the women's fault as the men's, just as their initial capture, and wing-shearing was in great measure the result of their own coquetry and curiosity” (Review of *Angel Island*, *The New York Times*, 45). This reviewer points out the women's culpability in their decreased status, even in their initial capture. Another reviewer explains,

Mrs. Gillmore's allegorical comment on woman's nature is that they are content; they miss the airy freedom of their former flights, but they accept the new burdens and restraints, and their one revolt comes later when the fierce mother instinct is aroused in defence of their children. (Review of *Angel Island*, *The Bookman*, 76)

This reviewer describes the women's call to action when the men's decision to cut their children's wings enrages them. Up until that point, they seem content even with their mistreatment. Gillmore Irwin emphasizes this uncomfortable point; readers should feel frustrated and displeased that the women accept their abuse, in turn drawing readers' attention to areas of their lives in which they have resigned themselves to inferiority. In her discussion of writing the novel, Gillmore Irwin explains, “I began to see that, although men are a little to blame in regard to this condition of the subjection of women, they are not entirely or even much to blame” (“Noted American Story-Writer: Out for Suffrage in Her Latest Fiction” 2). Readers clearly understood Gillmore Irwin's argument about women's culpability in the text. While blaming women for their historically

inferior social position seems unfair, if women have agency in maintaining the status quo, their ability to create change is apparent. By encouraging women to consider how their own actions contribute to their positionality, Gillmore Irwin encourages women to make changes that will allow them to metaphorically fly.

Julia is not a typical New Woman of turn-of-the-century America because she exists in a utopia that borders the reformist and revolutionary; the society mimics American gender roles but in a remote location. However, the American men forcibly convert the flying women to ideals of traditional womanhood. The women become docile, nurturing managers of the household and children. Julia resists this position, delaying marriage and children and engaging in the labor of developing the island. In this way, she becomes aligned with New Women of the early twentieth century. Like many other heroines from utopic texts that depict varieties of the New Woman, she finds love, but she is only willing to marry Billy when the society rises to meet her expectations. On this remote island, she becomes a laborer, a wife, a mother, and a leader in the community, and through her efforts she betters everyone's lives, making her a heroic New Woman. She tells the women, "There is only one way out. And there is only one duty before us—to learn to walk that we may teach our daughters to walk—to preserve our daughter's wings that they may teach their sons to fly" (306). Julia employs the language of duty, not to reinforce notions of women's place in the home like Bertha Wheeler, but to emphasize a responsibility to enhance their own abilities and fight for the rights of their children. She encourages the women to learn to walk so that they can advocate for their daughters' ability to fly, which will improve the lives of everyone.

Conclusion

In *Angel Island*, the winged women must break out of the confining gender roles the men establish to create a society where the women can choose to care for children or pursue other interests like Julia's community planning. Though the men attempt to replicate American gender roles, the women resist and break out of these expectations of subservience and advocate for their children's right to fly. The novel allegorically proposes that greater rights for women—even in the next generation—will be advantageous for all. *Other Worlds* creates a similar, though more propagandistic, argument through its revisions of domestic arrangements and childcare that free women to pursue their own interests. Both texts critique women's alignment with the domestic space and the duties of cooking, cleaning, and childcare. The novels assert that heroic New Women—like Julia and Mira—can advocate for the rights of their children and improve their own lives by lessening their domestic responsibilities. Unlike the other novels discussed in this project, *Other Worlds* and *Angel Island* depict substantially distinct societies outside of the United States. Given that the novels addressing domesticity and childcare are the most revolutionary, these topics are particularly challenging for Progressive Era women to revise in their here-and-now. Nevertheless, the New Women heroines throughout all the novels seek ways to enhance their lives and communities.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

What authors can imagine for their utopias is often as important as what they cannot. While the women authors whom I have discussed could envision a world with satisfying wage-earning work and more egalitarian romantic relationships, they were less able to envisage racially integrated utopias or communities that resolve the difficulties of childcare and domestic chores. The publication of texts such as *Iola Leroy* and *Other Worlds* demonstrates that women authors and reformers wanted to explore such topics, but they faced constraints on what was conceivable, even in a fictionalized utopia. For instance, both texts discussed in the fourth chapter depict communities isolated from white culture, and both novels analyzed in the fifth chapter can only imagine alternative systems to domesticity and childcare outside of the United States. Taken together, these texts suggest that the United States was not in a position to adequately address issues like racism, domestic work, or childcare in the Progressive Era. In contrast, the women authors I discuss in the second and third chapters are eager to provide visions of reformed Americas where women work for wages and marry companionate partners.

Revolutionary Utopias: *Herland*

While racism and childcare were difficult topics to address in reformist utopias, some women authors experimented with radically different societies in their revolutionary utopias. These works articulate theoretical considerations rather than

practical revisions to American culture. Pauline Hopkins' *Of One Blood* (1902), which I discuss briefly in the fourth chapter, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*⁶⁹ (1915) both describe revolutionary utopias. Though *Herland* offers captivating visions of a distinct world that affirms the power and strength of women, the novel lacks a vision for Gilman's contemporaneous reader's time and place. In Gilman's text, three American men—Jeff, Terry, and the narrator Van—locate an all-female world absent of men for two thousand years. The women's strength and their society's functionality astound the men. By highlighting the vast distinctions between Herlanders and American women, Gilman emphasizes how systematic sexism limits the latter from actualizing their full potential in their communities and the workforce. However, given that most people wanted a world of men *and* women, and the fact that human parthenogenesis is impossible, *Herland* fails to offer suggestions for bettering women's position in contemporary American society. Instead, Gilman's novel works to change readers' perceptions of women's capabilities. *Herland* revises dominant ideologies of the Progressive Era, but the society does not apply to American culture in tangible ways.

Herland also lacks New Women protagonists who model reformist action for Progressive Era readers. Though strong, capable women live in the foreign land, the novel features male characters who observe the revolutionary utopia but take no part in its creation. Gilman foregrounds the American men's interactions with the society to highlight their problematic views of women, including idolization, outright misogyny,

⁶⁹ Gilman's novel was originally serialized in her monthly publication *The Forerunner* in 1915, and was not published in book form until 1979 by Pantheon Books.

and supposedly scientific views of women's inferior status. The Herland women challenge the men's understandings of womanhood, but the utopia does not delineate a path for American women's improved status. Herland cannot serve as a model because unlike reformist utopias in the process of improvement, it has already reached near perfection. Terry says he likes "Something Doing" and that in Herland "it's all done" (99). Van affirms Terry's perspective, explaining that the "years of pioneering" were past and "the initial difficulties had long since been overcome" (99). In Herland, the "untroubled peace, the unmeasured plenty, the steady health, the large good will and smooth management which ordered everything, left nothing to overcome. It was like a pleasant family in an old established, perfectly run country place" (99). While this well-functioning system supports a positive environment for the women, by placing the problems in the past, Gilman does not demonstrate how the male characters could apply the ideas to American culture, or how readers could implement the Herland customs in their own lives. Even if Gilman included their problem-solving process, the Herlanders' issues were different from America's. *Herland* may challenge readers' understandings of womanhood, but it does not offer easily imitated ideas for revising societal structures that limit women's position in the United States. As such, revolutionary utopias like *Herland* do not share the literary function of reformist utopias: the ability to persuade and inspire individual women to create change.

Reformist Utopias

Rather than passive male protagonists like Van who simply observe a foreign land, New Woman heroines like Diantha and Iola create their desired personal life and

community. Much like the women authors themselves, these female protagonists exemplify New Womanhood and create better communities by improving the wellbeing of mill workers, eliminating financially manipulative trusts, or enhancing the lives of African Americans. These changes reform American culture rather than create radically different worlds like those depicted in *Of One Blood* and *Herland*. The novels highlight women's concerns beyond suffrage and underscore their belief in the reformist mindset of the era. In addition to societal changes, the New Woman protagonists cultivate personal satisfaction by seeking satisfying labor and supportive marital partners. Through highlighting individuals *and* society, the reformist utopias expand definitions of the utopian genre. As an extension of the women authors' political work, the reformist utopias present visions of better worlds. The writers describe everyday women who make relatively small but important changes in their lives and communities, encouraging women readers to do the same.

The reformist utopian novels impose theoretical ideas about society onto narrative form, demonstrating how they could work in practice. An editorial comment in the *Forerunner* introducing Gilman's utopian short story, "Aunt Mary's Pie Plant," explains this function:

Our readers have already been made acquainted with many of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's ideas on subjects in which women are interested. In 'Aunt Mary's Pie Plant' Mrs. Gilman's characters show in a convincing way how her beliefs and remedies would work out in practise. (Gilman, "Aunt Mary's Pie Plant" 117-118)

This commentator emphasizes the translation of ideas—such as Gilman’s in *Women and Economics*—into a realistic fictional example. The passage implies that such texts are persuasive, highlighting that the characters “show” Gilman’s ideas “in a convincing way.” Like all reformist utopias, “Aunt Mary’s Pie Plant” shows “how beliefs and remedies would work out in practice.” By providing fiction instead of non-fiction, Gilman and the other women authors appeal to a potentially different audience and anticipate concerns about their arguments’ practicality by narratively showing what they imagined. Critical to this demonstration is the individual New Woman heroine who puts the theories into action, substantially improving herself and her community.

Declining Progressivism and Utopianism

The reformist utopias capture the hopeful, revisionist spirit of the Progressive Era, but the period ended around 1920. Many historians assert that the energy of the era persisted during World War I, though it declined afterwards. For example, Steven L. Piott suggests that the progressivism before the war transformed into a more “reactive and repressive” nationalism (xv). After the war, Americans “longed for peacetime ‘normalcy’” and searched “for a life completely devoid of either political or social responsibility” on the domestic and international front, which diminished the spirit of progressivism (Walters 4). In addition to the waning politicism and rising insulation, increased hardships caused division: “The social harmony that characterized America’s entry into World War I came to an end in 1919 with runaway inflation, a wave of labor strikes, race riots, and the Red Scare” (Piott xv). In addition to these challenges, progressivism slowed because many dominant reform movements had achieved some

success. For instance, many states passed laws restricting child labor, and the eighteenth amendment prohibited the manufacture, sale, and distribution of alcoholic beverages. Additionally, by 1920, women's lives were much improved; many had access to birth control, exercised more frequently, lived in cleaner conditions, and bore fewer children (Schneider and Schneider 245-246). The long struggle for suffrage ended victoriously when Congress ratified the nineteenth amendment on August 18, 1920. The completion of major reformist goals, combined with changing perspectives after World War I, led to the end of the Progressive Era.

The Progressive Era's conclusion coincided with a sharp decline in utopian literature, not surprising given the waning optimism that had driven the historical and literary period. Carol Farley Kessler divides women's utopias into three periods: 1836-1920, 1921-1960, and 1960-present.⁷⁰ The number of utopian texts significantly decreased between 1920 and 1960, and dystopia became "the dominant form of the genre in the 1920s and 1930s" (Albinski 11). Darby Lewes concurs that after 1920, utopian fiction by women became more dystopic; British and American "women's utopian texts began to take on a considerably darker tone: dreams became nightmares, technology an enemy, progress an illusion, and feminism a forgotten issue" (107). Complicated political, social, and economic factors impacted the waves of the genre, and these influences markedly pushed women authors away from utopian fiction in 1920.

⁷⁰ Utopian literature reemerged in the 1960s during the Civil Rights and women's movements, but dystopian literature has regained popularity in the last two decades. Kessler's second edition of *Daring to Dream* was published in 1995, immediately preceding the recent upswing in dystopian literature.

Beyond World War I and the passage of the 19th amendment, the reasons behind utopian literature's decline are complex and varied. Darby Lewes argues, "The chaos, brutality, and barbarism of the First World War seemed to prove incontrovertibly that humankind was not ready for (and perhaps not worthy of) utopia" (107). Though not in domestic territory, World War I stories of chemical warfare and horrid trenches reminded Americans of humankind's capacity for violence and amorality, causing writers to highlight society's dystopian elements rather than visions of improved worlds. Additionally, Kessler argues that "the passage of Amendment 19 apparently lulled women into thinking that all needs could now be met" (*Daring to Dream* xxv). Viewed alternatively, the decrease in utopian fiction could result from their frustration that "long-sought enfranchisement did not bring about long-anticipated change" (Lewes 107). Regardless, women were not united in the 1920s; "women's groups began to reencounter the historical rationalist/evangelical split" and "drifted increasingly toward the more conservative, and hence apparently safer, evangelical model" (Lewes 109). Not surprisingly given this shift, "only eight of the thirty-five utopias" published between 1921 and 1960 contain arguably "feminist values" (Kessler, *Daring to Dream* xxv). As Nan Bowman Albinski asserts, "The history of feminism's internal conflict and external enmity is reflected in the almost total disappearance of feminist eutopian [*sic*] novels during this period" (109). Therefore, women's lack of unity and sense of complacency, in conjunction with post-war cynicism, contributed to the decline in women's utopian novels after 1920.

A Lasting Legacy

Despite progressivism's decline in the 1920s, the reform movements of the Progressive Era, many of which women spearheaded, have had a lasting impact on American culture. Noralee Franklin and Nancy S. Dye argue that "...the Progressive Era marks the beginning of contemporary America, and within it we can trace the roots of institutions, policies, and values that still define the United States as a nation a century later" (Frankel and Dye 9). Similarly, Piott remarks that "the period from the 1890s to the



Figure 20. "Mineral Wells Farm Club Has 40th Anniversary." *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*.

1920s was the time when modern America was really born" (xii). While many significant changes occurred at the governmental level, the work of reformers also significantly impacted individual lives. Progressive Era women reformed their own positions, not just by gaining suffrage, but by increasingly obtaining wage-earning work and demanding more egalitarian marital partners. While large-scale movements like the National American Woman

Suffrage Association are easily recognizable, small organizations and

individual women created countless valuable changes in local communities. For instance,

my paternal great-grandmother, Anna Mae Matheny, was a founding member of the Mineral Wells Farm Club in my West Virginia hometown (see fig. 20). The organization improved school buildings and the fairgrounds and fundraised for the community building where I attended weekly Salisbury 4-H Club meetings for ten years. The efforts of my great-grandmother and her companions in this women's club tangibly impacted the community and my own life.

Like Anna Mae, the women authors I discuss in this project were interested in real changes to the social, economic, and material realities of American's lives in the Progressive Era. The reformist utopias capture this dual focus on practical changes and a hope for a better world that would offer a comfortable and fulfilling life within a flourishing community. For example, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *What Diantha Did*, Diantha's business improves her own life and awakens the other characters to their own possibilities. The narrator explains, "Orchardina basked and prospered; its citizens found their homes happier and less expensive than ever before, and its citizenesses began to wake up and to do things worth while" (*The Forerunner*, vol. 1, no. 14, pp. 10). The authors write compelling narratives about individual women like Diantha who take action and potentially inspire readers to change their homes, communities, and the nation. Reading the reformist utopias today can not only expand our understanding of women's interests and progress over the last century but also inspire continued efforts toward a more just and equal society for ourselves and our communities.

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