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**New Women, New Technologies: The Interrelation between  
Gender and Technology at the Victorian *Fin de Siècle***

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. Ideas and passages reproduced from other sources have been properly acknowledged. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Lena Wångren

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## Abstract

This thesis treats the interrelation between gender and technology at the Victorian *fin de siècle*, focusing on the figure of the New Woman. It aims to offer a re-examination of this figure of early feminism in relation to the technologies and techniques of the time, suggesting the simultaneously abstract and material concept of technology as a way to more fully understand the ‘semi-fictionality’ of the New Woman; her emergence as both a discursive figure in literature and as a set of social practices. Major authors include Grant Allen, Tom Gallon, and H. G. Wells, examined in the larger context of late-Victorian and *fin de siècle* popular and New Woman fiction.

**Chapter 1** outlines the theoretical and methodological premises of the thesis. Locating a specific problematic in the ‘semi-fictionality’ of the New Woman, it draws upon wider discussions within gender and feminist theory to consider this central concern in New Woman criticism. Criticising gynocritical assumptions, the chapter offers a way of reading New Woman literature without relying on the gender of the author – taking Grant Allen’s (in)famous New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* as a case in point. It concludes by suggesting technology as a way of examining the figure of the New Woman in its historiospecific and material context.

**Chapter 2** establishes the typewriter as a case in point for examining the interrelation between gender and technology at the *fin de siècle*. Through reading Grant Allen’s *The Type-Writer Girl* and Tom Gallon’s *The Girl Behind the Keys*, it examines the semantic ambiguity of the term ‘typewriter’ to demonstrate the sexual ambiguity of the New Woman and also the mutual interaction between individual agency and technology.

**Chapter 3** examines the technology most associated with the New Woman: the safety bicycle. Through reading H. G. Wells’s *The Wheels of Chance* and Grant Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures*, it considers how the social practice of bicycling comes to be associated with concepts of female freedom, problematising the notion of the bicycle as a technology of democratisation.

**Chapter 4** discusses the figure of the New Woman nurse as a *fin de siècle* figuration of the Nightingale New Style nurse. Examining the emergence of the clinical hospital, it places the New Woman nurse in a context of medical modernity. Reading Grant Allen’s *Hilda Wade* as an intervention in a debate on hospital hierarchies, it explores the institutional technology of the hospital in the formation of notions of gender.

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## Preface

And I heard a sound of something cracking and I looked and I saw the band that bound the burden on to her back broken asunder; and the burden rolled on to the ground.

And I said, 'What is this?'

And he said, 'The Age-of-nervous-force has killed him with the knife he holds in his hand; and silently and invisibly he has crept up to the woman, and with that knife of Mechanical Invention he has cut the band that bound the burden to her back. The Inevitable Necessity is broken. She must rise now.'

(Olive Schreiner, 'Three Dreams in a Desert' (1890), 310)

The close of the nineteenth century marks an epoch of social revolutions! Humanity is borne more and more rapidly along on the course of the ever-widening, the ever-swifter flowing stream of progress, through scene after scene of novelty, where stupendous events and marvellous discoveries and inventions crowd thickly one upon another. ... [M]ore discussed, debated, newspaper paragraphed, caricatured, howled down and denied, or acknowledged and approved, as the case may be, than any of them, we have the new woman ... immeasurably the first in importance, the most abounding in potentialities and in common interest. ... Is the nineteenth century new woman a myth, as so many people aver – a figment of the journalistic imagination ...? Is she, indeed, none other than an intensely aggravated type of the unwomanly, unlovable, unlovely, untidy, undomesticated, revolting, shrieking, man-hating shrew of all the centuries? Or is she on the other hand, verily an altogether new type of woman evolved from out the ages?

(Mrs. Morgan-Dockrell, 'Is the New Woman a Myth?' (1896), 339-340)

In Olive Schreiner's 1890 short story 'Three Dreams in a Desert' the narrator, having fallen asleep under a mimosa tree, in three dreams experiences an allegorical journey from slavery to emancipation. In the first dream the narrator finds herself in a desert, in which she encounters the figure of a woman lying motionless in the sand, bound by chains and weakened by ages of subordination. But after having her chains cut off by 'Mechanical Invention', the woman staggers to her knees, and continues towards emancipation; the other two dreams see the narrator journey through a purgatorial river, and then arriving at a heavenly future. This thesis will focus on just what cuts off the woman's chains in Schreiner's allegory: that 'Mechanical Invention' of the late nineteenth century. Mrs. Morgan-Dockrell in the *Humanitarian* in 1896 names a 'course of the ever-widening, the ever-swifter flowing stream of

progress, through scene after scene of novelty, where stupendous events and marvellous discoveries and inventions crowd thickly one upon another' (339). The Victorian *fin de siècle* meant social revolutions and restructurings, both in terms of gender and technology; Schreiner's dream suggests a clear connection between the new technologies and the revision of gender.

More discussed than any of the novelties and transformations of the late nineteenth century, according to Morgan-Dockrell, is the New Woman: 'immeasurably the first in importance, the most abounding in potentialities and in common interest' (340). But who was the New Woman, connecting contemporary social, literary, and technological transformations? The answer seems as contested in twenty-first-century scholarship as in the late nineteenth-century debates. But what we can certainly conclude from the above quotes is that if the New Woman was a literary figure she was still always interconnected with the material world. This thesis will focus on two specifics of the New Woman that are suggested by these passages from Schreiner and Morgan-Dockrell. Firstly, we see that the figure is placed in a historiospecific technological modernity. Secondly, we see that the New Woman exists simultaneously as a 'figment of the journalistic imagination' and an 'altogether new type of woman' (340); she exists both as abstract concept and as 'real-life' phenomenon.

Despite this twofold character of New Woman writing, the figure of the New Woman has been treated as a solely discursive figure, without much attention to sociohistorical material context. As I hope to demonstrate throughout this thesis, much New Woman scholarship has tended to evade the question of the 'semi-fictionality' of the New Woman, the emergence of the figure as both a literary trope and as a set of social practices. The complex relation between literature and the material world has been overlooked by making a too strong divide between 'real' women and 'representations' of the New Woman. The term 'semi-fictional', adopted from Sally Ledger's *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (1997) to characterise the 'epistemological status' of the New Woman, 'the precise nature of her relationship to the lived experience of the feminists of the late nineteenth-century women's movement' (3), is a problematic one; or rather, it is problematic that its signification has not been fully explored. This thesis will focus



on the material social world, the historiospecificity of the 1890s, with its growing literary market and technological modernisation, alongside works of New Woman writing, in order to more fully examine the figure of the New Woman.

It is this epistemological problematic of the New Woman that makes Michel Foucault the most useful theorist within this thesis, providing a framework in which to examine the workings of discourse, its relation to social practice, the relation between technology and society, and also the work of the literary text itself. One can argue that a Foucauldian approach is ‘crucial to the dynamism of literary studies’, as it allows critics to ‘reflect upon the presuppositions and cultural-historical conditions of their methods’, while also promoting the interdisciplinary approach that has recently renovated the arts and humanities (Downing 68). As my vantage point stand therefore Foucault’s genealogical writings, considering history not as essential identities of origin but as ideas constructed within certain contexts. ‘Literary language for Foucault’, Lisa Downing states, is ‘the material trace of the specific conditions of our existence in time and in space’ (61). It is historically and specifically situated, while at the same time harbouring an endless number of possible significations. As Foucault states in *Death and the Labyrinth*, a real examination of literature ‘opens the text in all its force and reveals, beneath its marvels, the muffled phonetic explosion of arbitrary sentences ... each word at the same time energized and drained, filled and emptied by the possibility of there being yet another meaning, this one or that one, or neither one nor the other, but a third, or none’ (Foucault, *Death* 9, 13). Most importantly, after Foucault, ‘literature can no longer be read simply as an outward expression of the writer’s imagination, his feelings, intentions or political commitments’ (Oksala, ‘From the Death’ 199). Foucault in ‘What is an Author?’ famously theorises the ‘author function’ (211), warning against biographical criticism; that is, against using the author’s biography to interpret the meaning of a body of works.

The specific usefulness of Foucault for this thesis lies in the consideration of texts themselves as not only historically situated, but as also harbouring a type of agency of their own. Intersecting with Foucault in this thesis are various feminist literary critics building on or problematising certain aspects of Foucault’s work. Especially Foucault’s notion of the author function has enabled poststructuralist

feminism to look beyond the gender of the author, focusing on the potential of the text itself. Texts are not merely instruments for their author, but they are ‘meaning machines’ in themselves. Elizabeth Grosz states:

A text is not the repository of knowledges or truths, the site for the storage of information ... so much as it is a process of scattering thought; scrambling terms, concepts, and practices; forging linkages; becoming a form of action. A text is not simply a tool or an instrument; seeing it as such makes it too utilitarian, too amenable to intention, too much designed for a subject. Rather, it is explosive, dangerous, volatile. ... Texts, like concepts, do things, make things, perform connections, bring about new alignments. (57-58)

Grosz indeed describes texts as ‘little bombs’ that, when they do not explode in one’s face, ‘scatter thoughts and images into different linkages and new alignments’ (58). Throughout this thesis there is an understanding that, indeed, texts *do things*. The literary re/presentations of New Woman figures throughout the thesis are thus *not* to be seen as mere examples or ‘case studies’ of social transformation, but instead as taking part in shaping cultural figurations and understandings of the New Woman.

The title of the thesis parallels Ann Ardis’s seminal work *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990), which was one of the first reconsiderations of New Woman literature, following a renewed scholarly interest in the *fin de siècle*. Treating over one hundred New Woman writers, Ardis reads New Woman literature as an anticipation of literary modernism, as aesthetics, and formulates the figure or genre as a field of study. Like this early re-examination of the New Woman, much New Woman scholarship after Ardis has treated the New Woman as a merely discursive concept, taking the figure outside of its sociohistorical material context of late nineteenth-century technological modernity. This thesis asserts that the figure of the New Woman can be more fruitfully examined not just as a discursive figure or literary trope, but also as relating to a specific technological modernity; placed also in a material world.

Regarding the structure of the thesis, the first chapter is slightly different in its structure and mechanism than the following three. Chapters two to four are divided into three parts, which can roughly be formulated as: sociohistorical context – theoretical context – literary analysis. The methodological reason for this lies in examining the New Woman as simultaneously a discursive concept and a set of social practices. The sociohistorical context works as a grounding point from which

to enter the literary texts. The theoretical context, situated spatially in the thesis (in each chapter) between sociohistorical context and literary analysis, bridges the two; the notion of technology as both abstract and material concept is that which binds the sections together.

The first chapter introduces the theoretical and methodological premises of the thesis. Locating a specific problematic in the ‘semi-fictionality’ of the New Woman, it draws upon wider discussions within gender and feminist theory to consider this central concern in New Woman criticism. Criticising gynocritical assumptions, the chapter offers a way of reading New Woman literature without relying on the gender of the author – taking Grant Allen’s (in)famous New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* as a case in point. It concludes by suggesting the concept of technology as a way of examining the figure of the New Woman in its historiospecific and material context, independently of the gender of the author. Technology is defined as both abstract and material; as material object, knowledge, technique, and volition (through technologies of self-formation).

Having presented this general argument, chapter two then establishes the typewriter as a case in point for examining the interrelation between gender and technology at the *fin de siècle*, the importance of considering technologies as part of mobile power relations rather than as deterministic tools. Through reading Grant Allen’s *The Type-Writer Girl* and Tom Gallon’s *The Girl Behind the Keys*, it examines the semantic ambiguity of the term ‘typewriter’ to demonstrate the sexual ambiguity of the New Woman typist and also the mutual interaction between individual agency and technology.

Once this gender-technology interrelation has been established, asserting the crucial account of agency needed to analyse the technological New Woman, chapter three goes on to examine the technology most associated with the New Woman: the safety bicycle. Through reading H. G. Wells’s *The Wheels of Chance* and Grant Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures*, it considers the processes through which the social practice of bicycling comes to be associated with concepts of female freedom. It also problematises the notion of the bicycle as a technology of democratisation, once again stressing the mutual shaping of notions of technology and social order.

Chapter four is slightly different from the earlier two, in that the main technology focused on is the knowledge-producing institutional technology of the hospital. Here, the New Woman nurse becomes the focal point for examining medical technologies both as objects, knowledges, and techniques, in relation to technologies of self-formation. It purposes to demonstrate how gender relations within the hospital are not static but mobile. Reading Grant Allen's *Hilda Wade* as an intervention in a debate on hospital hierarchies, it also examines the technology of writing itself, texts as social and cultural agents.

Criticising previous attempts to structure the debates and works on the New Woman as simply gendered, the New Woman texts that I study and refer to throughout the thesis are written by both male and female authors – although the major analyses are of works written by men. Rather than asserting the gender of an author as a basis for analysis, this thesis will focus instead on the ways in which notions of gender play out within and between both literary and sociohistorical texts.

## Chapter 1

### The New Woman and the Gender-Technology-Modernity Nexus

#### 1.1 *Fin de Siècle* Modernity and the New Woman

##### Introduction

The Victorian *fin de siècle* was, as Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst state in *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History*, an epoch marked by the collision between old and new, the Victorian and the Modern (xiii).<sup>1</sup> Max Nordau comments in *Degeneration* (1892, translated into English 1895) on the immense changes that had swept through Western Europe with the industrialisation of society, and the effects that humanity suffered:

All its conditions of life have, in this period of time, experienced a revolution unexampled in the history of the world. Humanity can point to no century in which the inventions which penetrate so deeply, so tyrannically, into the life of every individual are crowded so thick as in ours. ... In our times ... steam and electricity have turned the customs of life of every member of the civilized nations upside down. (37)

Arguably, never before had so great social and political changes, coupled with advances in technology and new cultural movements, happened in so short period of time.

In literary culture, Raymond Williams famously classified the years from 1880 to 1914 as an ‘interregnum’, claiming that rather than doing ‘anything very new’, the artists and writers of the period represented ‘a working-out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection’ (165).<sup>2</sup> However, more recently the late nineteenth century has come to be considered not merely as an ‘age of transition’ between Victorian and modernist eras, but as a literary and cultural period in itself

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘*fin de siècle*’ appears to have entered cultural discourse in 1888, as the title of a play by F. de Jouvenot and H. Micard which was performed in Paris that year. In 1893 the term was so well established that one of the characters in George Egerton’s story ‘The Spell of the White Elf’ uses it as a shorthand to denote ‘a set of values and a lifestyle that together virtually constitute a cultural formation’ (Pykett, ‘Introduction’ 1).

<sup>2</sup> See Keating’s introductory chapter for a fuller account of similar attitudes in other studies of the period.

(Keating 1).<sup>3</sup> A designation of the late nineteenth century as a transitional period has, as Ledger and Scott McCracken note, led to it until recently being overlooked in literary and cultural criticism (1). The end on the twentieth century saw an increased critical interest in *fin de siècle* literature and culture.<sup>4</sup> From the mid-1980s a torrent of new books on the period were published, many of them indebted to Holbrook Jackson's 1913 pioneering study *The Eighteen Nineties* which appeared in 1988 in a new edition (Pykett, 'Introduction' 1). As Lyn Pykett notes in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, the last decades has seen the construction of a 'new' *fin de siècle* which is increasingly seen as 'a distinctive and diverse cultural moment rather than as a limbo-like "age of transition"' ('Introduction' 3).<sup>5</sup> *Fin de siècle* modernity involved not only the technological and industrial changes decried by Nordau, but also changes in literary and cultural climate.<sup>6</sup> Distinct *fin de siècle* characters such as the Aesthete and the New Woman, socioliterary movements such as decadence and aestheticism, and specific discourses on gender, sexuality and imperialism, emerge in this era of commercialisation of literature.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to Williams's claim that the 1890s did not represent 'anything very new', to the late-Victorians themselves the *fin de siècle* was bursting with a sense of

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<sup>3</sup> The quote is from H. G. Wells's late New Woman novel *Ann Veronica* (1909).

<sup>4</sup> See for example *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (1995, ed. Ledger and McCracken), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* (1996, ed. Pykett), and *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880-1900* (2000, ed. Ledger and Luckhurst), which all include interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the *fin de siècle*, and all provide chapters on the New Woman. Talia Schaffer edited the extensive reader *Literature and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (2007), which contains an entire section on the New Woman. See Pykett's introduction in *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* for a fuller overview of *fin de siècle* criticism.

<sup>5</sup> This new field, she argues, is to a great extent the product of new critical and theoretical perspectives and/or current political and ideological concerns; a poststructuralist 'post-Foucauldian' interest in gender and sexuality, postcolonial theory, the development of cultural materialism, and the growth of an interdisciplinary field of Cultural Studies ('Introduction' 1-2). Pykett rightly warns against a tendency to read the *fin de siècle* as 'our own contemporaries', to reshape the period 'only to find their own questions and preoccupations mirrored in the cultural ferment which they "discover"' ('Introduction' 18).

<sup>6</sup> The literary climate of the late nineteenth century has been examined in a large number of works; most notably Peter Keating's *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel, 1875-1914* (1989) and David Trotter's *The English Novel in History 1895-1920* (1993). Trotter studies a slightly later period, focusing on the rise of modernist literature, but still devotes some part to the late nineteenth century and what he calls its 'dramatic expansion and diversification of the market for fiction' (1).

<sup>7</sup> Keating highlights specific significant events in *fin de siècle* literary modernity; the commercialisation of literature: the royalty system (15), the organisation of authors and publishers in trade unions and societies (27), the death of the three-volume novel (32), the increase in periodicals and magazines (35-36), the emergence of organised literary agents (71), the figure of the Grub Street author (79). (For a further exploration, see Keating chapters 1 and 7; and also Trotter 62-66.)

the new and the modern. Rita Felski in *The Gender of Modernity* states that the idea of the modern ‘saturates the discourses, images, and narratives’ of the *fin de siècle*. She describes modernity as thus referring not only to a wide range of sociohistorical phenomena – capitalism, bureaucracy, technological development – but above all to certain experiences of temporality and historical consciousness (9). Jackson notes that alongside the prevailing use of the phrase *fin de siècle*, ‘running its popularity very close’ came the adjective ‘new’, which was applied in much the same way to ‘indicate extreme modernity’ (21). Just a few examples of its applications are the ‘New Spirit’, the ‘New Realism’, the ‘New Hedonism’, the ‘New Drama’, the ‘New Unionism’ – and so forth (Jackson 22). Modernity here involves a consciousness of a new era or of newness, taking on an amplified form in the *fin de siècle*. While modernity reconfigured social relations already before the 1890s, not until now were journalists and periodicals to such an extent labelling these changes as ‘New’ or modern.

One of these newnesses is the New Woman, one of the most well-known and debated figures of the *fin de siècle*. As quoted in the preface, Mrs. Morgan-Dockrell states in 1896 that while the ‘very word “new,” strikes as it were the dominant note in the trend of present-day thought ... [o]f all these new facts and entities, the new woman appears ... to be immeasurably the first in importance, the most abounding in potentialities and in common interest’ (339-340). Augustin Filon in his 1897 book on Victorian drama calls the New Woman an ‘obsessing phantom of which everyone speaks and which so few have seen’ (231). Olive Schreiner, herself a New Woman writer, observes in *Woman and Labour* (1911) that ‘[m]uch is said at the present day on the subject of the “New Woman” ... On every hand she is examined, praised, blamed, mistaken for her counterfeit, ridiculed, or deified – but nowhere can it be said, that the phenomenon of her existence is overlooked’ (252-253).<sup>8</sup> Focalising issues of gender at the *fin de siècle*, the New Woman figure stood at the centre of many debates.

New Woman fiction had been around before the term itself was coined. Many see Schreiner’s *Story of an African Farm* (1883) as the first piece of New Woman

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<sup>8</sup> Schreiner first wrote *Woman and Labour* in the 1890s, but the manuscript was destroyed, rewritten, and finally published in 1911 (cf. Gardner 14, note 15).

fiction. W. T. Stead writes in *The Review of Reviews* in 1894 that '[t]he Modern Woman, *par excellence*, the founder and high priestess of the school, is Olive Schreiner. Her "Story of an African Farm" has been the forerunner of all the novels of the Modern Woman' (64). Schreiner's unconventional heroine Lyndall can be seen as a prototype of the New Woman, as can Henrik Ibsen's female characters in plays such as *A Doll's House* (1879, first produced in London 1889) and *Hedda Gabler* (1890, London 1891). The naming of the New Woman had been preceded by debates on the 'Woman Question' for many years; prior to 1894 she had been called among other names Novissima, the Odd or Wild Woman, the Superfluous or Redundant Woman (Ardis 10). Likewise, of course so-called 'real' New Women had earlier engaged in social practices later ascribed to the New Woman – such as attending university, riding a bicycle, wearing rational dress, and smoking; but the New Woman as concept or literary trope did not yet exist.

The term New Woman was popularised through Sarah Grand's essay 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question', published in March 1894 in *North American Review* (Christensen Nelson ix).<sup>9</sup> Here Grand coins the term by using the phrase 'the new woman' to signify the woman who is above the man, and who has 'solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-sphere, and prescribed the remedy' (142). Some months later Ouida (pen-name for Marie Louise de la Ramée) responded to Grand with the essay 'The New Woman'. Here Ouida, while criticising the New Woman and her enterprise, capitalises the term: 'the New Woman with her fierce vanity, her undigested knowledge, her overweening estimate of her own value and her fatal want of all sense of the ridiculous' (157). Within some months the New Woman was an acknowledged concept, heatedly debated and also ridiculed in the press (Christensen Nelson ix).

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<sup>9</sup> Angelique Richardson notes that in a 1900 interview with Athol Forbes, Grand herself cited her 1894 article in the *North American Review* as the place where the term first appeared ('Eugenization' 249). For a further discussion of the genealogy of the term, see Ardis 10-28; Ellen Jordan's 'The Christening of the New Woman: May 1894' (*Victorian Newsletter* 48 (1983)) 19; Rubenstein 16-23; Tusan. It should be noted that the epithet had been used in an influential work before, in plural form, in George Gissing's 1893 novel *Odd Women*, when Everard Barfoot remarks on Rhoda Nunn: 'A strong character, of course. More decidedly one of the new women than you yourself – isn't she?' (110). The *Oxford English Dictionary* records even earlier usages, from 1865 (the *Westminster Review* describing the 'New Woman' figured in 'recent [sensation] novels' who is 'no longer the Angel, but the Devil in the House') and also 1873 (without capitalisation) ('new woman').



A satirical poem in *Punch* published only two months after Grand's naming of the New Woman states the omnipresence of the New Woman in popular discourse; the figure is discussed and debated widely, as the 'nagging New Woman' refuses to be quiet:

There is a New Woman, and what do you think?  
She lives upon nothing but Foolscap and Ink!  
But, though Foolscap and Ink form the whole of her diet,  
This nagging New Woman can never be quiet!  
(*Punch*, 26 May 1894; qtd. in Schaffer 50)

The poem articulates the New Woman as a discursive or textual figuration; she lives upon nothing but 'Foolscap and Ink'. The 'Foolscap' here refers to the paper format onto which she is written, but it also has the double meaning of the fool's or jester's cap. In another satirical poem entitled 'Misoneogyny', 'A. Bachelor' argues that the New Woman is a decadent monster of

no lasting vitality,  
Only existing in fancy and print;  
It is just an unlovely abstract personality,  
Coin from the end-of-the-century mint.  
(*Punch*, 20 July 1895; qtd. in Dowling 55)

Both these satirical poems claim the New Woman as a textual or fictional construct, existing only 'in fancy and print', ridiculing the figure but also opening up a discursive space for debates on gender.

A stereotyped image of the discursive construction that was the New Woman soon emerged: 'She was educated at Girton College, Cambridge, rode a bicycle, insisted on rational dress, and smoked in public: in short, she rejected the traditional role for women and demanded emancipation' (Christensen Nelson ix). She claimed that the separation of spheres into a female private and a male public was not a biological necessity but rather a social or moral constraint. Gail Finney gives a fuller characterisation, calling the New Woman 'a literary type' who

values self-fulfilment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; is more open about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'; is well-educated and reads a great deal; has a job; is athletic or otherwise physically vigorous and, accordingly, prefers comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb. (95-96)

Elaine Showalter in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* locates the New Woman in a wider context. She investigates the ‘crisis in gender’ or ‘sexual anarchy’ that occurred at the close of the nineteenth century, when ‘all the laws that governed sexual identity and behavior seemed to be breaking down’ (3).<sup>10</sup> Ledger, too, sees gender as the most destabilised category of the cultural politics of the *fin de siècle*, stating that ‘it was the force of gender as a site of conflict which drew such virulent attacks upon the figure of the New Woman’ (*New* 2; see also ‘New’ 22). As Showalter notes, the ‘redefinition of gender’ that took place at the end of the century of course concerned men as well as women, and of course masculinity is no more ‘natural’ than femininity (8). New Women and decadent artists, Showalter states, were linked together ‘as twin monsters of a degenerate age’; they were ‘sexual anarchists’ who blurred the gender boundaries (‘Introduction’ x). Sydney Grundy’s 1894 play *The New Woman* articulates this notion of ‘sexual anarchy’, as the Colonel states to his friend Sylvester: ‘These people are a sex of their own, Sylvester. They have invented a new gender’ (300). The debates concerning men’s and women’s places were focalised in the concept of the New Woman.

The New Woman became the focal figure for debates not only concerning gender. Many of the current discussions came together in the New Woman; debates on science, evolution and degeneration, gender and sexuality, and modernity. Fears and anxieties of the time, as well as hopes and possibilities, can be found in this proto- and early feminist figure. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg calls the New Woman ‘a condensed symbol of disorder and rebellion’ (247). Indeed, the trope could be ‘invoked and appropriated’ to represent whatever was modern and subversive in new ideas of femininity (Shaw and Randolph 8). Through the ‘intense and prolonged critical debate she engendered’, Ann Heilmann argues, the figure ‘shaped central aspects of British literature and culture from the late-Victorian age through the Edwardian period and beyond’ (1-2). As Ledger points out, the New Woman ‘was utterly central to the literary culture of the *fin-de-siècle* years’ (*New* 1).

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<sup>10</sup> The expression is taken from a letter by George Gissing to Eduard Bertz in June 1893: ‘I am driven frantic by the crass imbecility of the typical woman. That type must disappear, or at all events become altogether subordinate. And I believe that the only way of effecting this is to go through a period of what many people will call sexual anarchy. Nothing good will perish; we can trust the forces of nature, which tend to conservation’ (‘Letters’ 171).

The New Woman is very much connected with the social and material changes taking place in late nineteenth-century modernity; a period which involved not only new technologies, increased bureaucracy, and changing institutional structures, but also new literary and writing practices. Novels, periodicals and medical discourse of the time produce many instances of the New Woman figure; indeed they play a crucial part in articulating the concept. David Rubenstein claims that ‘never before had literature and fiction contributed so much to the feminist movement as it did at the *fin de siècle*’ (24). Although the 1890s suffragists are often overlooked, he argues, it was in this decade that women first took an important role in party political activity, through the agency of political organisations established in the 1880s (xii). Indeed, Rubenstein names the 1890s “‘the women’s decade’” (xv) and sees these years as the first stage in ‘an enduring campaign’ for women’s rights (xii). Rubenstein argues that this campaign was ‘aided by’ the literary flowering of the period (xii). To Viv Gardner, the New Woman is indeed a ‘composite product of the accelerating woman’s [sic] movement’ (6).

However, the literature of the period does not merely ‘aid’ a possible political cause, neither is it simply a ‘product’ of it, but formulates and takes part in creating it. Peter Keating in his sociohistorical study of literary modernity treats literature in its connection to ‘other agencies’ of the time, stressing the agency of a text itself.<sup>11</sup> Jane Tompkins names this agency the ‘cultural work’ of literature, referring to the ways in which literary texts attempt to ‘redefine the social order’ by providing alternative visions of society (xi). Writing can here be seen as a discursive and social practice; literary texts as not simply reflecting but also shaping contemporary opinion. As Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips state, ‘our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them’ (1). Language, or literature, is not merely ‘a channel through which information about underlying mental states and behaviour or facts about the world are communicated’:

On the contrary, language is a ‘machine’ that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world. This also extends to the constitution of social

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<sup>11</sup> The quote is from Matthew Arnold’s preface to *Mixed Essays* (1879): ‘Whoever seriously occupies himself with literature will soon perceive its vital connexions with other agencies’ (qtd. in Keating vii).

identities and social relations. It means that *changes* in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed. Struggles at the discursive level take part in changing, as well as in reproducing, the social reality. (Jørgensen and Phillips 9)

Writing, as language, is a technology not just in the literal sense but also as ‘cultural technologies for producing meaning in a very broad sense’ (King 90).<sup>12</sup> This extended meaning of writing involves the ways that writing and works of literature produce, reproduce, and negotiate discursive formations, shaping history and society; literary texts as ‘agents of cultural formation’ (Tompkins xvii).

In the case of the New Woman this coupling of literary texts and social history is crucial. The figure of the New Woman is at the same time a literary and sociohistorical figure; she simultaneously is made out of and makes up the debate. The figure’s specificity as both a fictional construct and a sociohistorical phenomenon, as emerging simultaneously in a literary and in a historical context, can be referred to as the ‘semi-fictionality’ of the New Woman. The term ‘semi-fictional’ is adopted from Ledger’s *The New Woman* (1997), to characterise the ‘epistemological status’ of the New Woman, ‘the precise nature of her relationship to the lived experience of the feminists of the late nineteenth-century women’s movement’ (3). As quoted in the preface of this thesis, Mrs. Morgan-Dockrell in 1896 defines the New Woman simultaneously as a ‘figment of the journalistic imagination’ and an ‘altogether new type of woman’; she exists as both a discursive figure and as a set of social practices:

Is the nineteenth century new woman a myth, as so many people aver – a figment of the journalistic imagination ...? Is she, indeed, none other than an intensely aggravated type of the unwomanly, unlovable, unlovely, untidy, undomesticated, revolting, shrieking, man-hating shrew of all the centuries? Or is she on the other hand, verily an altogether new type of woman evolved from out the ages? (340)

Similarly, Elizabeth Chapman in her preface to *Marriage Questions in Modern Fiction, and Other Essays on Kindred Subjects* (1897) emphasises the distinction

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<sup>12</sup> Writing itself in its material, *literal*, sense is noticeably a technology. Christina Haas in *Writing Technology* (1996) states that writing is ‘language made material’: ‘Through writing, the physical, time-and-space world of tools and artifacts are joined to the symbolic world of language. ... Writing is made material through the use of technologies, and writing is technological in the sense and to the extent that it is material’ (3). Katie King indeed refers to the alphabet the ‘Western writing technology par excellence’ (89).

between the ‘phantom’ of that ‘journalistic myth known as “New Woman”’, and the ‘real reformer and friend of her sex and of humanity, whom I would call the “Best Woman”’ (xiii), without outlining further the differences between the two figures.

How is one to come to terms with this gap between the textual and the so-called ‘real’ New Woman, between concepts and social practices? This chapter will present and problematise this semi-fictionality, while evaluating earlier scholarship on the New Woman. Having analysed the debates concerning the naming of the New Woman in the 1890s, Grant Allen’s New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* (1895) will then prove a case in point to demonstrate the limiting division of the New Woman debate into gendered opposite camps. Lastly, I will suggest the role of technologies in the semi-fictional figuration of the New Woman as a possible way of bridging the gap between textual concept and social practice; placing the New Woman in both a literary and technological modernity.

## 1.2 Examining New Woman Scholarship

### Criticising Gynocriticism

Several works, inferring various strands of feminist criticism, have been published on the concept of the New Woman. Scholars such as Ledger and Showalter have described the new social mobility and the transformation of gender roles at the *fin de siècle*. As Teresa Mangum calls to notice in her book on Sarah Grand, the academic focus on New Woman literature is fairly recent.<sup>13</sup> Until the

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<sup>13</sup> There are several works on New Woman writers and literature; two very early such are Lloyd Fernando’s “New Women” in *the Late Victorian Novel* (1977) and Gail Cunningham’s *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (1978). Even earlier was Leone Scanlon’s essay ‘The New Woman in the Literature of 1883-1909’, published in 1976, which situates New Woman fiction temporally within the specific timeline of 1883 and 1909, between the publications of Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* and Wells’s *Ann Veronica* (133). Fernando concentrates on male writers (George Eliot is the only woman, the others being George Meredith, George Moore, George Gissing, and Thomas Hardy) who, while exploring issues of gender and the position of women in the second half of the nineteenth century, were not primarily associated with the ‘New Woman’ debates. Cunningham treats writers of both sexes, some of who were involved in the New Woman debates, but her full-length analyses focus on Hardy, Meredith and Gissing. Also Showalter’s *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) can be included with these early writings of the New Woman.

With the increased interest in and reconsideration of the *fin de siècle* followed a reconsideration of New Woman literature. Ardis in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990) treats over one hundred New Woman writers, seeing the genre as an anticipation of literary modernism. Showalter’s *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1990)

1980s New Woman novels were usually dismissed as ‘popular’ rather than ‘literary’, as political rather than artful, as topical and limited in focus (that is to say concerning women) rather than universal (5). She also points out that before the 1970s, studies of New Woman fiction highlighted male writers (26). With the increased scholarly interest in and reconsideration of the *fin de siècle* followed a reconsideration of New

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connects the sense of sexual anarchy in the last decades of both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The collection *The New Woman and her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914* (1992) edited by Vivien Gardner and Susan Rutherford, examines the New Woman on the stage, both as dramatic character and as actress. Lyn Pykett in *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1993) compares the responses to the 1860s sensation novels and the 1890s New Woman novels. Sally Ledger’s *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (1997) places the New Woman in the cultural context of the *fin de siècle*, connecting the figure with other movements of the era. Teresa Mangum’s *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (1998) focuses mainly on the works of Sarah Grand, but also on the literary culture in which she was active. Sally Mitchell in ‘New Women, Old and New’ (1999) provides a concise overview of these major earlier works on the New Woman. Many critics discuss the emergence of the New Woman at the *fin de siècle* in relation to other contemporary cultural phenomena, but they do not relate the New Woman to the simultaneously emerging technologies. An exception is Patricia Marks who in *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (1990) considers the pairing of the New Woman and the bicycle as seen by the popular satiric press.

Apart from these earlier works, several collections with new perspectives on the concept of the New Woman have been published in recent years. Ann Heilmann’s *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (2000) examines the dialectical relationship between New Woman fiction, first-wave feminism, and female consumer culture, placing New Woman writing more firmly in relation to a subsequent feminist tradition. *Feminist Forerunners: New Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century* (2001), edited by Heilmann, provides a critique of the often white middle-class focus among New Woman scholars’ research. Furthermore, Heilmann wrote *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner and Mona Caird* (2004), which gives a good overview of these three major New Woman writers. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis co-edited *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms* (2002), a broad and interdisciplinary collection of essays which illustrates the diversity of the New Woman debate. Marion Shaw’s and Lyssa Randolph’s *New Woman Writers of the Late Nineteenth Century* (2007) provides a concise introduction to New Woman writing. Carolyn Molly Youngkin in *Feminist Realism at the Fin de Siècle: The Influence of the Late-Victorian Women’s Press on the Development of the Novel* (2007) examines literary figurations of the New Woman through reviews in *fin de siècle* feminist journals, uncovering a feminist realist aesthetic that anticipates the modernist aesthetic. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller in *Framed: The New Woman Criminal in British Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (2008) explores figurations of female criminals in detective stories, early crime film, and dynamite narrative, seeing the figure as indicative of late nineteenth-century ‘feminist’ consumerism.

There are several anthologies of New Woman fiction, for example *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle* (ed. Elaine Showalter 1993), *Women Who Did: Stories by Men and Women, 1890-1914* (ed. Angelique Richardson 2002), and *Dreams, Visions and Realities [Late Victorian and Early Modernist Writers]* (2003), all collections of short stories. Juliet Gardiner edited *The New Woman: Women’s Voices 1880-1918* (1993), a wide-ranging collection with excerpts from novels, short stories, poems, pamphlets, letters, articles, and more. Christensen Nelson edited the excellent *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (2001), which assembles both fictional and non-fictional literary works. Pickering & Chatto Publishers recently launched a scholarly nine-volume series of New Woman fiction 1881-1899 (general editor Carolyn W de la L Oulton), published in three parts between 2010 and 2011. As a further sign of the increased scholarly interest in the New Woman, the online journal *The Latchkey: Journal of New Woman Studies* launched its first issue in Spring 2009.

Woman literature. More recently, several collections with new perspectives on the concept of the New Woman have been published, as have several anthologies with New Woman writing. A special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* in 2007 ('The New Woman's Work: Past, Present, and Future') reasserts the amount of New Woman scholarship carried out since the early 1970s, and the work yet to be done: 'A full generation after New Woman fiction was re-introduced to academic readers ... and a decade beyond outpourings of gender-inflected essays, dissertations and books aroused as the most recent *fin de siècle* approached, the impact of this scholarship – and of the women, the writers and the texts it studies – is far from exhausted' (Ardis, Mangum, and Mitchell 1). Twentieth-century scholarship on the New Woman, Ardis, Mangum and Mitchell write, 'reshaped the study of modernity', examining evolving questions about gender, nationality, race, class and empire (1). As we will see, the ways in which the figure of the New Woman has been read by scholars also mirror waves of feminist literary theory, moving from a historically situated second wave feminist focus on gynocritical ideas, to a third wave or poststructuralist focus on the text itself.

The debates of the 1890s were not simply divided in leagues supporting or opposing the New Woman, but consisted of many diverse voices. Keating notes that the New Woman novelists 'did not constitute a school of writers in any formal sense, and, once reviewers and critics had given them a collective image, it was not necessary to be a woman to write a New Woman novel' (189). What, then, qualifies as New Woman writing? Christensen Nelson in the introduction to *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, Drama of the 1890s* provides a useful definition of New Woman fiction as novels and stories 'characterized by the representation of strong heroines who rebel against the limitations placed on their lives and demand the same education and economic opportunities as men enjoy' (xii). The fiction places greater emphasis on women's sexuality and psychology, and also gives some complex and often negative portrayals of marriage – something which provoked many critics (xii). They most often have politically conscious, self-supporting, women as main characters, who challenge the idea of gendered separate spheres in society.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that an absolute definition of New Woman fiction is inevitably arbitrary. Schaffer in *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes* notes that critics who 'include any authors with gender interests

Despite this broad definition, much New Woman scholarship has struggled to determine what counts as New Woman writing. Many critics have tended to name certain novels and novelists as ‘anti-feminist’ or ‘feminist’, as belonging to the ‘dominant’ or ‘reverse’ discourse of the debates, often relying on the gender of the author to define which camp they belong in. To these critics, texts can only be defined as feminist, or as New Woman writing, if they are female-penned. In this way, much New Woman scholarship has relied on gynocriticism – the study of women writers as a distinct literary tradition – to structure their discussions. I will examine this underlying tendency in the majority of New Woman scholarship, proving it as a flawed or reductive theory that hinders us from considering the full potential of literary works.

Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1978), her influential feminist study of two hundred women novelists from 1800 to the present day, argues (and so legitimises the study of women writers as a group) that (British) women novelists have always in a sense lived in a different space from men (in different sociohistorical circumstances) and thus have ‘a literature of their own’; a distinct ‘female literary tradition’ or ‘literary subculture’ consisting of both formal tradition and shared subject matter (11).<sup>15</sup> Showalter argues that ‘women themselves have constituted a subculture within the framework of a larger society, and have been unified by values, conventions, experiences, and behaviors impinging on each individual’ (11). She writes: ‘Feminine, feminist, or female, the woman’s novel has always had to struggle against the cultural and historical forces that relegated women’s experience to the second rank’ (36). Showalter claims that by the 1880s, while the female novelists’

male contemporaries, such as Gissing, Moore, and Hardy, imagined a New Woman who fulfilled their own fantasies of sexual freedom (a heroine made

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under the New Woman aegis or view “women writers” and “New Women” synonymously’ makes possible a reconsideration of forgotten authors, but at the same time risk ‘stretching the term so far as to make it almost useless for identificatory purposes’ (10).

<sup>15</sup> Showalter coined the term gynocritics (later gynocriticism) a year later in her essay ‘Towards a Feminist Poetics’ (1979). Gynocritics considers the specificity of women’s writing, as part of a specifically female reality: ‘the programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories’ (28). Such a criticism, writes Showalter, must free itself from ‘the linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture’ (28).



notorious to feminists' disgust, by Grant Allen's best seller *The Woman Who Did*), feminist writers of the 1880s and 1890s demanded self-control for men, rather than license for themselves. They took the idea of female influence seriously, and they intended to make it a genuine source of power. Their version of New Womanhood, though not as sensational as Allen's, was more pragmatic, and probably more threatening. (184-185)

Showalter here puts forward a sexed division of New Woman writers; the female authors harbouring a 'threatening' and 'genuine' version of the New Woman, while the male authors 'imagined' a 'fantasy' New Woman. This division is much simplified, and as we will see in the case of Grant Allen, it threatens to close down the many potential meanings of a literary text.

Ledger in *The New Woman* presents a similar gendered reading of New Woman writing. In an earlier text she acknowledges that 'the relationship between the New Woman as a discursive construct and the New Woman as a representative of the women's movement of the *fin de siècle* was complex, and by no means free of contradictions. ... Even within discourse the New Woman was not a consistent category' ('Crisis' 23). However, she then leaves this problematic unsolved, forcing the New Woman debate into two opposed camps. Ledger, advocating (and misreading) Foucault, organises the *fin de siècle* discussions on the New Woman in terms of a 'dominant' and 'reverse' discourse. The genre of New Woman fiction is seen as a 'reverse' discourse, a sense of rupture of the 'dominant' discourse of the *fin de siècle*, a revolt against the 'particular class (male and bourgeois)' that 'held power' at the *fin de siècle* (New 10).

Ann Heilmann, too, in *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*, makes a clear distinction between male and female authors: 'If, as Sally Ledger suggests, New Woman fiction exemplifies Foucault's concept of the "reverse discourse", then anti-feminist writers created yet another layer of oppositional literature by "writing back" to the women who dominated the genre' (53). Following Ledger's (mis)reading of Foucault's concept, Heilmann thus argues that both Grant Allen and H. G. Wells, despite declaring themselves defenders of women's rights, 'both produced stridently misogynistic novels' (53). 'While feminist women writers challenged the existing structures that underpinned sexual relations', Heilmann states, 'anti-feminist men used their novels as a vehicle for the expression of sexual

fantasies' (53-54). Heilmann does admit that 'all male writers by no means pursued an anti-feminist agenda' (she gives Ibsen, Meredith, and Hardy as examples), but only after a long critique of male writers. Furthermore, while Ibsen, Meredith, and Hardy, according to Heilmann, are not anti-feminists, she names them 'realist' writers instead of New Woman writers (54-55).<sup>16</sup> Both Ledger and Heilmann make the clear distinction of female New Woman writers as feminist and male New Woman writers as anti-feminist.

As Vanessa Warne and Colette Colligan note, many recent critics thus disown male New Woman novelists, some insinuating that 'a man could but awkwardly promote women's social and sexual freedom' (22). Even if not explicitly spelt out that men could not be advocates of women's rights, 'there is a tendency in the criticism to present the female New Woman novelists as the true revolutionaries' (Warne and Colligan 44, note 4). In this way, any social value of New Woman writing by men is dismissed, and even if considered worthy of discussion it is read reductively. More recently, Regenia Gagnier suggests a gendered division of New Woman literature not as simply feminist or anti-feminist, but as bearing different characteristics. She refers to New Woman literature, but distinguishes 'New Women writing' from that of 'men writing about new women' (*Individualism* 63). In fact, she sees the difference between independence and autonomy as characterising texts by authors of different sexes: 'Women-created New Women were not so rigidly independent. They wanted autonomy, individual development, but they wanted it through *relationship*' (*Individualism* 63).<sup>17</sup> Such a neatly gendered division of the multifaceted genre of New Woman literature must prove reductive.

With underlying gynocritical assumptions in their argumentation, Ledger and Heilmann (and to some degree Gagnier) thus structure their discussion according to the gender of authors. Furthermore, they rationalise this by referring to Foucault's discourse analysis, developed primarily in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and 'The Order of Discourse' (1970). However, as I will demonstrate, they depend

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<sup>16</sup> Jane Elridge Miller in *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (1997) also makes the distinction between the generally male-dominated new realists and the generally female-dominated New Woman novelists, but she does stress that the two genres intersect (12).

<sup>17</sup> Gagnier explores this reading further in 'Individualism from the New Woman to the Genome: Autonomy and Independence', published in *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, 1.1 (January 2003): 103-128.

on a reductive reading of Foucault's work.<sup>18</sup> In 'The Order of Discourse' Foucault writes of the strict norms that govern how one must speak, behave and live in a society in order not to be excluded. Foucault argues that in every society there are procedures, discursive practices, which control the production of discourse and discourage dissident voices (52). Discourse and discursive behaviour are formulated and reinforced both in everyday speech and behaviour, and in for example literary texts ('Order' 56-57).

The term discourse harbours various significations. '[I]nstead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word "discourse"', Foucault states, 'I believe that I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements' (*Archaeology* 90). Thus discourse, in its widest (and mostly theoretical) definition, will infer all utterances or texts which bear meaning. Secondly, it can infer the particular structures, groups of utterances, of a specific discourse. Thirdly, it can concern the rules and regulations themselves by which discourses function. As Sara Mills notes, these definitions are used almost interchangeably and one can be overlaid on the other (7). Joan W. Scott provides a general definition of discourse as 'a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs' ('Deconstructing' 379).

It is in discourse and discursive formations that power and knowledge are joined together, in a 'complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' (*Will* 100). Discourse is not a mere tool for rulers, but 'the very stuff of power struggles' (Downing 73); one of the ways in which power struggles manifest. 'Discourse', Foucault writes, 'transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (*Will* 101). Discursive formations

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<sup>18</sup> For a further examination of Foucauldian forms of discourse analysis, see Sara Mills, *Discourse* (1997) and David Howarth, *Discourse* (2000). As Jørgensen and Phillips note, Foucault 'has played a central role in the development of discourse analysis through both theoretical work and empirical research. In almost all discourse analytical approaches, Foucault has become a figure to quote, relate to, comment on, modify and criticise ... because all our approaches have roots in Foucault's ideas, while rejecting some parts of his theory' (12).

are not to be seen as fixed, but like power relations they are mobile and changeable. Discourse must be conceived as ‘a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable’ (*Will* 100). Indeed, one must not imagine ‘a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies’ (*Will* 100).<sup>19</sup> This last quote counteracts the exact use that Ledger and Heilmann make of Foucauldian discourse analysis. We cannot consider discourses as binary systems of dominant and dominated discourse. Foucault himself stresses the multiplicity of discourse: ‘Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other’ (‘Order’ 67). In short, discourse is a notion that allows for mobility, agency, diversity of opinion – and change. Readers, writers, and the concept of the New Woman itself are part of reproducing, negotiating or undermining discourses at the *fin de siècle*.

Foucault does indeed in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* employ the concepts of a ‘dominant’ and a ‘reverse’ discourse, but in a specific context and not in the clear-cut sense that Ledger takes them to be. He presents the formation of a ‘reverse’ discourse as a kind of identity politics or technology of the self, in order to describe how a sexual identity such as homosexuality in the late nineteenth century appropriated the discourse provided, when homosexuality began to ‘speak in its own behalf’ (101) to demand its legitimacy. But he also clarifies, just a few lines down:

There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary,

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault elsewhere uses the dossier of the nineteenth-century murderer Pierre Rivière to examine the complex workings of discourse. The varying discourses in Rivière’s case ‘in their totality and their variety ... form neither a composite work nor an exemplary text, but rather a strange contest, a confrontation, a power relation, a battle among discourses and through discourses. And yet it cannot simply be described as a single battle; for several combats were being fought out at the same time and intersected each other’ (*Pierre* x). The collection of documents in the Rivière case thus provides an exemplary illustration of the functioning of power relations; ‘a battle among discourses and through discourses’ (x).

circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (101-102)<sup>20</sup>

Foucault instead describes the formations and workings of discourses as much more unstable. He also writes, in ‘Powers and Strategies’, that ‘resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power’ (142). Power is not ‘held’ by a group of people, but constantly being reinforced and renegotiated in force relations. Power and resistance work through these same force relations; resistance ‘exists all the more by being in the same place as power’ (142).

Foucault’s mobile and diverse notion of discourse has been misread to accommodate gynocritical assumptions, as an all-encompassing set of strict regulations, divided into two opposite – and gendered – camps. Not only is Ledger’s reading (and Heilmann’s echoing of it) of discourse as divided into ‘dominant’ and ‘reverse’ incongruous with the rest of Foucault’s ideas, but the adoption of the term ‘reverse’ discourse is misleading in itself, since it is not an accurate translation. Dan Beer remarks that there are many obstacles in translating Foucault’s works, because of its ‘multiple meanings, implications and allusions’ (2), and something crucial has indeed been lost in Robert Hurley’s translation. Foucault does not actually use the term ‘reverse’ discourse, which would suggest something opposite, a binary to the dominant; he refers instead to a ‘discours “en retour”’ (*Histoire* 134). The quote treats the medicalising and categorising of what was considered various ‘perverse’ behaviours and identities (such as the homosexual) in the late nineteenth century. A more accurate translation would perhaps be a discourse ‘in return’, or a ‘returned’ discourse; an answering back by the individual to the ‘dominant’ medicolegal

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, Foucault spends a large part of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, explaining how the concept of discourse is *not* meant to be understood. He states that systems of discursive formation ‘must not be taken as blocks of immobility, static forms that are imposed on discourse from the outside, and that define once and for all its characteristics and possibilities. They are not constraints whose origin is to be found in the thoughts of men, or in the play of their representations; but nor are they determinations which, formed at the level of institutions, or social or economic relations, transcribe themselves by force on the surface of discourses. These systems – I repeat – reside in discourse itself; or rather ... on its frontier, at that limit at which the specific rules that enable it to exist as such are defined’ (82). A discursive formation ‘is not, therefore, an ideal, continuous, smooth text that runs beneath the multiplicity of contradictions, and resolves them in the calm unity of coherent thought; nor is it the surface in which, in a thousand different aspects, a contradiction is reflected that is always in retreat, but everywhere dominant’ (173). It is rather ‘a space of multiple dissensions; a set of different oppositions whose levels and roles must be described’ (173).

discourse – not a binary opposite. In Foucault’s text, the discourse ‘in return’ here works as a kind of identity politics; the ‘pervert’ *appropriating* and reworking the medical categorisation into which s/he has been placed, using it for their own purposes. Clearly, this is *not* a question of an opposite discourse of a supposedly hegemonic ‘dominant’ discourse. What is apparent in Foucault’s language, Beer states, is his ‘opposition to fixed categorizations: there is no clear distinction between oppressor and oppressed (the very machinery of oppression incorporates elements of what it is trying to oppress)’ (3). In Foucault’s works, power and resistance are in the same place, and discourse is formed out of many diverse, overlapping, and sometimes contradicting, voices.

While gynocriticism is important for understanding the writing conditions and experiences of authors of different gender and other social orderings, and also for understanding the workings of canon formation, the scholarship based on it implies a regard or disregard for writers based solely on their sex. Poststructuralist feminist literary critics such as Toril Moi and Rita Felski have famously criticised Showalter’s essentialist formulation of a feminist literary criticism. Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985) questions the underlying political and theoretical assumptions of gynocriticism, emphasising instead ‘the politics of language as a material and social structure’ (15). ‘Feminist criticism’, Moi writes in the 1986 essay ‘Feminist, Female, Feminine’ (the title paraphrases Showalter’s theory of the various stages of women’s writing), ‘is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature’ (104). Thus, if feminist criticism is characterised by its *political* commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it follows that ‘the very fact of being *female* does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach. ... [N]ot all books written by women on women writers exemplify anti-patriarchal commitment. ... A female tradition in literature or criticism is not necessarily a feminist one’ (106). Moi concludes that ‘[t]here is not, unfortunately, such a thing as an intrinsically feminist text: given the right historical and social context, all texts can be recuperated by the ruling powers – or appropriated by the feminist opposition’ (116). Similarly, Felski in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (1989) shows

how a gynocritical position ‘applies a dualistic model to the analysis of literary texts; the work of a male author is assumed to affirm unconditionally the sexual ideology it portrays, whereas the work of a woman is read as containing an implicit critique or subversion of patriarchal values’ (27). Felski also in *Literature after Feminism* (2003) refutes the idea that literature ‘either causes or simply reinforces the oppression of women’ (12). Instead, we should examine how ‘ideas, symbols, and myths of gender *saturate* literary works’ (12). We need to study literary forms and works in context of the social conditions of their production, study their social effects in relation to women (or notions of gender) in a particular historical context.

The New Woman debate cannot be studied merely as two gendered opposed sides. Even though there was a stereotyped image of the New Woman, the New Woman as category is neither stable nor unified. Describing the New Woman debate as taking place between two clearly opposed and homogenous sides, with the one discourse withholding power from the other, must be simplifying. Any collection of New Woman writing is multifaceted and made up of contributions by many women and men. As Marion Shaw and Lyssa Randolph state, both ‘female and male interlocutors [should be] read as an important dialectic in the consideration of the way in which feminist ideas were established and contested in literary culture’ (ix). Certain male authors, including Gissing and Allen, present double-sided and often self-contradicting views on gender at the *fin de siècle* and on the New Woman in particular. But so do female authors of the time. For example, two of the major New Woman writers, Mona Caird and Sarah Grand, held opposite views concerning marriage, motherhood, and eugenics. New Woman writers themselves held a variety of opinions on social and political issues such as female suffrage, marriage, sexual moral, and motherhood. What they all shared was a rejection of the socially constructed gender role of femininity, a demand for increased educational and career opportunities so that they would be able to earn their own livelihood and thus be economically independent, in short the belief in the autonomy of women and the need for social and political reform (Christensen Nelson x; Richardson xxxiii, xxxviii). Therefore it is unfeasible to speak of the New Woman debate as a binary structure of ‘dominant’ and ‘reverse’ discourse. Instead of seeing New Woman

writing (or the New Woman debate) as made up of two opposite (gendered) sides, we can study it as different articulations of the same debate.

### **The Naming of the New Woman: Containment or Empowerment?**

Gynocriticism in its extremes harbours the idea that certain (female-penned) literature fights oppression, while certain (male-penned) literature is the cause of oppression; the idea that literature will involve either containment or empowerment of women. This conception can be seen in critical discussions on the naming of the New Woman.

While the growing women's movement previously had taken various forms and names, the coining of the specific term New Woman changed the debate. The naming of the New Woman (that is, the coining of the term 'New Woman' and the focalisation of gender issues in that specific term), Ardis argues, was specifically charged for late nineteenth-century critics (10). Schaffer, echoing Ardis, agrees that the naming of the New Woman 'did indeed initiate a new discourse'; later New Woman writers such as Ouida and Grand were now 'clearly doing something quite different from earlier writers' (48). The naming process itself poses questions about the workings of discourse, and about the function of the literary text in society. While demands for female emancipation, criticisms of marriage, debates about prostitution, had occupied many Victorian women's rights campaigners, the New Woman as literary figure changed the focus of the debate: 'Having been a social debate at its inception in the 1860s, what had once been termed the "Woman Question" became a more strictly literary affair following the naming of the New Woman' (Ardis 12). Discussions now often turned to discussing literary characters and plots instead of 'real' political issues. This naming of the New Woman figure can be seen as a transformation of feminist demands into a textual figuration: the New Woman novel rather than 'real' New Women became the centre of controversy (Ardis 12).

Many New Woman scholars have analysed the naming of the New Woman, in order to examine whether this transformation of the nineteenth-century women's movement into a stereotypical discursive New Woman involved a gain or a loss of feminist potential. However, many of the analyses take rather a one-sided view of the



problematic, inferring a specific relation between literature and the social world, literature as either reflecting or as being set apart from society. This section will critically examine earlier scholarly analyses of what exactly this discursive naming of the New Woman entails, offering a different (and hopefully more fruitful) approach to understand the emergence of the new term, and to analyse the social nature of discourse in this instance.

Michelle Tusan, in a similar way to Ledger's reductive appropriation of Foucault's notion of discourse as opposite sides in a debate, posits the naming of the New Woman as a struggle between the male mainstream periodical press and the female women's press. She presents an alternative naming of the New Woman, through an earlier article describing the figure. She argues that it was in fact 'in the pages of the fin-de-siecle [sic] feminist press that she [the New Woman] was first invented as a fictional icon to represent the political woman of the coming century' (169), referring to an article in *The Woman's Herald* in August 1893, in which the New Woman is presented.<sup>21</sup> She claims that though the New Woman was named by feminists and articulated in the women's press, the figure was appropriated by the (male) mainstream periodical press and ridiculed, thus losing its feminist potential. The figuration of the New Woman in the mainstream press is, she argues, a 'counter image' of the New Woman (169). While Ledger claims the female New Woman writing to be a kind of 'reverse' discourse or reply to the male 'dominant' discourse, Tusan argues that the male mainstream press instead replies to the feminist press. Both Ledger and Tusan display the same notion of discourses or sides of the New Woman debate as clear-cut gendered opposites, constructing analyses that are incompatible with the notion of discourse where power is not 'held' by a group of people, but is constantly being reinforced and renegotiated in force relations.

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<sup>21</sup> Tusan here actually misquotes the original source. The New Woman *is* mentioned, but not with the capitalised first letters. The piece she quotes is *not* – as Tusan claims – an article named 'The Social Standing of the New Woman' (Tusan 170). In fact the heading 'SOCIAL STANDING OF THE "NEW WOMAN"' (all letters capitalised) is part of a report from the 'World's Fair', and the heading in question recounts a paper in the Congress 'given by Mr. Ham on "Woman."' The words that Tusan quotes ('Without warning ... woman suddenly appears on the scene of man's activities, as a sort of new creation, and demands a share in the struggles, the responsibilities and the honours of the world, in which, until now, she has been a cipher' (Tusan 169)) are in fact the words of 'Mr. Ham's' paper ('Cleanings at the World's Fair'). Tusan also puts *The Woman's Herald* alongside two other feminist periodicals – whereas in fact the three are the same periodical, but having changed names at two occasions. *Women's Penny Paper* (1888-1890) became *Woman's Herald* (1891-1893), which became *Woman's Signal* (1894-1899).

This gendered way of structuring New Woman writing not only thwarts any analysis of the full potentialities of the literature, but it is in fact an ahistorical and reductive reading. Molly Youngkin in *Feminist Realism at the Fin de Siècle: The Influence of the Late-Victorian Women's Press on the Development of the Novel* (2007) provides a much more nuanced account of the late-Victorian women's press. Youngkin includes reviews written by a range of both women and men committed to the cause, in the two major literary women's rights' periodicals of the *fin de siècle* (the weekly journals *Shafts* and *The Woman's Herald*), of New Woman writing by both men and women. *Shafts* and *The Woman's Herald* in particular focused on 'literary representation as a method to advance the cause of women'; along with articles about local politics, key figures within the movement, and non-literary events and issues, these periodicals reviewed the works of both female and male authors (Youngkin 7). Youngkin rejects the idea 'that there were more differences than similarities between men's reading (and writing)', and finds that the response among proto- and early feminists – both women and men – was more multifaceted than a simple negation of male authors (20). Similarly, Sue Thomas in 'Elizabeth Robins, the "New Woman" Novelist, and the Writing of Literary Histories of the 1890s' provides a more complex idea of the literary climate of the *fin de siècle*, arguing that anti-feminist reviewers enjoyed less authority than is usually believed, something which raises doubts of the validity of the narratives of 'rupture' that underlies much literary criticism of New Woman fiction (124-125). Instead, we see in the New Woman debates an intersection of discourses as 'discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other' (Foucault, 'Order' 67).

Ardis sees the naming of the New Woman as 'a means of controlling the phenomenon: a way of undermining the seriousness of real New Women's criticisms of the Victorian social order at the same time trivializing the "real life" consequences of a literary phenomenon' (11). She argues that the popularisation of the term New Woman in 1894 turned the political debate about women's rights into a purely literary debate, concerning New Woman fiction; thus turning the 'Woman Question' from a topic of political and social importance into a personal issue. She claims: 'To label something literary rather than "real" is to quarantine it, in effect: to isolate it in

a special corner of life, to box it off as a special kind of phenomenon, not something one encounters in society at large' (12). When labelled, Ardis argues, the figure became the object of denunciation by those who were averse to change (10-11). The designation of the New Woman as a literary phenomenon, according to Ardis, thus functions as a kind of containment, removing the figure's feminist potential.

Contrary to this view, Talia Schaffer sees the naming of the New Woman as increasing the figure's political possibilities. The New Woman is turned into a literary product 'not to contain her, but to expand her' (43). Arguing against Ardis, Schaffer claims that 'the New Woman's literary status was the most challenging aspect of her identity, not a way of making it any "safer"' (47). The naming of the New Woman, whether in mainstream or in feminist press, involves not a lessened but an increased political importance: 'Fictionalizing the New Woman allowed her to be defined in any way the author needed, at any time. ... As a mythic icon, the New Woman evokes an extraordinary range of emotional associations, a flood of feelings which can powerfully support whatever goal the writer has channelled it towards' (45). While Ardis sees the designation of the New Woman as a literary phenomenon as a way of containing her feminist potential, Schaffer instead sees this process as opening up emancipatory possibilities.

So, did the literary format work to 'contain' the New Woman or indeed to give her more freedom? Does literature here function primarily as either an oppressive or an empowering tool? These questions seem to be wrongly posed. In Foucault's terms, statements (the building block of discourse) do not have a fixed meaning – they do not immediately either oppress or liberate. Instead, a statement is 'a specific and paradoxical object'; an object to 'produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy' (*Archaeology* 118). A statement, as it emerges in its materiality – say, as in the New Woman debate carried out in the *fin de siècle* periodical press –

appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences or modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies ... [it] circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation and rivalry. (*Archaeology* 118)

Statements contain many possible meanings, as discourses harbour many overlapping and conflicting voices. In this light, the naming of the New Woman might not have to be read exclusively as either containment or empowerment of the figure's potential for social change. Instead, literature could simultaneously entail both or neither of these possibilities (and independently of the author's intention – or gender).

Building on Foucault, we can never merely read the literary text against a social background; there is a dialectical complexity at work here. As Felski states in *Literature after Feminism*, literature is 'double-sided'; it is 'not *either/or* but *both/and*' (12). On the one hand, literature deals with 'the history of conventions, symbols, rules of genre, and styles of language that make up what we call "literature"' (12). On the other hand, literature is also 'saturated with social meanings', it is one of the cultural languages (interrelating with other ways that we have) through which we understand and make sense of the world (12). In other words, literature is part of discourse. Literature helps to create our sense of reality rather than simply reflecting it. At the same time, it 'draws on, echoes, modifies, and bounces off' other frameworks of sense-making (13). Literature and society in various ways 'inform and shape each other without in any simple sense being "the same"' (22). Literature and the social world cannot be held apart; literature helps to *create* rather than merely reflect the social world.

Felski provides a critique of the notion of literature as a tool of either oppression or liberation, containment or empowerment, in *Uses of Literature* (2008). She criticises what she terms 'theological' and 'ideological' approaches to the literary text; that is treating the text as either an aesthetic object separate and other from social context or as primarily an expression of or product by the society in which it is written. While the first style of reading completely discards the context of the text, the second instead relegates the text 'to the status of a symptom' of social structures or political causes; 'a text is being diagnosed rather than heard' (6). Literature, in the ideological view, is seen primarily as a potential medium of political enlightenment and social transformation (6). Felski seeks a third way, by drawing on more recent (poststructuralist) feminist theory that, rather than assigning 'an invariant kernel of feminist or misogynist content' to literary texts, carry out a

more ‘historically attuned’ approach while also acknowledging the text’s capacity to ‘challenge or change our own beliefs and commitments’ (6-7). Taking their cue from Foucault, such approaches

circumvent the problem of secondariness by treating literary texts as formative in their own right, as representations that summon up new ways of seeing rather than as echoes or distortions of predetermined political truths. Espousing what cultural studies calls a politics of articulation, they show how the meanings of texts change as they hook up with different interests and interpretative communities. (9-10)<sup>22</sup>

Literary texts themselves can in this way avoid occupying a secondary place in the analysis (‘the problem of secondariness’), that is as merely a ‘sign of’ or representing a historical period or an author’s intention. Felski thus avoids finite readings of texts as either standing above historical context or, as in the debate between Ardis and Schaffer, having one specific meaning or effect.

As the naming debate illustrates, in which the New Woman was named in an ongoing discussion by an interchange of articles by Grand and Ouida, the New Woman emerges as a contested, multifaceted and flexible concept, in and through discourse. There are many sides and contributions to the debate, both by men and women. As Felski shows, a literary text can suggest several possible intersecting and contradictory meanings, depending on how it is taken up. The naming of the New Woman thus cannot be seen as either exclusively containing or opening up possibilities for the late nineteenth-century proto-feminist and feminist cause. Considering textual figurations of the New Woman as simply a feminist (female) or anti-feminist (male) stance proves reductive and simplified, and limits readings of literary and other texts.

Having in the last two sections broadly and critically surveyed the field of New Woman scholarship, I will now examine the critical discussions regarding a specific New Woman novel by a male author, before moving on to considering more fully the semi-fictionality of the New Woman.

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<sup>22</sup> To this historically informed approach Felski adds a phenomenological perspective, investigating ‘how selves interact with texts’ (11) through four main ‘modes of textual engagement’: recognition, enchantment, knowledge, shock (14). Felski in one of her chapters focuses specifically on women in late nineteenth-century London, who when seeing the New Woman play *Hedda Gabler* performed on stage recognised themselves in the main character.

### The Case of Grant Allen and *The Woman Who Did* (1895)

Grant Allen (1848-1899) and his (in)famous 1895 New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* can be studied as a case in point, problematising the definition of a New Woman novel or novelist. The novel causes us to question the notion of gendered dominant and reverse discourses, and ideas about the possible ‘uses of literature’. This section will discuss the novel itself not so much regarding its textual qualities, but instead regarding the criticism that has surrounded it.

Allen is an example of the late nineteenth-century ‘man of letters’: starting out as a writer on science, the multifaceted Allen soon also included fiction in his work, and his literary output during the 1880s and 1890s was considerable.<sup>23</sup> Edward Clodd in his memoir on Allen comments on the writer’s many-sided career: ‘naturalist, anthropologist, physicist, historian, poet, novelist, essayist, critic – what place is to be assigned to this versatile, well-equipped worker?’ (207-208). William Greenslade and Terence Rodgers argue, in *Grant Allen: Literature and Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, that Allen bears a great importance both as a writer and as a ‘cultural mediator’ in his time (4). With his diverse interests and his ability to move across genres, Allen’s writing can be seen as a response to and also as a taking part in shaping the growing diversification of literary demand and consumption in the late nineteenth century (Greenslade and Rodgers 7). Allen’s writing is not only diverse in genre, but also consisted of an engagement with contemporary issues. Allen took part in various debates of his time; he commented upon the ‘Woman Question’ in several articles, and wrote several works of New Woman fiction.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For annotated bibliographies of Allen’s work, see Peter Morton’s online *Grant Allen: An Annotated Bibliography of his Non-Fiction; Grant Allen: An Annotated Bibliography of His Fiction & Poetry*. Until recently, not much had been published on Allen. However, the scholarly interest for him has seen an upswing in recent years. As a result of an Allen conference, *Grant Allen: Literature and Cultural politics at the Fin de Siècle* (ed. Greenslade and Rodgers) was published in 2005. In the same year came Morton’s critical biography *‘The Busiest Man in England’: Grant Allen and the Writing Trade, 1875-1900*. Morton also compiled *Grant Allen (1848-1899): A Bibliography* which was published in 2002. As Greenslade and Rodgers note in their introduction, while *The Woman Who Did* was reprinted many times in the first years after it was originally published, it was not again reissued until its centenary (18, note 18). In the last two years reprints of both fictional and non-fictional works by Allen have been published, and occasional chapters on Allen can be found in critical anthologies.

<sup>24</sup> See Morton’s *‘The Busiest Man in England’* for an account of Allen’s place in the literary climate of the day. Allen’s main articles on the ‘Woman Question’ are ‘Plain Words on the Woman Question’ (*Fortnightly Review* 52/46 (October 1889), 448-458), ‘The Girl of the Future’ (*Universal Review*, 7 (May 1890), 49-64), ‘A Glimpse into Utopia’ (*Westminster Gazette*, 3 (9 January 1894), 1-2), and

Thus, Allen could be seen as a ‘sign of the times’, his work a signal of a new literary modernity (Greenslade and Rodgers 17).<sup>25</sup>

Allen’s *The Woman Who Did*, along with works by for example Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, George Egerton, and Mona Caird, is one of the most famous New Woman texts. Published in February 1895 in John Lane’s *Keynote* series, a ‘haven for “New Woman” fiction, naturalistic short stories, and “decadent” poetry and art’ (Stetz 72), it presently provoked satire and criticism from many directions (Wintle, ‘Introduction’ 3).<sup>26</sup> Warne and Colligan indeed state that Allen’s novel became ‘the most notorious book of the series’ (21). The novel ran to nineteen editions in its first year of publication, and Allen earned £1000 in royalties a year from it until his death in 1899 (Cunningham 63; Gardiner 171; Warne and Colligan 21). The novel quickly prompted satirical responses such as *The Woman Who Didn’t* (1895) by Victoria Crosse (Vivian Cory) and *The Woman Who Wouldn’t* (1895) by Lucas Cleeve (Adelina G. I. Kingscote). As Warne and Colligan note, ‘The Woman Who –’ soon became a catchpenny phrase (21). This notoriety was lasting; fourteen years later, in H. G. Wells’s New Woman novel *Ann Veronica* (1909) the heroine’s father bemoans the influence of ‘[a]ll this torrent of misleading, spurious stuff that pours from the press. These sham ideals and advanced notions, Women who Dids, and all that kind of thing’ (19). The novel was widely referenced, parodied, discussed, and dramatised for the stage as well as made into film, well into the twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

The main character in *The Woman Who Did* is Herminia Barton, a former Girton Girl who earns her own living by teaching, journalism, and editorial work: ‘I wouldn’t be dependent on any man, not even my own father’ (15).<sup>28</sup> She left

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‘The New Man’ (*Westminster Gazette*, 4 (16 July 1894), 1-2). See also his essay ‘Falling in Love’ (*Fortnightly Review*, 40 (October 1886), 452-462) for his views on marriage and love.

<sup>25</sup> See John Lucas’s essay ‘Grant Allen: Writing to the Moment’ (45-54) in Greenslade and Rodgers (eds.) for an account of Allen’s literary concern with contemporary issues.

<sup>26</sup> The series, consisting of thirty-three novels and short story collections, took its name after New Woman writer George Egerton’s short story collection *Keynotes* (1893). John Lane also published *The Yellow Book*, the 1894-1897 periodical with works by New Woman writers and decadent writers. For a further examination of these publications, see James G. Nelson, *The Early Nineties: A View from the Bodley Head* (1971).

<sup>27</sup> The first recognised film dramatisation was Walter West’s *The Woman Who Did* (1915, UK), followed by the parody *Pimple’s The Woman Who Did* (1917, UK). Danish director Benjamin Christensen filmed *Frau mit dem schlechten Ruf* (*The Woman Who Did*, 1925, Germany), featuring stars such as Gustav Fröhlich and Alexandra Sorina (<<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0350328/>>; <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0189931/>>; <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0212954/>>).

<sup>28</sup> Page numbers for *The Woman Who Did* refer to the 1895 edition.

university because it failed to develop ‘every fibre’ of her nature (13). Like New Woman writers such as Mona Caird, Herminia sees marriage as nothing but thralldom; she considers it ‘part and parcel of a system of slavery’: ‘Marriage itself is still an assertion of man’s supremacy over woman’ (43). She believes instead in a free union between the sexes. Herminia states, refusing Alan Merrick’s marriage proposal: ‘I have wrought it all out in my mind beforehand, – covenanted with my soul that for woman’s sake I would be a free woman. ... Unless one woman begins, there will be no beginning’ (41). However, when entering a relationship with Alan, she is forced to resign her position as a teacher. When Alan later dies, Herminia is pregnant with their illegitimate child, and she has to support herself and her daughter by writing. In the intervals between carrying out her journalistic work and nursing the baby, Herminia even writes and publishes a New Woman novel, ‘the despairing heart-cry of a soul in revolt’ (141). Embodying ‘the experiences and beliefs and sentiments of a martyred woman’ (141-142), the novel is recognised by her reviewers as a ‘novel with a purpose’ – just as *The Woman Who Did* itself would be. At the close of the novel, when Herminia sees her daughter shunning her mother’s emancipatory work, Herminia commits suicide, a martyr for her cause.

The study of the New Woman debate in terms of a ‘dominant’ and ‘reverse’ discourse threatens to leave unacknowledged writers who do not fully fit either role. In Allen’s case it is difficult to draw a certain line and label him for or against the ‘Woman Question’, feminist or anti-feminist. Allen was famed for writing ‘potboiler’ novels in order to make a living, but as epigraph to *The Woman Who Did* he (rather pompously) states that the novel was written at Perugia in the spring of 1893, for the first time in his life ‘wholly and solely to satisfy my own taste and my own conscience’ (4, original in capital letters).<sup>29</sup> Coupled with his various essays on the subject, the epitaph shows a concern with the ‘Woman Question’ of the late nineteenth century. Whether or not of major significance to the reading of the rest of his works, Allen in 1898 claimed to ‘hate... the ill-treatment of women’ (qtd. in Clodd 201). Allen in both his non-fiction essays on the subject, and in his New

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<sup>29</sup> Before the publication of *The Woman Who Did*, Allen ‘defined authorship as a trade rather than as a calling’ (Warne and Colligan 23). A quote from an interview with Raymond Blathwayt exemplifies this: ‘my line is to write what I think the public wish to buy, and not what I wish to say, or what I really think and feel’ (qtd. in Warne and Colligan 23).



Woman novels, is rather ambiguous in his treatment of the New Woman; he seems to promote independent and non-traditional female characters at the same time as promulgating specifically female biological urges.

This is manifested in *The Woman Who Did* when essentialist remarks from the narrator clash with the emancipated views of the characters. Herminia's motherhood is described by the narrator as 'the natural outlet for woman's wealth of emotion': 'Every good woman is by nature a mother, and finds best in maternity her social and moral salvation' (138). Such narrative commentary threatens to undercut the description of the advanced woman Herminia: 'It is a woman's ancestral part to look up to the man' (105); 'the male, active and aggressive; the female, sedentary, passive, and receptive' (82). At the same time, Herminia is put forward as an evolutionary ideal of womanhood; she sees herself as a martyr for further, more enlightened, generations to come. In the 'sacrifice she was willing to make for humanity' (53) she represents the 'church of the future' of advanced womanhood (223). Chris Willis terms this textual ambiguity the 'dual consciousness' ('Detective' 151) of Allen's New Women characters; thousand years old traditions and biological urges here haunt the modern New Woman. Portraits of the emancipated New Woman, Willis argues, are repeatedly undercut by repeated references to the heroines' rejection of stereotypically 'womanly' instincts: 'Allen's self-styled "mediaeval" woman with strong sexual and maternal urges becomes the *doppelgänger* of the egalitarian "modern" woman' ('Heaven' 61). This ambiguity should not be ignored in favour of more unified interpretations, which may force Allen's texts into categories they do not fit.

Contemporary reviews of the novel were not as unanimous in their condemnation as later New Woman scholarship would be. Critics with different political perspectives commented differently on Allen's association with the New Woman and the women's rights movement, 'some viewing him as sympathetic, others seeing him as adversarial, and still others perceiving him as fickle' (Warne and Colligan).<sup>30</sup> The suffragette Millicent Garrett Fawcett, one of the most prominent

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<sup>30</sup> See Warne and Colligan for a fuller account and engagement with the critical reception of *The Woman Who Did* in both late nineteenth-century press and in literary criticism. A selection of contemporary reviews, and also some of Allen's replies to them, can be found in the 2004 Broadview edition of the novel (appendix D, 207-225).

English feminists of her generation, in her 1895 review of *The Woman Who Did*, appoints Allen as ‘not a friend but an enemy’ (630). Fawcett urges readers to remember that ‘Mr. Grant Allen has never given help by tongue or pen to any practical effort to improve the legal or social status of women’ (629). Important to note though is that Fawcett, like New Woman writer Sarah Grand, promoted ‘social purity’ as a way to stop sexual exploitation of women, both within and outside of marriage.<sup>31</sup> The reason that Fawcett calls Allen an ‘enemy’ to women’s rights, is because he links together ‘the claim of women to citizenship and social and industrial independence with attacks upon marriage and the family’ (630) – views which were incompatible with her own brand of feminism. Allen’s stance, expressed in his non-fiction essays on the ‘Woman Question’, is not the advocacy of ‘social purity’ for both sexes, but a critique of loveless relationships. Like Mona Caird, Allen criticises marriage as an institution. Other contemporary reviews, by for example W. T. Stead and H. G. Wells, are of mixed content. What most of them have in common is their view of *The Woman Who Did* as a ‘novelette with a purpose’ (Wells, ‘*Woman Who Did*’ 212) or a ‘tract’ ([no signature], ‘*Woman Who Did*’ 217), something which is seen as infringing on the work’s literary qualities and portrayal of characters. Richard Le Gallienne writes in 1896 that the characters in the novel ‘are rather a philosopher’s puppets than human beings. ... Its purpose is everything, its people nothing’ (224). The reviewers generally point to the radical nature of the novel.

Compared to these contemporary responses, the novel has received an almost uniformly negative response from New Woman scholars. Neither Ledger nor Showalter, in their analyses of the crisis in gender relations at the *fin de siècle*, thoroughly consider Allen’s New Woman fiction. This is perhaps because, as Showalter states, *The Woman Who Did*, despite its great impact and best-seller status, ‘was never popular with feminists and their supporters’ (*Sexual* 52). Gail Cunningham in *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (1978) writes that beneath ‘all this talk of independence and freedom lurks an almost entirely traditional ideal of femininity’ (61), while Patricia Stubbs in *Women and Fiction* (1979) argues that

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<sup>31</sup> Drawing its impetus from eugenics, the social purity movement advocated male chastity (rather than female sexual liberation) as a way to reach equality and also to end female prostitution. Instead of criticising the marriage institution itself, social purity campaigners criticised the double standards for men and women. See Laura Bland’s *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* (1995) for a further exploration of this movement.

Allen ‘was no feminist’ (118). Ardis in *New Women, New Novels* (1990) criticises the ‘aggressive conservatism’ of the novel (51), while *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English* (1990, ed. Blain, Clements, and Grundy) even goes so far as describing the novel as ‘nastily anti-feminist’ (792). Jane Eldridge Miller in *Rebel Women* (1994) calls it ‘an anti-feminist novel disguised as a New Woman novel’ (25), while Ledger in *The New Woman* (1997) treats Allen as ‘very much a part of, rather than a response to, the dominant discourse on the New Woman’ (New 16). Mangum in *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant* (1998) suggests that by depicting a New Woman’s ‘failed’ experiment in free love, *The Woman Who Did* reinforced journalistic stereotypes and diverted public attention away from women’s political demands (28-29). Christensen Nelson (2001) notes that there were both male and female New Woman writers, but does not include Allen in her examples (xii). Shaw and Randolph (2007) see Allen as adapting the trope of the New Woman ‘to his own ends as an anti-feminist’ (23). Gagnier in *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization* (2010) takes Allen as her main example of ‘men writing about women’, seeing the heroine of *The Woman Who Did* as a typical male-created New Woman shunning all relationships (*Individualism* 63).<sup>32</sup> The approach to *The Woman Who Did* seems to be to merely disown Allen as a New Woman writer, without actually engaging with the complexities of the novel.

Only in recent years has New Woman criticism taken a slightly different approach. Instead of merely writing off Allen as feminist or anti-feminist, Warne and Colligan in ‘The Man Who Wrote a New Woman Novel: Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* and the Gendering of New Woman Authorship’ (2005) fruitfully highlight the problematic nature of Allen’s New Woman authorship and fiction. Addressing the anxiety that surrounded male participation in the production of New Woman literature, they examine the construction of male authorial identity around *The Woman Who Did*; Allen’s uneasy attempts at ‘carv[ing] out a role for the male author in the women’s movement’ by introducing ‘inconsistencies in his feminism’ and an ‘inconsistent authorial positioning’ (23-24). This simultaneous distancing from and ‘cross-gendered identification with’ his protagonist is found already in the prefatory

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<sup>32</sup> This is an unfortunate example, not only because many of Allen’s New Woman heroines are quite unlike Herminia Barton. Furthermore, the fact that Allen published his 1897 New Woman novel *The Type-Writer Girl* under a female pseudonym should complicate such reasoning.

material: the way that the dedication (this anti-marriage novel is dedicated to Allen's wife) and the epigraph play off each other to convey contradictory messages (Warne and Colligan 25-26). The novel's internal inconsistencies in narrative voice and plot development are read as an ambivalence about Allen's authorial role (Warne and Colligan 27). Allen is seen as an incarnation not only of the late nineteenth-century 'man of letters', as a 'cultural mediator' or 'sign of the times' (Greenslade and Rodgers 4, 17) regarding his position in the literary marketplace, but also as emblematic of the gender confusion at the *fin de siècle*: 'Arguably, Allen's befuddled authorial persona is the quintessential figure of the 1890s, the decade of "sexual anarchy" ... when gender identity was in flux because of the efforts not only of first-wave feminists but also of the male partisans of the movement' (Warne and Colligan 22-23). The varying responses to *The Woman Who Did* not only suggest the contradictions that underlie Allen's construction of male authorship but also offers insight into the *fin de siècle* literary market that 'renumerated the New Man author and yet was so deeply hostile toward him' (Wanessa and Colligan 28). Thus, Warne and Colligan conclude, 'neither authorship nor gender is an individual accomplishment but a historical process of collective contest and negotiation' (22).

Elizabeth Foxwell suggests that while Allen may send mixed signals in his various writings, these are not inconsistent with the period (xiii) – we cannot take them out of their historical context. Until recently many New Woman scholars have tended to impose their own twentieth-century version of feminism on *fin de siècle* debates, measuring authors against their own contemporary strand of feminism. As we have seen, many scholars discuss whether certain New Woman novelists are 'feminist' or not, without considering that the term 'feminism' itself was not in widespread use at the time. The term 'feminism' in its modern sense appeared in print in the English language first in April 1895, in *Athenaeum* ('feminism'), which is two months after the publication of *The Woman Who Did* (and 18 months after Allen first submitted his manuscript).<sup>33</sup> Earlier usage has other significations: in 1851 the term feminism describes the 'qualities of females', and in 1882 it is used as a medical term to denote the 'development of female secondary sexual characteristics

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<sup>33</sup> See Nicholas Ruddick's introduction to the 2004 Broadview edition of *The Woman Who Did* for more information about the novel's composition and publication history.

in a male' ('feminism'). The term 'feminist' as an adjective first appeared printed in English in October 1894, in *Daily News* (describing a French 'Feminist' group in Paris), and as a noun it appeared printed in February 1895, in *Critic* ('feminist'). Much New Woman scholarship has failed to consider the historiospecificity of the term with its various previous significations. Obviously, a late nineteenth-century struggle for emancipation and equality must be studied on its own terms, rather than be blamed for not adhering to notions that were not in existence at the time.

This historical context also entails the specific late nineteenth-century literary modernity with its growing demand for commercial fiction. As Elizabeth Carolyn Miller points out, many of the freedoms that the New Woman embodied arose 'in tandem with consumerism and an accompanying consumerist ideology of individual choice' (11). Women became increasingly sexually commodified as femininity became increasingly constituted by self-administered regimes of health, beauty, fashion, and appearance. This 'feminist' consumer capitalism, Miller argues, shifted the terms of women's oppression: 'Women's bodies shifted from being the property of individual men (such as fathers or husbands), to being social property, in need of constant maintenance to meet the new cultural standards of femininity' (11). The New Woman had become a marketable novelty figure whose presence in a story increased its chance of good sales (Willis, 'Heaven' 64). As Willis notes, novels and stories in which the heroines were 'scaled down and prettied up for popular consumption ... possibly did as much for women's rights as did the more serious fiction produced by the campaigners' ('Heaven' 54).<sup>34</sup> As Willis states, some authors – for example women's rights supporters such as L. T. Meade and Beatrice Harraden – used popular fiction as a polemic, in order to draw attention to political ('serious') issues. 'By marketing the New Woman for mass consumption', Willis states, 'the writers of commercial fiction ensured her a prominent and lasting place in popular culture' ('Heaven' 64). Indeed, the parodic images in magazines such as *Punch* also served the New Woman movement's purpose, by spreading the ideas in the press: 'For by "naming" and thenceforward largely ridiculing and attacking the New Woman, the editors and hacks of the periodical press unwittingly prised open a

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<sup>34</sup> See Willis's Ph. D. dissertation *The Transgressive Woman: Gender and Popular Fiction, 1850-1914* (Birkbeck College, University of London, 2000) for a further reconsideration of the New Woman in popular fiction.

discursive space for her' (Ledger, *New* 10).<sup>35</sup> Commercial fiction and journalism also play a part in formulating the figure of the New Woman – this work is not carried out only by 'serious-minded' fiction. And if this is the case, we certainly ought to credit Allen for producing popular figurations of the New Woman.

Allen's works may seem less subversive than other New Woman works, but as part of the genre they certainly question established notions of gender. Gynocritical assumptions threaten to close down possible meanings of a text, when focusing merely on the gender of the author instead of how notions of gender play out in *the text itself* and in the debates surrounding it. With attention to historical and literary context, it is clear that the notoriety of *The Woman Who Did* helped establish the New Woman novel as a genre, articulating the concept of the New Woman in *fin de siècle* discourse.

### **Examining the Semi-Fictional New Woman**

As exemplified in the case of *The Woman Who Did*, New Woman scholarship has tended to disregard the historiospecificity of the New Woman and the parameters of late nineteenth-century (proto)feminism and women's rights campaigning. Furthermore, it has tended to focus on the literary construction of the New Woman, while evading the material context – except when relating to the gender of the author. Instead of, as gynocritical assumptions do, locating the material side of the New Woman figure in an author's intention or gender (a reading which closes down significations rather than explores them), we can locate it in the context of material objects and social practices. This section will propose the concept of technology as providing a way of reading the semi-fictional New Woman figure in its historiospecific and material context of late nineteenth-century technological modernity, without closing down the many meanings of its various figurations.

The field of New Woman criticism as a whole struggles with the semi-fictional nature of the New Woman, and the question of how to conciliate the textual figurations of the New Woman with the so-called 'real' or material historical women

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<sup>35</sup> See Ann Heilmann's and Valerie Sanders's 'The Rebel, the Lady, and the "Anti": Femininity, Anti-feminism, and the Victorian Woman Writer' for a consideration of such 'anti-feminist' writings in Victorian debates on women's rights (*Women's Studies International Forum* 29 (2006): 289-300).

of the late nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> As Pykett states, in her foreword to *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, there were indeed many ‘real’ women who identified themselves as ‘New Women’, appropriating the term and establishing their own definitions of it. Even if *the* New Woman did not exist, there were several ‘New Women’ (xi). That is, even though the figure of the New Woman was a discursive, abstract concept, there were of course women engaging in the same social practices, and advocating similar political ideas, as those of this discursive figure.

Despite the twofold characterisation of the figure as ‘sociological phenomenon’ as well as ‘literary type’ (Tickner 183), New Woman scholarship has tended to focus just on the literary construction that is the New Woman, without examining the other side of the figure’s semi-fictionality which regards a set of social practices. The semi-fictionality of the New Woman has been, to a large extent, evaded. Ledger in *The New Woman* states that ‘to a certain extent, the history of the New Woman is only available to us textually, since the New Woman was largely a discursive phenomenon’ (3). Pykett confirms this, stating that ‘[f]irst and foremost’, the New Woman was a ‘representation’ (*Improper* 137) – she was ‘actively produced and reproduced in the pages of the newspaper and periodical press, as well as in novels’ (*Improper* 137-138). Ledger states that as the New Woman was apprehended at the end of the nineteenth century, she was predominantly ‘a journalistic phenomenon, a product of discourse’; and ‘what writers and readers at the *fin de siècle* thought the New Woman was, the way in which she was constructed as a product of discourse, is just as “real” and historically significant as what she *actually* was’ (*New* 3).

However, such a reductive reasoning involves a skewed formulation of the notion of discourse itself; Ledger poses the New Woman as a ‘product’ of discourse, rather than a *part of* discourse. Texts and textual figurations are read as ‘products’ or ‘representations’ of prediscursive ‘real’ historical situations. Through gynocritical

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<sup>36</sup> The New Woman actress forms a specifically interesting instance of this semi-fictionality. As Gardner states, the women who played the New Woman roles in the plays of for example Ibsen, Grundy, and Shaw ‘were themselves, in many ways, New Women’: ‘Simply by working they were transgressing the social boundaries that required middle-class women to be dependent on their father, husband or brother. To be working on the stage doubled the offence and alienated these women from “normal” female society’ (3). An example of this is Elizabeth Robins (1862-1952), who started out as an actress, playing several of Ibsen’s New Woman characters, and soon became a prominent feminist author and suffragette.

readings, too often the critical discussions imply an almost clear-cut *fin de siècle* debate between on the one hand male writers' stereotypical image of the New Woman and on the other hand female writers' representations of 'real' women. In this way, many writers and works of the time have reductively been dubbed 'feminist' or 'anti-feminist', and the New Woman debate of the 1890s has been read in simplified ways. The complex relation between literature and the material world is thus overlooked by making a too strong divide between 'real' women and 'representations' of the New Woman, ignoring the many ways in which texts and sociocultural contexts work together in forming *fin de siècle* debates on gender. Instead, we need to consider discourse as one among many social practices, without having to recourse to distinctions of 'real' and 'representative' women.

Examining the New Woman purely as a discursive construct is not enough; we also need to engage with this other element outside of, or at the limits of, discourse; we must consider that discourse is one social practice among others. While language to an extent structures the social world, also material objects and practices are part of it. Discourse is both constitutive and constituted: 'discourse is a form of social practice which both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices. As social practice, discourse is in a *dialectical* relationship with other social dimensions. It does not just contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them' (Jørgensen and Phillips 61). As Foucault formulates it, discourse should be thought of not simply a group of signs (signifying elements that refer contents or representations) or a stretch of text, but as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, *Archaeology* 54; cf. Mills 17).<sup>37</sup> In other words, just as discourse informs practice, so practice informs discourse: 'real-life' New Women and the literary figurations of the New Woman constitute each other, and cannot be entirely separated. Institutional and textual changes feed into each other; texts are agents in the production of discursive formations, and social practices outline discourse. Novels and other writing simultaneously shape and are shaped by the social world.

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<sup>37</sup> While the concept of discourse has been connected with Foucault's work, the concept of (social) practice has been developed in sociological writings such as those of Pierre Bourdieu, perhaps most extensively in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972, trans. 1977) and *The Logic of Practice* (1980, trans. 1980).



This mutual relationship is made explicit in the semi-fictional New Woman, in the figure's construction through both discourse and social practice. An attention to historical and material context, through a focus on technological *fin de siècle* material modernity, can help us understand this semi-fictionality. Technologies, along with language or discourse, are the foremost way in which we deal with the material world (Preston 514). As Mark L. Greenberg and Lance Schachterle point out, 'what makes our daily lives different from what they would have been a generation ago is technology ... Technology supplies most of the artifacts with which we interact every day and the structures we inhabit' (14). Furthermore, literary texts respond to 'both the actual technologies and ideas about that technology in the world around them' (Greenberg and Schachterle 16). We may use the notion of technology to situate a historiospecific grounding in which to understand the semi-fictionality of the New Woman, without relying on the author as material basis.

I will illustrate my argument with a well-known and much reproduced figuration of the New Woman: the satiric illustration 'Donna Quixote' from *Punch*, 28 April 1894. In this cartoon the New Woman, bespectacled, sits upright and legs apart in an armchair, holding an open book in her left hand and a latchkey (simultaneously the symbol of a woman's independence and the emblem of John Lane's *Keynote* series) in her raised right hand. At her feet are scattered books by Ibsen, Tolstoy and Mona Caird. The caption explains that, like Don Quixote, she has been led astray by '[a] world of disorderly notion *picked out of books*, crowded into his (her) imagination'.<sup>38</sup> In the background a Quixote-like character is depicted riding off to fight windmills on which is written 'MARRIAGE LAWS'. An Amazonian woman is holding a sharp weapon, ready to slay both a dragon named 'DECORUM' and a three-headed beast naming for example 'MRS GRUNDY' and 'CHAPERON'. Another woman is holding a banner on which is written 'DIVIDED SKIRT'. A large (decapitated) head of a bearded man, on whose forefront is written 'TYRANT MAN', also lies at the New Woman's feet.

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<sup>38</sup> The notion of the New Woman as a female Don Quixote, being led astray by books, relates to late nineteenth-century debates about women's reading. As Kate Flint points out, literary critics in the 1890s claimed that fiction had actual effects, on body and mind, on both the individual readers and society at large (294-316). New Woman novels were thus often attacked by reviewers because of the damage that they could do to women.



DONNA QUIXOTE.

[<sup>1</sup> A world of disorderly notions 'poked out of books, crowded into his (her) imagination.'—Don Quixote.]

'Donna Quixote.' *Punch, or, the London Charivari*. London: Published for the Proprietors, 1894. April 28, 1894, p. 194.

This image shows the fusion of fiction, texts, political demands, discourse and practice, compressed in the New Woman. Discursive concepts such as 'decorum' and social practices such as the wearing of a cycling (or divided) skirt come together in literature and in the figure. Richardson and Willis point out that for much mainstream press, 'cycling and rational dress provided visual emblems of the social, sexual and political disquiet caused by women's demand for equality' (24).

Technologies of the time, as embodying or materialising social practices, can be seen as 'visual emblems' connecting different figurations of the New Woman.

Technologies of the time might be studied as a way of understanding the semi-fictionality of the New Woman, without having to resort to discussions of 'real' versus 'fictional' women and their respective emancipatory potential. It also saves us from having to resort to gendered authorial intention for analysing a literary text. Technology works as both discursive concept and social practice, linking these two aspects of the figure of the New Woman; binding together literary or textual and sociohistorical (material) elements.

Indeed, the New Woman is – in various figurations, both in fiction and journalism of different genres – often connected not only with ideas or concepts, but with specific tools, technologies and practices, which place the figure in a historiospecific technological modernity. Technologies of the time are the main ways in which the figure of the New Woman interacts with the surrounding world. I will argue that it is in the relation between contemporary technologies (both material objects and abstract knowledge) and specific technologies of self-formation that the New Woman can be more fruitfully understood. Within this framework we might better understand how the discursive figuration of the New Woman emerged in relation to the social world, and why at this specific point in history. To do this, we need to fully consider the interrelation between gender, technology and *fin de siècle* modernity.

### **1.3 New Women, New Technologies**

#### **The Gender-Technology-Modernity Nexus**

The *fin de siècle* was not only a time of breakdown of ideas concerning gender and sexual identity, but also a time of much technological change. The 1880s and 1890s saw an incredible upsurge of new technologies; the typewriter, the safety bicycle, medical technologies, the phonograph, the telephone, the X-ray, cinematography. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler describes the change at the end of the nineteenth century from the ‘Gutenberg Galaxy’, a time of monopoly of writing, where everything was filtered through letters and ideograms (5-6), to ‘Edison’s Universe’, or ‘Mediengründerzeit’. By Mediengründerzeit Kittler refers to ‘the founding age of technological media’ (xl); the ‘media revolution of 1880’ (16), when three main modern media technologies – gramophone, film, and typewriter – made their entrance. This trinity stored information in new ways, separated the senses and thus, argues Kittler, changed human perception: ‘the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg’s writing monopoly around 1880’ (16). This, he argues, made the ‘fabrication of so-called Man’ possible (16). By the term ‘so-called Man’ Kittler implicitly refers to Foucault’s earlier writings on the ‘death of man’ in *The Order of Things* (1966), that is Foucault’s critique of a

universal subject called ‘man’ as the originator of discourse.<sup>39</sup> Technological modernity also made possible the fabrication of the New Woman; emerging in the late nineteenth century, the figure connects changes in technology and changes in ideas of gender and social order.

How then do these late nineteenth-century technologies, and the society in which they exist, work together? Or to be more specific: What are ‘so-called’ Man’s, and the New Woman’s, places in relation to these technological and perceptual changes? Discussing gender and technology, in the context of the *fin de siècle* and the New Woman, involves moving simultaneously between different and overlapping fields of knowledge and layers of criticism. The interrelation between technology and gender entails complex questions of materiality and abstractness, technology and society, body and machine, and the place of the subject/agent in discourse and practice.<sup>40</sup> I will argue that the interrelation between gender and technology needs to be taken into account when discussing the processes of *fin de siècle* modernity, and when approaching the late nineteenth-century figure of early feminism, the New Woman.

The term ‘modernity’ has been assigned numerous meanings, defined both by notions of subjective consciousness and of historical specificity. Felski in ‘Feminism, Postmodernism, and the Critique of Modernity’ identifies modernity as ‘not only such socioeconomic processes as industrialization, urban expansion, and the increasing division of labor associated with the development of capitalism, but also the epistemic shift towards a secularized worldview exemplified in the articulation of universalizable concepts of rationality, freedom, and equality’ (47). As Ben Singer states in *Melodrama and Modernity*, modernity is often defined as a temporal concept; an epoch situated after the premodern or ‘traditional’ age and before the postmodern (17). However, as Jürgen Habermas in ‘Modernity: An Unfinished Project’ and Henri Meschonnic in ‘Modernity Modernity’ recognise, there is a

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<sup>39</sup> Kittler, however, adds his own technological determinism to this, effacing any concept of individual agency (see chapter two of this thesis).

<sup>40</sup> The terms ‘subject’ and ‘agent’ have different theoretical connotations. While Michel Foucault uses the term subject, Pierre Bourdieu prefers the term social agent in order to highlight the agency of the individual in and through social practice. Bruno Latour similarly uses the term agent, also adding the term ‘actant’ to describe non-human forces of agency in a network. Since I argue throughout the thesis that Foucault’s conception of the subject in power relations *does* allow for a concept of agency, I use the two terms interchangeably.

difficulty in defining modernity as a temporal epoch. Habermas argues that what is considered modern is, since Romanticism, ‘the moment of novelty, the New’, and that the sense of the modern is created through ‘the consciousness of a new era’ (38-39). Meschonnic describes modernity as ‘the historical mode of subjectivity’, that is, modernity as neither the new nor a characteristic of the present, but as a function of language and of the subject’s experience of newness, anchored in history (420-422).

While modernity cannot be reduced to one single meaning or truly distinctive feature, the term needs to be examined in a historical and temporal context. A focus on technology, which ‘may be *the* truly distinctive feature of modernity’ (Misa 8), can provide this grounding.<sup>41</sup> For the purpose of this thesis I will therefore, following Kittler, consider modernity as bound up with the technological or media revolution of the late nineteenth century. The relation between technology and modernity has been treated in a number of works, most notably in the recent *Modernity and Technology* (2003, ed. Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey, and Andrew Feenberg), which focuses on the co-construction of modernity and technology. Stephen Kern in *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (1983) writes specifically on modernity in relation to technology, seeing how technological and cultural changes between 1880 and World War I altered human perception of time and space.<sup>42</sup> In addition to *Technology and Modernity* and Kern’s work, also Paul Rosen in *Framing Production* (2002) acknowledges ‘the centrality of technology to the shaping of modernity’ (6). Modernity can in these terms be seen as an interrelation between technological, perceptual and social changes – including notions of gender.

Gender is to be considered as being produced socially and historically, through social and institutional practices. Joan W. Scott provides a twofold definition

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<sup>41</sup> This material turn in studies on technology and modernity is linked with the increased interest in material culture and materiality in many fields, from feminist and gender theory to literary criticism. The corporeal feminism developed in the last decade by for example Elisabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti are examples of these. Two good introductory collections on materiality are *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture* (2000, ed. P. M. Graves-Brown), consisting of a number of essays by for example Bruno Latour and Beth Preston and focusing mostly on contemporary material culture, and *Materiality* (2005, ed. Daniel Miller). Tim Dant’s *Materiality and Society* (2005) has a specific chapter on the intersection of technology and modernity, and another chapter on issues of agency and actor-network-theory (ANT).

<sup>42</sup> Like Kittler, Kern sees technology as changing human perception: ‘From around 1880 to the outbreak of World War I a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space. The result was a transformation of the dimensions of life and thought’ (1-2). Technologies are here described as agents determining human life.

of gender, which states the marked connection between gender and power, and the omnipresence of both: '[G]ender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power' (42). These two propositions on gender are fundamentally and mutually connected; changes in the organisation of social relationships interact with changes in representations of power. Furthermore, Scott sees gender as operating at different levels, in layers of function and meaning, in these social relationships. Firstly, gender works in *symbolic and representational* ways, in assumptions about gender difference. Secondly, gender manifests in *normative concepts and statements*, usually expressed in religious, educational, scientific, legal, and political doctrines. Thirdly, society makes use of gender in organisational and material ways, through *social institutions and organisations*. Finally, at the most personal level, gender is a *subjective identity*, a part of how one sees oneself and presents oneself to the world (43-44).<sup>43</sup> Considering gender as something unstable, performed, constructed through processes, we may see possibilities for change. Modernity not only involved technological changes but also changes in gender formations and relations.

Questions concerning gender and modernity have often been restricted to assigning a gender to modernity. Marshall Berman in *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (1982) sees Goethe's Faust as the exemplary modern hero, emphasising the part of the lone male hero struggling in a world of rationalisation and progress. He thus defines, and engenders, modernity in very narrow ways, arguing for a universal definition of the term. Gail Finney in *Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism and European Theater at the Turn of the Century* (1989) suggests an opposite approach; reading 'modern' female characters of certain *fin de siècle* dramas, in relation to Freud's theories on hysteria, she also engenders modernity. Felski in *The Gender of Modernity* provides an account of these competing 'myths of modernity' – how modernity, and history, have often been gendered – and also an excellent critique of these myths (1). As Felski states: 'any

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<sup>43</sup> Sandra Harding in *The Science Question in Feminism* presents a similar, though not as detailed, definition of gender as simultaneously individual, structural, and symbolic – and always asymmetric. An adequate theorisation of gender will examine 'the interactions between gender symbolism, the particular way in which social labor or activity is divided by gender, and what constitutes gendered identities and desires in any particular culture' (57).

attempt to encapsulate women's distinctive relationship to modernity through a single alternative myth risks becoming a new form of "reifying universal" in its assumption that the history of women can be subsumed and symbolized by a single, all-encompassing image of femininity' (7). Following Felski, I suggest that modernity is not to be considered as a stable place in any gender category, but instead we might explore how modernity is shaped by and manifested in questions of gender – and of technology.

Whereas earlier scholarship on gender and technology focused mostly on the question of whether technological changes had been 'a boon or a bane' to women, more recent work focuses on gender relationships, regarding both men and women, analysing cultural practices and social systems (Lerman, Oldenziel, and Mohun, 'Shoulders' 430). Most writing on the relationship between gender and technology focuses on contemporary or twentieth-century issues, not on late nineteenth-century modernity. Much research on the relation between gender and technology has concerned either attempts to gender technology, or postmodern writing on technoculture, cyborgs and cyberfeminism.<sup>44</sup> Rosalind Gill and Keith Grint in their introduction to *The Gender-Technology Relation: Contemporary Theory and Research* (1995) display this attempt to gender technology, when stating as their task to 'explore the *nature* of gender-technology relations' (1) – as if there was one universal relation. They investigate the relationship between gender and technology in quite narrow conceptions: 'Are technologies inherently masculine? What sorts of assumptions about gender go into their design, production and use? Are technologies implicated in women's oppression or could they play a part in women's liberation?' (1-2). Not only is the idea of a binary oppression-liberation system simplifying, so is the attempt to assign an absolute value to different technologies. Judy Wajcman in 'Feminist Theories of Technology' provides an overview of these various approaches of feminist theories of technology; from the early discussions of the definition of gender, through 1980s explorations of the 'gendered character of technology itself' (146), to the contemporary fusion of cyborg feminism and the (co-)constructivist or mutual shaping approach. Feminist scholarship on technology has increased

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<sup>44</sup> Cyberfeminism quotes as its central text Donna Haraway's 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs' (1985), which questions the human-technology binary, placing gender at the centre of the discussion.

significantly within the last two decades (although most often subsumed by feminist science studies), and has indeed taken such a turn towards studying the constructed and interrelated character of both gender and technology.<sup>45</sup>

Gender, that constitutive element of the social, must be a factor in our discussion of modernity and its social orderings. Barbara L. Marshall in ‘Critical Theory, Feminist Theory, and Technology Studies’ states that ‘there is no point at which technology and modernity are not joined in some way in the production of sexual bodies’ (123). We must also include gender in the modernity and technology nexus; each is constructed in terms of the other two. It is now generally acknowledged within feminist scholarship on technology not only that ‘the social relations of technology are gendered relations’, and that ‘technology enters into gender identity’, but also that ‘technology itself cannot be fully understood without reference to gender’ (Cockburn 32). Importantly, ‘technology as such is neither inherently patriarchal nor unambiguously liberating’ (Wajcman, ‘Feminist’ 148); gender power relations influence technological change, which in turn configures gender relations. As clarified earlier in relation to Foucauldian discourse analysis and the New Woman, these relations are not structured according to a binary oppressive-liberatory logic, but are diverse and mobile. It is crucial to understand that ‘the politics of technology is integral to the renegotiation of gender power relations’; technologies that are part of mobile power relations (Wajcman, ‘Feminist’ 151). Technology is to be considered as both a source and consequence of gender relations; there is an interrelation.

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<sup>45</sup> The interrelation between gender and technology has been examined in many other works in addition to the aforementioned *Gender and Technology: A Reader*. These are for example *Machina ex Dea: Feminist Perspectives on Technology* (1983, ed. Joan Rothschild); Wajcman’s *Feminism Confronts Technology* (1991); and the just mentioned *The Gender-Technology Relation: Contemporary Theory and Research* (1995, ed. Gill and Grint). The journal *Technology and Culture* released a seminal special issue on gender in 1997, edited by Nina Lerman, Ruth Oldenziel, and Arwen Mohun. Patrick D. Hopkins edited the collection *Sex/Machine: Readings in Culture, Gender and Technology* (1998) which contains articles from various disciplines. Sally L. Hacker in various writings, informed by Foucault, examines specific links between gender, technology and power – see for example *Pleasure, Power & Technology* (1989). *Gender and Technology: A Reader* takes the most useful approach, in its intention to describe the mutual relationship between gender and technology; gender constructs technology and technology constructs gender. More recently have been published for example *Women, Science, and Technology: A Reader in Feminist Science Studies* (2001) edited by Mary Wyer, Mary Barbercheck, Donna Giesman, Hatice Örün Öztürk, and Martha Wayne; *Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology* (2007) by Maureen McNeil; and *Feminist Technology* (2010) edited by Linda L. Layne, Sharra L. Vostrat, and Kate Boyer.



This thesis builds on the work of these critics by examining the vital connection between the New Woman and different technologies of late nineteenth-century modernity, a connection which thus far has not received much critical attention. Scholarship on literature and technology in broader terms is a rather recent field; while there is an abundance of studies treating literary relations with science, very few such studies on technology have been undertaken (Greenberg and Schachterle 14). Pamela Thurschwell in *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (2001) explores the intersections between the increased interest in spiritualism at the turn of the century and the new technologies. Ian Carter in *Railways and Culture in Britain: The Epitome of Modernity* (2001) examines railways in mainly Victorian fiction. Nick Daly in *Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860-2000* (2004) examines human/machine encounters in fiction from the 1860s and onwards, seeing such scenes as illustrating the modernisation of subjectivity itself. The recently published collection *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch* (2011, ed. Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley) examines the mixed-media properties of literature, each chapter focusing on a specific sensory dimension of nineteenth-century media and technologies. However, neither Thurschwell, Daly, Carter, nor any of the essays in *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* engage specifically with the figure of the New Woman. There are a few works on particular aspects of the New Woman – the New Woman as typist or secretary, for example – but no work which relates the New Woman to the various technologies of *fin de siècle* modernity. Most scholarship on technology in literature is instead carried out in the field of twentieth-century fiction: modernist and postmodernist literature.<sup>46</sup>

I want to explore what happens when the two ‘newnesses’, the New Woman and new technologies, come together. What is ‘modern’ about these technologies is also their part in reworking notions of gender. It is crucial here to stress the mutual

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<sup>46</sup> See for example Tim Armstrong’s *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (1998), or Sara Danius’s examination of the interrelation between technology and modernist literature in *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (2002) and in her essay on technology in the *Blackwell Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture* (2006, ed. David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar). For an early collection on literary relations with technology throughout various periods, see *Literature and Technology* (1992, ed. Mark L. Greenberg and Lance Schachterle) which contains essays by technology (rather than literary) scholars.

interaction, the interrelation, between technology and gender, technology and society – as we will see, technological determinism is incompatible with any kind of feminist analysis. To understand the complex interrelation between gender, technology and modernity, we need to account for individual agency as well as the impact of specific technologies.

### **Defining Technology**

Questions of technology can take various directions, so before going further a definition – and an account of the discussion concerning it – of technology is called for. The term technology may be defined broadly, as by Melvin Kranzberg in 1959, as “‘how things are commonly done or made [and] what things are done and made’” (8-9).<sup>47</sup> He emphasises the need to ask other questions concerning technology: ‘*Why* are things done and made as they are? What effects have these methods and things upon other areas of human activity? How have other elements in society and culture affected how, what, and why things are done or made?’(9). Similarly, Lewis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization* (1934) emphasises the mutual relationship between technology and social change: ‘The machine cannot be divorced from its larger social pattern; for it is this pattern that gives it meaning and purpose. Every period of civilization carries within it the insignificant refuse of past technologies and the important germs of new ones: but the center of growth lies within its own complex’ (110-111). Mumford in fact employs the term ‘technics’ rather than technology, to signify the broader definition of the Greek *techne* which includes not only technology but also art and skill, thus emphasising the interrelation of technology and social context. More recently, theorists continue to argue the importance of considering technology in its social context. Echoing Martin Heidegger’s concept of *Gestell* (see discussion below), Don Ihde states that ‘technology is only what it is in some use-context’ (128). Andrew Feenberg in *Questioning Technology* (1999) similarly calls for a definition of technology which includes its social aspects (83).

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<sup>47</sup> Kranzberg takes this first definition from Charles Singer, E. J. Holmyard, A. R. Hall, and T. I. Williams’s *A History of Technology* (5 vols. New York; London, 1954-8): vol. I, p. vii.

However, these theorists of technology fail to include notions of gender in their accounts; technology for them seems to signify only objects made out of metal.<sup>48</sup> As Lerman, Oldenziel, and Mohun state, Kranzberg's broad and historical definition of technology as people's 'ways of making and doing things' allows the term to encompass Stone Age tools, cars, sewing, cooking, and much more ('Introduction' 2). If one is to consider a social context in the definition of technology, one must also regard gender as part of this equation; what is defined as technology is, like gender, a social construct.

Contemporary scholarship on technology seems to move in-between two intersecting disciplines: on the one hand within Philosophy and on the other hand within Sociology or Cultural (including Media) Studies. These strands have their separate terms and areas, but often overlap and blur the boundaries between them. Whereas scholars in Philosophy of Technology often base their work on a long-standing canon of philosophical writings on technology, within Cultural Studies the focus tends to be on more recent work and take the form of case studies. In the field of Media Studies Marshall McLuhan and the aforementioned Kittler can be counted as two of the most influential theorists.<sup>49</sup>

Generally, there is a consensus within both fields that technology and society need to be considered together, although theorists disagree in regard to the direction of this influence. Discussions are formulated through different models: while Philosophy of Technology refers to determinist (technology has an inherent essence which changes humans and society) versus instrumentalist (technology is the tool by which humans master nature) debates, Sociology or Cultural Studies refer to a question of whether technology shapes society (TSS) or whether there is a social construction of technology (SCOT).<sup>50</sup> Within Cultural Studies writing on technology

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<sup>48</sup> See Autumn Stanley's 'Women Hold Up Two-Thirds of the Sky: Notes for a Revised History of Technology' for an excellent account of this necessary change of the definition of technology, and on what is considered significant technology (in Hopkins 1998, 17-32).

<sup>49</sup> McLuhan in *Understanding Media* (1964) sees the various media as extensions of human, that is to say as extending our senses, nerves, and consciousnesses (3-4). Technologies are tools created for human's sake. Both Kittler and McLuhan stress the effect of technologies on society, McLuhan stating that '[a]ny extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex' (4).

<sup>50</sup> This constructivist approach to technology was expressed in Trevor Pinch's and Wiebe Bijker's 1984 discussion article 'The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts' in *Social Studies of Science*. Here the authors call for a research based on the sociology of technology and science. In 1987 the

more generally has since the 1980s emphasised the mutual shaping of technology and society, and from this has emerged the interdisciplinary field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). Ron Westrum in *Technologies and Society: The Shaping of People and Things* (1991) writes: ‘Technology and society intertwine: When one changes, the other is likely to change as well. Social changes bring new needs, desires, and insecurities: technical changes force new choices, new adjustments’ (4). This mutual shaping has more recently come to be called the ‘co-construction’ of technology and society (Feenberg, *Between* xxi).

Kranzberg’s broad and historical definition of technology as people’s ‘ways of making and doing things’ allows the term to encompass all sorts of technologies. For the purpose of this thesis I will need to limit the term further. Westrum provides a more precise and also threefold definition, stating that technology consists of ‘those material objects, techniques, and knowledge that allow human beings to transform and control the inanimate world’ (7). By this definition technology is, as Westrum writes, both concrete and abstract: ‘It is both the pair of scissors I hold in my hand and the knowledge of how to make them from iron, carbon, and chromium’ (8). Westrum’s first designation of technology as material objects, ‘things’ or ‘devices’, helps encircle specific material technologies connected with the New Woman, such as the typewriter and the bicycle. The notion of technology as techniques and knowledge is inferred; the skills required for typewriting and bicycling, and in the case of the New Woman nurse also medical techniques and knowledge. Such technologies play a crucial part in posing questions of gender in late nineteenth-century technological modernity.

We also need a definition that takes into consideration a notion of volition or agency, technologies of self-formation, in order to formulate the shaping of technology and society as a *mutual* one. Carl Mitcham in *Thinking through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* (1994) offers a definition of technology similar to Westrum’s: as material objects, as knowledge, as activity – and as volition. Mitcham explains volition as ‘the most individualized and

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essay collection *The Social Construction of Technological Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (ed. Wiebe Bijker, Trevor Pinch, and Thomas P. Hughes) was published. Other important works in this tradition are *The Social Shaping of Technology* (1985, ed. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman), and *Technologies and Society: The Shaping of People and Things* (1991) by Ron Westrum.

subjective of the four modes of manifestations of technology' (250), describing how technologies have been associated with diverse types of 'will, drive, motive, aspiration, intention, and choice' (247). He quotes Oswald Spengler who in a 1931 text describes technology as "the tactics of living": "What matters is not how one fashions things, *but what one does with them*; not the weapon, but the battle" (qtd. in Mitcham 248). The idea of technology as volition can be more fully explored in correlation with Foucault's concept of technologies of self-formation, to understand how individual agency is involved. The concept of 'technologies of the self', developed in Foucault's later writings, describe the ways in which individuals by their own means or with the help of others perform certain operations on themselves and their way of being ('Technologies' 225; see next chapter for a further discussion).<sup>51</sup>

In addition to a definition of technology as material objects, the notion of technology as techniques and knowledge allows for an analysis of individual self-formation, and also of institutional ways of producing knowledge. The idea of technology as volition (technologies of self-formation) is crucial to acknowledge the agency of the individual in relation to technology, the mutual shaping of technology and society. Reading the New Woman as a semi-fictional figure of proto- and early feminism, in order to acknowledge the possibility of change and to be able to account for human-technology relations, we need an account of agency.<sup>52</sup>

### **Technological Determinism and Individual Agency**

Debates on the role and value of technology, and the relation between technology and society, have been recorded in various disciplines since Antiquity. Plato in *The Republic* separates craft knowledge from knowledge of life, material life from abstract, and values the latter higher. His famous allegory of the cave argues the superiority of the abstract thought-world over the concrete visible world. Aristotle shares Plato's hierarchical conception of knowledge, dividing it into 'techne' (craft-

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<sup>51</sup> See also Teresa de Lauretis's *Technologies of Gender* (1987) for a formulation of the performative nature of gender based on Foucault's notion of the 'technology of sex' in *The History of Sexuality*.

<sup>52</sup> The issue of whether one can discuss the 'agency' of a fictional character or discursive figure is of course problematic (see Youngkin 10-11 for a further exploration of this). However, as earlier discussed and as will become apparent, there is an inherent agency or technology of writing in the text itself.

knowledge) and ‘episteme’ (scientific knowledge).<sup>53</sup> Christian theology, as exemplified by Francis Bacon, often continues this tradition of valuing the ethereal before the corporeal, and dividing human from nature. The Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment with its technology-promoting theory of progress is formulated in Immanuel Kant’s *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784) where he sets forth the idea of the human mastering nature.<sup>54</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau criticised the praise of progress and technology, and later Karl Marx presented his technology-based theory of dialectical materialism. Twentieth-century philosophers have both praised and criticised technology, and also tried to find a way out of the technology-nature dichotomy.<sup>55</sup> As Leo Marx and Merritt Roe Smith note, a sense of technology’s force ‘as a crucial agent of change’ has a prominent place in the culture of modernity (ix).<sup>56</sup>

Martin Heidegger’s ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1954) is often considered as one of the most influential texts within scholarship on technology (Scharff and Dusek 247), and has become a key text of technological determinism. In this essay Heidegger sets out to encircle the essence of technology, and also humanity’s role of enframing and being-with technology, finally issuing a Kantian warning of the dangers of technology. Heidegger’s language is dense, and he employs many concepts which often require further explanation.<sup>57</sup> Heidegger poses the question of the *essence* of technology, and denies the supposedly ‘instrumental and anthropological’ understanding of technology as a neutral instrument under control of humans. He writes: ‘the essence of technology is by no means anything technological’ (287). The essence of technology is nothing technological, to do with the mechanical function itself, but instead it concerns how technology changes the relation between humans (in Heidegger’s words: *man*) and technology, how it

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<sup>53</sup> See excerpts in Scharff and Dusek.

<sup>54</sup> See excerpt in Scharff and Dusek.

<sup>55</sup> See Gregory H. Davis’s *Means Without End: A Critical Survey of the Ideological Genealogy of Technology without Limits, from Apollonian Techne to Postmodern Technoculture* (2006) for a more extensive account.

<sup>56</sup> Note that the idea of technological determinism takes several forms, which Marx and Smith describe as occupying places along a spectrum between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ extremes; hard determinism imputes independent agency in technology itself, whereas soft determinism considers technology as also embedded in a social structure (xii-xiv).

<sup>57</sup> See Don Ihde’s text for a detailed analysis of the essay (‘Heidegger’s Philosophy of Technology’ in Scharff and Dusek, 277-292).

changes our being in the world. Heidegger, as one of the main proponents of technological determinism, thus sees technology as a threat to individual agency, and his ideas have been taken up by many writers and also certain feminist critics. I will first attempt to provide a brief overview of Heidegger's influential essay, and then a critique of it by evoking Foucauldian and feminist theories, seeing how the latter two can provide a more fruitful examination of technology. As we will see, technological determinism is irreconcilable with a feminist framework.

In order to uncover the 'truth' or 'essence' of technology, Heidegger analyses the notion of instrumentality by using the example of a silversmith. He understands instrumentality in terms of causality, explaining how the silversmith by his work (in the mechanical process) does not so much produce a silver chalice, but instead he *brings it forth*. His work discloses or reveals something to us: 'Thus what is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing' (295). This 'revealing' (*das Entbergen*), or 'bringing-forth', which 'brings out of concealment into unconcealment' (293), is to be understood as 'truth' (294). The revealing of modern technology, Heidegger argues, has the character of a 'setting-upon', a 'challenging-forth'; a challenging that happens 'in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked' (295-296) – as the silversmith 'unlocking' the silver when he makes a chalice. Technology, as it were, 'sets-upon' or orders nature: 'Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing' (298). Whatever is so positioned and ordered becomes a resource belonging to what Heidegger calls the 'standing-reserve' (*Bestand*) (298). Heidegger calls this entire way of treating and disclosing nature as 'enframing' (*Ge-stell*) (301). Enframing is thus the essence of technology – the way in which technology reveals or unfolds 'truth', and comes to treat nature and others as resources. Enframing is 'the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve' (305).

There lies a twofold danger in enframing, Heidegger argues, in this technological framework in which we presently function. Firstly, there is the danger of objectification, that we come to view ourselves and others as resources, as 'standing-reserve': 'The essence of modern technology starts man upon the way of that revealing through which the real everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes

standing-reserve' (305). Secondly, there is the danger that enframing's status as a mode of disclosure hinders other modes of disclosure; we cannot perceive of any other framework than the technological as 'true'. In Heidegger's words, the challenging-enframing 'not only conceals a former way of revealing, bringing-forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it that wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass' (309). The technological framework establishes itself as the only possible framework. The danger of technology, Heidegger argues, is that it puts us in a framework in which we see nature and humans as resources, objectifying others or making them into tools.<sup>58</sup>

It is not difficult to see why Heidegger's essay has played and still plays such an important part in discussions on technology; its crucial point is that technology does not merely signify the mechanical process itself, but what that process entails in a wider sense. Indeed, the 'essence' or inherent character of technologies can be said to lie in their enframing, their relation to humans and to the surroundings; technology changes what it is to be human in the sense that it changes the ways in which we perceive each other and the world. As Beth Preston notes, tools and artefacts are, together with language, the major form of interaction, or 'cognitive mediation', between individual and world (514).

However, the essay at several points does not hold; Heidegger misses two central points. Firstly, he fails to notice that there are many diverse and specific technologies – not simply one abstract all-encompassing notion of technology. Secondly, he also fails to acknowledge that not only does technology change what it means to be human, but humans also change meanings of technology. I will outline these two issues, which are both central to the discussion on gender, technology, and the New Woman in this thesis, below.

Firstly, Heidegger's abstractness is problematic. He employs abstract and ahistorical terms such as 'truth', 'essence', and 'man', to encompass all relations of technology. But in order to study humanity's relation to nature, or the relation

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<sup>58</sup> The Kantian warning issued here is of course that of not using people as means to ends, but as ends in themselves. As an alternative possibility of enframing Heidegger offers art as a way of seeing nature as other than a resource. Art can provide a new framework – or show that the technological framework is not the only one. However, this discussion of the inclusion or exclusion of art in the definition of technology (linking back to the Greek notion of technology as *techne*, signifying handicraft) falls outside the scope of this thesis.



between theoretical and abstract knowledge, the questions concerning technologies must also be anchored in historiospecific events and texts. As Thomas J. Misa writes, merely abstract approaches cannot help us discern ‘the *varieties* of technologies we face and the *ambiguities* in the technologies’ (9). Different groups and cultures have appropriated the same technology and used it differently, wherefore, writes Misa, ‘we must look more closely at individual technologies and inquire more carefully into social and cultural processes’ (9). Technologies can work and interrelate with humans in many different ways, depending on context, chance, et cetera. There is not one technology, but rather; *technologies*.

Secondly, Heidegger ignores that *mutual* shaping of technology and society; the possibilities for individuals to answer back. In his deterministic view, technology affects humans but humans do not seem to have any influence over technology. Feenberg, building on Foucault’s writing on technology, counters Heidegger’s determinism by the concept of potentiality (99) to emphasise the part that individual agency plays in the relation between technology and society.<sup>59</sup> Technological objects are neither neutral tools (as instrumental theories of technology will have it) nor do they constitute a new kind of cultural system that controls the entire social world (as substantive or determinist theories – such as that of Heidegger). Technology is neither neutral nor autonomous, but ambivalent; it harbours *potentialities* for different meanings and implications. The concept of potentiality thus allows an acknowledging of agency, of an interrelation between society and technology, body and machine.

Foucault’s conception of technology as *part of* power relations, coupled with his notion of technologies of self-formation, including his focus on historiospecificity, provide a clear critique of Heidegger’s essentialist and determinist formulation of technology. While Foucault in his last interview states Heidegger as one of the two philosophers that he has read the most (the other and primary is Friedrich Nietzsche), there are more discrepancies than common grounds between them. For Foucault, the relation between the subject and technology is not to

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<sup>59</sup> Feenberg’s critical theory of technology, based on the works of Herbert Marcuse and Foucault, are formulated in his trilogy *Critical Theory of Technology* (1991, republished as *Transforming Technology* in 2002), *Alternative Modernity* (1995), and *Questioning Technology* (1999). A further exploration can be found in his *Between Reason and Experience: Essays in Technology and Modernity* (2010).

be seen as a one-way influence, but as an interaction. Foucault in several of his middle writings defines technologies as neither agents in themselves nor tools for human aims, but as part of mobile and reciprocal power relations.<sup>60</sup> Technologies cannot be studied apart from the society in which they work; technologies are *part of* power relations, not instruments for them. And as such, they are also changeable; as power relations change, so also possible meanings of technologies change. As we will see in the next chapter, Foucault's later works on the technologies of self-formation make this even clearer.

Furthermore, unlike Heidegger's critique of modernity, Foucault's critique is particularistic. As Jana Sawicki points out, rather than attempting to provide a general account of the 'essence' of modern technology, Foucault provides 'specific histories of technological practices'; he 'simply identifies particular practices in the present, the assumed value of which he is skeptical, and traces their lines of descent in a Nietzschean fashion ... to denaturalize them' (168). And unlike Heidegger, who argues that it is only art that can save us from the technological enframing, Foucault does not look to art as a source of redemption – to Foucault, art is also an arena of struggle. Foucault proposes instead an 'active mode of resistance that directly confronts particular practices of domination wherever they arise' (Sawicki 170), a historically and particularly situated struggle.

Mirroring both the abstractness and the determinism of Heidegger's text is his inability to include questions of gender, race, class, et cetera, in the discussion. Heidegger by default describes 'man' and his place in the world. However, social structures – such as those of gender, race, class – and technology work together, in a mutual relationship, shaping each other. As Lerman, Oldenzel, and Mohun point out, technologies in themselves have no power to change social structures – the change lies in the interrelation between individual agency and technology ('Introduction' 6-7). They write: 'Thus the mutual shaping of technology and culture takes place through people – through a range of human relationships' ('Versatile Tools' 5). Technologies in themselves do not provide social change, but this depends

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<sup>60</sup> Foucault's work can very roughly be divided into his early, middle, and late writings, each period focusing on different areas: formations of truth/knowledge (*The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), power relations (*Discipline and Punish*, *The History of Sexuality* vol. 1, *Power/Knowledge*), and technologies of self-formation ('Technologies of the Self', *The History of Sexuality* vols. 2 and 3). Of course these areas overlap and interrelate throughout his work.

on how they are employed. Patrick D. Hopkins writes of the specific interaction between gender and technology:

Existing sex roles and ideas of gender affects how technologies are used, which ones come to dominate in a particular context, and even what things are defined as technology. However, the technologies themselves often change sex roles and even notions of gender. They reorganize social systems; they permit us to step outside gendered social spheres whose boundaries are braced by technological limits on communication, labor, and mobility; they let us extend and alter ‘our place’ in the world. (14)

A tool can be used in a variety of ways, and it is fruitless trying to ascribe a certain gender to certain technologies, or even to attempt an evaluation of the revolutionary potential of a certain technology. Saskia Everts rightly argues that the relationship between gender and technology is not one-sided but mutual: ‘any impacts that seems to arise from a technology (or even directly from an artefact), in fact arises from the interplay between technology and the social context’ (6). Criticising both biological and technological essentialism and determinism, we must consider both gender and technology as social, constructed in complex networks; interrelated. It is in the interplay, the interrelation, between gender and technology that new possibilities for analyses can be found.

This mutual interaction, interplay, *interrelation*, between technologies and individuals within social structures might perhaps be better understood, in addition to Foucauldian theory, in terms of Bruno Latour’s theory of the social as an assemblage of actors (and actants) in networks:

By themselves, a statement, a piece of machinery, a process are lost. By looking only at them and at their internal properties, you cannot decide if they are true or false, efficient or wasteful, costly or cheap, strong or frail. These characteristics are only gained through *incorporation* into other statements, processes and pieces of machinery. These incorporations are decided by each of us, constantly. (*Science* 29)

Technologies and their potential meanings can thus only be studied in their social context; in fact, technologies are part of and make up that social context. The social, Latour states, ‘does not designate a thing among other things ... but a *type of connection* between things that are not themselves social’ (*Reassembling* 5). It is to be defined ‘not as a special domain, a specific realm, or a particular sort of thing, but only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling’ (*Reassembling*

7). The impact of any statement, technology, process, depends upon how it is taken up – or in Latour’s terms ‘translated’ – into a specific context (*Science* 108).

Furthermore, into our definition of the social we must include the role of apparently inanimate objects, not merely focus on intentional human actors.<sup>61</sup> The fact that material objects might also harbour a type of agency has until recently been neglected: ‘If action is limited a priori to what “intentional”, “meaningful” humans do, it is hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list, or a tag could act’ (*Reassembling* 71). In actor-network-theory however, also material, non-human actors and objects are identified: ‘*any thing* that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant’ (*Reassembling* 71).<sup>62</sup> The social is to be understood as made up by both human and non-human actors and actants; also technologies play their part.

Technology and individual agency should thus be considered as interacting, not as standing opposite each other; technology shapes society but society also constructs technology. Or indeed, we should understand technology-as-social. Technologies are thus not inherently revolutionary in themselves, but attain this meaning first in their context. Simultaneously, we also need to consider the characteristics and possible impacts of material objects and technical systems on individuals. The possibility for change lies in the meeting point between technology and individual agency, in the interrelation between technology and gender.

## Conclusion

Within feminist theory making, the notion of agency has become ‘a prerequisite around which other concepts are defined’ (Gardiner 9). Reading the New Woman as a figure of early feminism, one needs to acknowledge individual agency

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<sup>61</sup> Andrew Pickering in *The Mangle of Practice*, too, provides an intersecting theory of material (non-human) agency, with the idea that the world is filled not, in the first instance, with facts and observations, but with *agency*: ‘The world, I want to say, is continually *doing things*, things that bear upon us not as observation statements upon disembodied intellects but as forces upon material beings’ (6).

<sup>62</sup> Note, however, that as Cynthia Cockburn points out, actor-network-theory is often blind to the importance of gender relations; there is a lack of concern with subjectivity/identity as well as with the historical dimensions of power (39). Actor-network-theory, writes Cockburn, is characterised ‘less by liberatory politics than by an enthusiasm for the minutiae of technical decision-making as intellectual puzzle and human drama’ (43).

as part of that political or feminist history, a technology of self-formation in relation to other technologies. As Rosalind Williams states in ‘The Political and Feminist Dimensions of Technological Determinism’, there is a fundamental ‘dissonance between technological determinism and a feminist understanding of history’ (232). This is because technological determinism, she argues, has been part of writing a predominantly ‘masculine’ view of history (232). Determinism in any context presents difficulties for theories of change, since determinism excludes the possibility of an acting subject.

This chapter has argued, via Foucault’s notion of both language and technology as part of power relations, that neither language nor technologies are mere ‘tools’ for ‘rulers’. A literary text is neither oppressive nor liberatory per se (as gynocritical theory assumes), in the same way as technology is neither oppressive nor liberatory in isolation (as technological determinism assumes). Instead, they are meaning-machines that gain import first in relation to their surroundings – be it readers of a text or users of a specific technology. Foucault’s ideas can thus be employed to counter essentialist and determinist assumptions regarding literature and technology, through considering the omnipresence of mobile power relations, and the role of technologies of self-formation therein.

The following chapters of this thesis will examine the figure of the New Woman by its interrelation with specific technologies of late nineteenth-century modernity, connecting changes in technology and in ideas of gender and social order. The interrelation between gender and modern technologies is to be studied as crucial to first-wave feminism and to the concept of the New Woman. Through the concept of technology, which is simultaneously abstract and concrete, we may find a way to understand the semi-fictionality of the New Woman figure; its articulation both as a discursive concept and as a set of social practices.

## Chapter 2

### Typewriters and Typists: Secretarial Agency at the *Fin de Siècle*

#### 2.1 The New Woman Typist

##### Introduction

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, the New Woman is one of the most well-known figures of the Victorian *fin de siècle*, and very much connected with the social changes taking place at the time. *Fin de siècle* modernity involved new technologies (changes in means of transportation, communication and art forms), increased bureaucracy and changing office structures, and it also meant new literary, writing and publishing practices.<sup>63</sup> It is in relation to these social and technological changes that the New Woman takes shape.

A particular case in point is the typewriter, connecting questions of gender, technology, and the New Woman. As the typewriter came into widespread use in the late nineteenth century, the New Woman typist became a recurrent literary motif. Although various types of writing-machines had been invented in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the earlier models being intended for the use of the blind, the extensive use of the typewriter dates only from the 1880s. Not until the Remington Company started manufacturing typewriters on a large scale in 1873 (after C. L. Sholes's model), was the typewriter more widely adopted. Many changes were made to the typewriter, and different manufacturers had different models, but from the 1880s onward the typewriter had a firm place both in office and popular culture (Derry and Willams 642).<sup>64</sup> Writing in 1897, C. L. Stevens claims that there are nearly hundred different types of machines on the market, and out of these a finished Remington typewriter 'is being produced for every five minutes of the working day' (650-651). Importantly, the typewriter proved one of the most significant means for women to enter the offices at the Victorian *fin de siècle*. In fact,

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<sup>63</sup> See Greenslade and Rodgers, 'Resituating Grant Allen: Writing, Radicalism and Modernity'.

<sup>64</sup> The Remington No. 1 was manufactured in 5000 copies in 1873, and the Remington No. 2 came in 1878. See Kittler's *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* for an extensive account of the history of the typewriter, and also Stevens's 1897 article in *The Strand Magazine* for a contemporary account.

Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell argue that ‘[t]urn-of-the-century feminists associated standing up for one’s rights with sitting down at one’s desk; the history of the typewriter (human operator and machine) is bound to a history of the contestation and re-installation of gender roles’ (4). Gender and technology are bound together in the female typist.

The case of the typewriter raises questions about technology in its relation to social history and individual agency, and the impact that they have on each other. Do machines make history, or do people? As yet, the relation between the New Woman, gender, and late nineteenth-century technologies such as the typewriter has not been fully studied. Existing studies have mainly consisted in attempts to engender technology, or to consider the particular impact that technology may have on society and on people. Reading the New Woman as a semi-fictional figure of proto- and early feminism, this becomes a rather too simplistic account. As I have suggested in the previous chapter, in order to acknowledge the possibility of political change, we need an account of agency rather than a deterministic framework of understanding technology. As we will see, the ambiguity of the word ‘typewriter’ at the *fin de siècle* points to an uncertainty in the relation between the female typist’s body and the machine. What is at stake is not simply a naming issue: in examining the relation between typist and typewriter, body and machine, questions about agency and structure, subject and discourse, are opened up and put into play.

In this chapter I will study the interrelation between gender and technology at the Victorian *fin de siècle* through the figure of the New Woman typist, engaging with two novels that were published within a few years of each other at the turn of the century: Grant Allen’s *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897) and Tom Gallon’s *The Girl Behind the Keys* (1903). Furthermore, I will engage with trade journals and other periodical press of the time, in order to place the two novels in a historical and social context, and to more fully understand their role in the debates concerning the New Woman and the female typist.

### **The New Woman Typist in a Literary-Historical Context**

While the term New Woman was popularised through Grand’s 1894 essay and the debates that followed, we find a particular figuration of the New Woman in

the female typist. As a semi-fictional figuration, that is as both a discursive or literary concept and as a set of social practices, she is represented in and forms a part of both the office culture and the literature of the time.

*Fin de siècle* modernity not only involved a rapid increase in the number of clerks and white-collar workers, but also ‘the supplanting of the Dickensian counting house by the modern business office’ (Wild 3). The average size of offices increased, scientific management and office mechanisation emerged, and industrial concentration and amalgamation amplified – all in all, leading to a concentration and rationalisation of office work and staffs (Wild 3; Holcombe 142-144). As office structure changed throughout the nineteenth century, so also the gendering of clerical work changed. The Dickensian black-coated clerk was replaced by what Gregory Anderson has called ‘the white-blouse revolution’; the entry into the office by female workers.<sup>65</sup> Accounts of the number of women employed as typists and as clerical workers vary from different sources. T. K. Derry and Trevor I. Williams state that in 1881 there were only 7 000 women clerks in England and Wales; thirty years later there were 146 000 (642). Meta Zimmeck in her more recent article states that from 1851 to 1911 the number of female clerical workers ‘rocketed from a mere 2 000 to 166 000 (x83); or from 2 per cent to 20 per cent of the total’ (154). These numbers clearly indicate the immense changes in the gendering of clerical work.

The emergence of the female typist is noted in women’s and trade journals of the time. An 1891 article signed ‘C. L.’ in *The Ladies Treasure: A Household Magazine* confirms the new gendering of office work, at the same time connecting the female typist with modernity: ‘The lady typewriter is an entirely modern creation; even ten years ago she was rarely to be met with, but now the chief workers of the type-writing machines appear to be of the female sex’ (165). In June 1891 the London-based journal *The London Phonographer: A Journal Devoted to Typewriting and Shorthand* (ed. John Bassett) started. It was a publication exclusively devoted to typewriting and shorthand, and as such it had a special place in *fin de siècle* office and literary culture. As a monthly journal, it contained editorials, shorthand notes and

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<sup>65</sup> See Wild for an account of the male office clerk in literary culture of the time. The modernisation of office culture 1880-1920 has also been dubbed ‘the administrative revolution’ (Graham Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution: The Feminization of Clerical Work* (1987)), and in an American context ‘a veritable revolution in communication technology’ or ‘an office revolution since unequalled until the advent of the desktop computer’ (Yates 39, 63).



transcriptions, reviews of and advertisement for office equipment, short works of fiction (often on themes linked to typewriting and office culture), letters, reports from typewriting offices abroad, and articles on issues from what to wear in the office to typewriting speed contests. Many of the authors and contributors were typists or stenographers themselves, something which together with the many letters to the journal made *The London Phonographer* a possible platform for discussion among the office workers. The journal probably circulated in typewriting offices and at the lodging houses available to female office workers.<sup>66</sup> In its first issue the crucial link between female emancipation and the typewriter is clear. The front page is covered by an article on the typewriting society in London, and it starts out declaring that in a new journal issued in the interests of the typewriting world, ‘the pioneer who opened out this industry nine years ago should hold first place’ (1).<sup>67</sup> The pioneer is Madame Monchablon, the woman who in 1882 established the first typewriting office in London at 26 Austin Friars, herself pictured in a photograph at the centre of the page. An 1892 article in *The London Phonographer* on ‘Feminine Amanuenses’ focuses on the outer appearances of the modern female typist as replacing the ancient Dickensian clerk: ‘The dismal old-time clerk of Dickens’ day, with his shiny black coat and his scratchy goose quill, has been inexorably supplanted by radiant creatures with fluffy bangs and smart gowns, who pound out of their monotonous instruments an unceasing accompaniment to the merchant’s song of sixpence’ (274).

The typewriter and the New Woman are joined more generally in journals of the time, as signs of newness, progress, and modernity. As Lawrence Rainey points out, the female secretary ‘was shorthand for a recognizably modern phenomenon; she indexed a distinctly new occupational category that sprang into existence only after 1880 (in America) or 1885 (in Britain) and was indelibly linked with metropolitan experience .... She was the most visible, everyday representative of the modern woman’ (‘Fallen’ 273). We find an instance of this link manifested in the

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<sup>66</sup> In his 1894 guide book *Typewriting as a Means of Earning a Livelihood*, A. D. Southam offers listings of different lodging houses suitable for female office workers. Setting out to provide typists or future typists with useful tips for living as a typist, he also offers information on length of study, standard salaries, descriptions of the leading machines, and even provides a directory of schools and institutions where typewriting and stenography are taught.

<sup>67</sup> All quotes from *The London Phonographer* refer to volume 1, unless stated otherwise.

first issue of *The London Phonographer*, which states that it will not only be devoted to ‘the various interests involved in the daily practice of Shorthand and Typewriting ... it will be, moreover, a representative of those numerous practitioners who are not the least interesting and useful pioneers of progress in this very progressive country’ (14). In fact, shorthand writers and typists are said to be ‘imbued with the progressive spirit of our time’, which makes them ‘remarkable as examples of modern ingenuity and enterprise’ (13). The newness of the female typist and modernity thus become intertwined.

The rise in the number of female office workers is formulated in fiction of the time, as well as in the periodical press. Figurations of emancipated female typists existed before the term New Woman, and an immense amount of typist or secretarial fiction was published at the end of the nineteenth century. But as Rainey points out, not all of them share the stereotypical traits and radical politics of the New Woman (‘Secretarial’ 325). In addition to the many ‘typewriter girl’ novels and short stories circulating, there are many New Woman characters who also work as typists, for example Helen Channing in L. T. Meade’s novel *Engaged to be Married: A Tale of Today* (1890), Mina Harker (perhaps the most famous literary typist and stenographer of the *fin de siècle*) in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), and Rachel West in Mary Cholmondeley’s *Red Pottage* (1899). Mary Sutherland in Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes story ‘A Case of Identity’ (1891, set in 1887 or 1888) could also be considered a New Woman typist. Since her inheritance goes straight to her father-in-law, Mary earns her own income by typewriting: “‘It brings me twopence a sheet, and I can often do from fifteen to twenty sheets a day’” (149). When the same over-protective father-in-law forbids Mary to attend balls and see friends, typewriting becomes the sole means through which she can momentarily leave the restricted domestic setting. In J. M. Barrie’s play *The Twelve-Pound Look* (1911) a wife leaves her husband to become a typist, after she has earned enough to buy her own typewriter – which at the time cost twelve pounds (hence the play’s title): ‘I got some work through a friend, and with my first twelve pounds I paid for my machine. Then I considered that I was free to go, and I went’ (732). The play ends by his *new* wife asking the husband: ‘Are they very expensive? ... Those machines?’ (736), displaying the allure of female emancipation. Elizabeth Baker

features many working women in her plays, among them also typists; the main characters in *Miss Robinson* (1918) and in *Lois* (c. 1920, seemingly neither performed nor published) are both typists, Lois working together with other women in a typing pool. In *Miss Robinson* the term ‘typewriter’ is still employed to signify both the machine and the operator, and both these plays thematise the objectification or harassment of female office workers (Fitzsimmons 192-193). The typewriter in these works provides both a means of earning one’s own livelihood, and a possibility for leaving an unsatisfying domestic life.

One of the most well-known New Woman novels is centred on a female-run typewriting agency. George Gissing’s 1893 novel *Odd Women* presents several self-supporting female characters; most memorable is the independent New Woman typist Rhoda Nunn who has ‘made up her mind to live alone and work steadily for a definite object’ (48). Rhoda is a typical New Woman figure: she is well-educated, independent, politically active, and critical of marriage. She is ‘a woman daring enough to think and act for herself’ (31). Although the term New Woman was first popularised through Grand’s 1894 essay, it is used in plural form in *Odd Women*, as Everard Barfoot remarks on Rhoda: ‘A strong character, of course. More decidedly one of the new women than you yourself – isn’t she?’ (110). As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the New Woman is often posited as a new or ‘unknown’ sex. This is formulated when Gissing describes Rhoda, this self-supporting odd woman, as possessing ‘a suggestiveness directed not solely to the intellect, of something like an unfamiliar sexual type’ (26). On first view her countenance ‘seemed masculine, its expression somewhat aggressive – eyes shrewdly observant and lips consciously impregnable’ (26). As a New Woman, she is almost seen as a sex of her own.

Together with her friend and colleague Mary Barfoot, Rhoda runs a business school, educating young women into professions – and toward emancipation. Rhoda teaches the students typewriting and other clerical work: ‘In one of the offices, typewriting and occasionally other kinds of work that demanded intelligence were carried on by three or four young women regularly employed; to superintend this department was Miss Nunn’s chief duty, together with business correspondence under the principal’s direction’ (71). But what Rhoda considers to be her ‘work’ is much more than this; her typewriting classes are bound up with the greater mission of female

emancipation. Everard asks Rhoda, after she declines to marry him by saying that she will never abandon her work: ““What *is* your work? Copying with a type-machine, and teaching others to do the same – isn’t that it?”” Rhoda replies: ““The work by which I earn money, yes. But if it were no more than that” –’ (240). Her work is what Rhoda calls ““the greatest movement of our time – that of emancipating her sex”” (114). Their business school is not only an institution to further women’s careers, but also a meeting point for women’s rights activists. At the school, Mary and Rhoda have ‘a bookcase full of work on the Woman-question and allied topics’ (71) serving as a circulating library, and once a month one of them gives a lecture on such a subject. Certain characters in the novel, such as Mr. Widdowson, see this (proto)feminist enterprise as dangerous, and are afraid to let young women be influenced by the ideas of Mary and specifically Rhoda. The work of typewriting and the work of women’s emancipation are here intertwined.

It is not merely the typewriter machine itself that threatens to ‘unsex’ the New Woman, but her entry into the office space. Rhoda, when criticised by Everard for educating women into a career that her opponents call ‘unwomanly’, states that she is glad to lead women into the previously male space of the office. She indeed describes in a militarist language the league of typists as ““an armed movement, an invasion by women of the spheres which men have always forbidden us to enter”” (178). She continues: ““We live in a time of warfare, of revolt. If woman is no longer to be womanish, but a human being of power and responsibilities, she must become militant, defiant”” (179). Rhoda disclaims other kinds of work – an ‘excellent governess, a perfect hospital nurse’ – as even harmful to her kind of emancipation. This is because nursing still imitates a kind of stereotypical womanliness whereas female typists, working in the previously male space of the office, will become ““*rational and responsible human beings*”” (178). Instead, Rhoda states:

‘It must be something new, something free from the reproach of womanliness. I don’t care whether we crowd the men out or not. I don’t care *what* results, if only women are made strong and self-reliant and nobly independent! ... Most likely we shall have a revolution in the social order greater than any that yet seems possible. ... There must be a new type of woman, active in every sphere of life: a new worker out in the world, a new ruler of the home.’ (179-180)

The home was at the time seen as the most appropriate setting for women's lives, and the spatial separation of gendered spheres has been a central theme within feminist scholarship (Wajcman, *Feminism* 112-113). Many critics of the late nineteenth-century women's movements argued that it was 'unwomanly' and 'against nature' for women to be working outside the home. The signature 'C. L.' in an 1891 issue of *The Ladies Treasure* gives the example of a 'well-known modern novelist' who claims that 'all outdoor work is "naturally distasteful" to women, who were designed by nature to "sit at home and nurse the baby, and look after the servants"' (165). Rhoda in *Odd Women* states that women's rights campaigners – typists among them – 'must carry on an active warfare, must be invaders' into the previously male spheres (180). Mary in fact gives one of her monthly talks on 'Woman as an invader' (176). The typewriter, as the main technology responsible for this gendering of clerical work, can be seen as an emblem of this 'invasion' into the office space – it becomes a visual sign of female emancipation.<sup>68</sup>

There is a real significance in the female typists' entry into a space since long kept only for men. As Lynne Walker points out, in the late nineteenth-century city 'opportunities for developing new identities which differed from the social norm were offered at various sites in the city, both public and private' (66). By working as typists, women were introduced to new possible ways of living. These working women's socially lived identities were 'partly defined by the spaces they occupied – and ... in turn their presence produced the social spaces and buildings which they occupied' (Walker 66). Price and Thurschwell note that early twentieth-century conservatives worried that working side by side with men in public would 'unsex' women (5). Not only might the supposedly innocent female minds be polluted by knowledge, but the possible sexual contact with male office workers was perceived as a threat (Thurschwell, 'Supple' 158). The physical presence in itself, of women in the previously male-dominated offices, was threatening established notions of gender. The female typist thus engages in a kind of double writing; she is not merely tapping on her machine, but is also rewriting discourse by inscribing her physical presence in the office.

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<sup>68</sup> This militaristic language in relation to female typists incidentally connects to the history of the typewriter: the Remington Company, which was the first to start mass-producing typewriters in 1873, was before this (and perhaps still is) more commonly known for their production of firearms.

The New Woman typist can, through Rhoda's use of military language and spatial terms, be seen as a precursor to and inspiration for the suffragette movement. Martha Vicinus in *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* highlights the ways in which the suffragettes later used 'the metaphors of space and the body – the private and the public, the female body and the body politics' to carry through their politics; 'each action of the militant campaign was symbolic of the state of women' (252). The language and iconography (and ultimately the behaviour) of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), portrayed 'an army at war with society', and 'as militancy increased, the metaphor of military action became a reality' (261). The most revolutionary aspect of the suffrage movement, Vicinus argues, was precisely the 'insistence upon a female presence – even leadership – in male arenas'; claiming male space for women's purposes (264). Indeed, Vicinus includes an incident recounted by a suffragette, from an imprisonment in 1909. It describes a recitation that culminated in Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence's (one of the leading suffragettes) recital of Olive Schreiner's 'Three Dreams in a Desert' (1890, quoted in the preface of this thesis). This allegorical short story seemed to the prisoners 'a bare literal description of the pilgrimage of women. It fell on our ears more like an A B C railway guide to our journey than a figurative parable' (qtd. in Vicinus 273). Schreiner here supplies the suffragettes with a political allegory; as metaphor and practice intertwine, New Woman writing is taken up and employed as a guide for their work.

The typewriter and the emancipatory ideas signifying the New Woman are thus frequently connected in both periodical press and fiction of the time, the New Woman typist being a recurrent figure. However, the figure of the typewriter girl is not always merely conflated with the New Woman to suggest the revolutionary potential of the typewriter. In an 1898 article in the journal *The Woman's Signal*, J. R. Greenhalgh imagines the New Woman as a typist:

At the present time, when so much is being written and said about the 'new woman,' it may be interesting to consider one of the modern channels into which her superfluous energies have been profitably directed. The almost universal adoption of the typewriter for the rapid execution of correspondence and all written matter has created a great and increasing demand for well-educated girls, who are peculiarly adopted for this class of work.

The typewriter is described in this instance as a way of channelling the ‘superfluous energies’ of the New Woman. Could the figure of the female typist, in the views of the conservative forces of the time, serve as a possible *containment* of the New Woman, a useful way of controlling her energies and activities? The use of these words, ‘superfluous energies’ being ‘directed’, suggests rather the containment of the threat represented by the New Woman within the safe confines of the female typist, rather than the typewriter being a tool of female emancipation.

However, this view suggests the female typist as occupying a merely passive role in the processes of signification – a reductive reading that ignores any agency on the part of the typewriter operator. As I discussed in the previous chapter, reading the New Woman as a figure of early feminism, we need an account of agency rather than a technological determinist framework. In fact, the relation between the typewriter operator and her machine is of a more complex nature, opening up questions regarding the relation between gender, technology and individual agency. As we will see when reading the novels, the figure of the New Woman typist not only infers an appropriation of the typewriter as a tool of emancipation, but through literature also engages in a dialectical process, a struggle, of naming and defining the typist profession. The New Woman is often formulated in texts of the time as both simultaneously unsexed and hyperfeminine, and through interrelation with the typewriter the figure is suggested as simultaneously machine and woman. Notions of gender permeate the power relations in which technology and modernity are connected; the three interrelate, depend upon and construct each other.

## **2.2 Situating Technologies within Mobile Power Relations**

Before moving on to consider the ways in which literary works partake in the debate regarding the character of New Woman typist, we must consider more thoroughly the place of technology and individual agency in relation to each other, in the particular case of the typewriter. Having found, in the previous chapter, technological determinism incompatible with any feminist reading, I turn instead to Foucault’s definition of technology as part of power relations. Foucault’s conception of power as dispersed constellations of mobile relations, intertwined with discourse and the production of knowledge, allows for a concept of agency. It also offers an

understanding of technologies as harbouring various potential implications. As will be explored when analysing the New Woman typist as figured in novels, technologies are situated within mobile power relations, working in conjunction with technologies of self-formation.

Power, in Foucault's terms, is not something that can be 'held' by a person or institution or 'withheld' from another: 'one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with "dominators" on one side and "dominated" on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies' ('Powers' 142). There is 'no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled' (*Will* 94), but power relations are everywhere and come from everywhere; one is never 'outside' power. Instead, power relations 'are rooted deep in the social nexus, not a supplementary structure over and above "society" whose radical effacement one could perhaps dream of' ('Subject' 343). As Johanna Oksala explains, 'the subject and the constitutive matrix are not to be understood as external to each other, but are rather regarded as importantly continuous and entangled in complex ways. Power/knowledge, understood as a network of practices, is not ontologically distinct from the subject' (*Foucault* 106).<sup>69</sup> Foucault's conception of power enables a non-essentialist (and non-determinist) formulation of struggle, in which power is not (as in the earlier 'juridico-discursive' model of power) automatically defined in binary terms as those who have it and those who do not.

Importantly, the omnipresence of power relations does not entail that one is condemned to always reinforce them. Power relations are of a strictly relational character; their existence depends on 'a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network' (*Will* 95). Power relations are mobile, and therefore changeable, allowing for a concept of agency. They are to be seen not as fixed structures, but instead as constant struggles: 'at the same time

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<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, power should not be understood as exclusively oppressive but as *productive*; power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and subjectivities: 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault, 'Truth' 119).



mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent struggle' ('Subject' 342). There is always a reciprocal appeal; resistance exists in the same place as power. Furthermore, what characterises power is that it brings into play relations between individuals (or between groups): 'if we speak of the power of laws, institutions, and ideologies, if we speak of structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. The term "power" designates relationships between "partners"' ('Subject' 337). Power is formulated between people, a fact that accommodates the possibility of individual agency and of change.

Technologies, in Foucault's conception of power, are not to be seen as revolutionary in themselves, or as 'tools' for rulers, but their import depends upon how they are taken up in society. The most often cited work by Foucault in scholarship on technology is *Discipline and Punish* (1975), in particular the part on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. Foucault investigates the move from pre-modern to modern surveillance technologies and techniques, seeing the Panopticon as part of power relations rather than the tool of someone 'holding' power. As Foucault states in a 1981 interview: 'Power is a relationship, it is not a thing' (qtd. in Dosse 249). Analysing the changes in technology as interrelated with changes in social organisation, Foucault shows that technologies cannot be studied by themselves apart from the society in which they work, but they are part of power relations, without inherent signification. There is not one person or institution mastering technologies, but power relations are everywhere. In a Foucauldian framework, technologies are *part of* these power relations, not instruments for them. And as such, they are also changeable; as power relations change, so also possible meanings of technologies change.

Foucault's theory of power acknowledges a notion of agency, in the formulation of power relations as mobile, reciprocal, and occurring between people. Despite this, critics have read his theories on power as signifying the opposite, that is understanding power as an all-encompassing force dominating people, and technologies as tools for this same force. We see this argument – especially in the case of the typewriter – in the writings of Kittler, who dedicates one part of his book

*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1986) to the innovation and role of the typewriter in social history.

Although not always explicitly mentioning Foucault, Kittler builds on his ideas. In his earlier *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* Kittler employs Foucault's discourse analysis to formulate shifts in discourse between two turns of the centuries, and the role of technological media in these shifts. While Kittler employs Foucauldian notions of discourse and the decentred subject, he reads the original rather recklessly. Foucault describes the *regulating* force of discourse in subject-formation, but emphasises that there is no totalising homogenous discourse:

Nothing would be more false than to see in the analysis of discursive formations an attempt at totalitarian periodization, whereby from a certain moment and for a certain time, everyone would think in the same way, in spite of surface differences, say the same thing, through a polymorphous vocabulary, and produce a sort of great discourse that one could travel over in any direction. (*Archaeology* 165)

Despite this, Kittler denies a subjectivity not completely constructed by discourse, by new technologies: technologies make the 'fabrication of so-called Man' possible (*Gramophone* 16). He argues that there is no subject other than that discursive construction formulated through technologies and media: 'What remains of people is what media can store and communicate. ... [T]he phantasm of man as the creator of media vanishes' (*Gramophone* xl-xli). Kittler thus not only avoids considering any individual agency on account of human subjects (or agents), but rather denies their existence. Autonomy or agency can only, according to Kittler, originate in the technologies themselves: technological media 'determine our situation' (xxix). One wonders, confronted with Kittler's notion of 'so-called Man' as a mere extension of technologies and discourse, how to account for political struggle or change.

What is at stake in such a reductive reading of Foucault? By situating agency only in technologies themselves, and denying a subject of agency, Kittler silences individuals, bodies and voices. The consequence of this kind of reading, in studies of technology, is that the relation between technology and the subject becomes one-directional; technologies are seen as inscribing passive subjects. Quoting a 1923 book on the typewriter, Kittler argues that '[a]part from Freud, it was Remington who "granted the female sex access into the office"' (*Discourse* 352). He here places

the agency, the possibility for change, entirely in the machine itself. This is problematic not only in the context of the New Woman, early feminism, and the typewriter. It also questions the whole existence of agency and the possibility of change. Whereas in fact, within a Foucauldian framework, change involves an interaction between technologies and society, machines and subjects. While Foucault indeed states that discourse and power are all-encompassing, he also emphasises that power in the end is between people, and that discourse is not a fixed structure: ‘Discourse also transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’ (*Will* 101). Foucault later states in an interview, answering his critics: ‘How can you imagine that I think change is impossible since what I have analyzed was always related to political action? All of *Discipline and Punish* is an attempt to answer this question [of how change is possible] and to show how a new way of thinking took place’ (Martin 14). While Kittler denies a subject or any individual agency at all, to be able to account for political struggle and change, we need an account of a subject capable of action. Even though Foucault in his middle writings does not elaborate on the individual’s potential for reworking power relations, he presupposes its importance.

Neither Foucault nor Kittler adequately problematise gender and its interrelation with technology. Although Foucault formulates the idea that sexuality and knowledge of the body are culturally produced (*History of Sexuality*), he does not focus on gender as a category in the power/knowledge nexus. Foucault has been criticised by feminist theorists for his ‘gender blindness’ (McNay, *Foucault and Feminism* 33), and as Lois McNay states in *Foucault and Feminism* the subject or ‘disciplined body’ of Foucault’s writings is ‘often implicitly assumed to be male’ (34).<sup>70</sup> If the possibility for change lies in the meeting point between technology and social context, we must include a discussion on gender, that ‘primary way of signifying relationships of power’ (Scott 42). But as McNay also states, even more problematic than Foucault’s gender blindness are the reductive readings of his work

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<sup>70</sup> See also for example *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (1988, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby); Jana Sawicki’s *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body* (1991); *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* (1996, ed. Susan J. Hekman); and *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (2004, ed. Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges).

that deny any account or possibility of individual agency (12).<sup>71</sup> As I have established in the previous chapter, gender and technology are intertwined; they mutually shape each other and give each other meanings. Equally, notions of gender and power are bound together and construct each other. We need to acknowledge the role of individual agency in shaping these power relationships.

Despite the apparent lack in Kittler's reading, he has many followers – some too credulous. In literary criticism, Christopher Keep, writing on late-Victorian office culture, uncritically continues and builds on Kittler's reasoning. Both Kittler and Keep consider the figure of the female typist one-sidedly: as a figure being culturally fitted into a stereotyped femininity. Kittler argues that as women become information workers – for example typists – these new information worker jobs are soon devalued and coded female, and women become associated or even equated with machines. Women as secretaries become central relay stations for vast networks of usually male-manipulated information (*Discourse* 347). Kittler further argues that by the introduction of female typists and office workers, the gender of writing itself changes and is coded female (*Discourse* 354) – he ignores instances throughout literary history of novel-writing being considered as a feminine activity. Both Kittler and Keep study the effect of the typewriter on the female typist, not the influence that the female typist may have on her machine, or her agency in relation to it. In their texts, the subject and the body are inscribed upon by an external force. This is a reductive or indeed a contradictory reading of Foucault, in whose writings the subject and the body are always present as an integral *part of* power relations.

Foucault's understanding of the historical constitution of the body through a network of power/knowledge has been crucial within feminist scholarship, providing a way to theorise the body in its materiality while avoiding all essentialist

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<sup>71</sup> For a further critique of Foucault on subjectivity and agency, see McNay's *Gender and Agency* (2000). Here she presents, as a supplement to Foucault's theories on the self, an account of subject-formation also by 'the creative or imaginative substrate to action' in the subject (5); a 'generative paradigm' of subject-formation as a supplement to Foucault's 'negative paradigm' (1). Employing theories laid out by Bourdieu, McNay calls for a more precise and varied account of agency than the one that Foucault provides, proving the necessity of 'contextualising agency of power relations in order to understand how acts deemed as resistant may transcend their immediate sphere in order to transform collective behaviour and norms' (4). As McNay points out, whereas Foucault theorises the constitution of the subject, Bourdieu rather speaks of social *agents* (40). See also Margaret A. McLaren's *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (2002) on formulations of agency in Foucault. For a wide-ranging account of feminist theory and the concept of agency, see *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice* (1995, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner).

formulations (Oksala, *Foucault* 110; ‘Freedom’ 95). While feminists have criticised Foucault for an apparent denial of the body’s capacity for resistance, more recently the non-passivity of the Foucauldian body has been noted.<sup>72</sup> Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish* that the body is ‘directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs’ (25). For this Foucault coined the term ‘biopower’; certain techniques of power that discipline and control bodies and populations (*Will* 140). But then, Foucault also writes, just a few lines down, that this hold upon the body is to be conceived ‘not as a property, but as a strategy’: ‘one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess; ... one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory’ (*Discipline* 26). Foucault’s politics of the body, as Lisa Downing asserts, is ‘not a politics of straight-forward control’ (77). The term ‘strategy’ to describe the hold upon the body rather denotes ‘a set of actions or dynamics that generate outcomes apparently indirectly, surreptitiously or in diffuse ways and that emanate from, as well as affecting, the body of the other’ (Downing 77-78). ‘It is not’, Downing clarifies, ‘a direct, transparent action with a single-minded aim or intentionality’, neither is it ‘unilaterally employed by one agent to have a direct and predictable oppressive effect on another’ (78). Instead, it is a situation of mobile power relations. As Oksala points out in ‘Freedom and Bodies’, ‘it is in the body that the seeds for subverting the normalizing aims of power are sown’ (93). Indeed, the Foucauldian body can be seen as ‘a site of the production of positive forces and creative differences’ (Oksala, *Foucault* 127). If the Foucauldian body is inscribed by history, Oksala states, it is ‘inscribed in ways that are open to reinterpretations and multiple meanings’ (*Foucault* 134). In this way, Foucault defines technologies, such as the Panopticon, not as themselves changing their

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<sup>72</sup> The last decade has seen a feminist reappraisal on Foucault’s conception of the body, with more nuanced readings of his works. See for example Oksala’s various writings on the subject: ‘Anarchic Bodies: Foucault and the Feminist Question of Experience’ (*Hypatia*, 19.4 (2004): 97-119); *Foucault and Freedom* (2005); ‘Freedom and Bodies’ (in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* edited by Dianna Taylor, 2011). See also the chapter on bodies in Margaret A. McLaren’s *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (2002), and Judith Butler’s ‘Bodies and Power Revisited’ (in *Feminism and the Final Foucault* edited by Dianna Taylor and Karen Vintges, 2004).

subjects – but as part of a system of mobile power relations. The relation between body and machine, subject and technology, is not to be seen as a one-way influence, but as an interaction.

Foucault in his later writings further explores the relation between technologies and individual agency, in his investigation of technologies of self-formation; those practices whereby individuals make themselves and are made into selves.<sup>73</sup> After concerning himself mainly with the constitution of the subject by ‘techniques of domination’, he now recognises that there is, ‘in all societies, I think, in all societies whatever they are’, another type of techniques (‘About’ 203). These are the techniques or technologies of the self:

techniques which permit the individual to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on. (‘About’ 203)

During a visit to the University of Vermont in 1982, Foucault in six seminar presentations traced the techniques of self-formation from the early Greeks to the Christian age (Martin, Gutman, Hutton 5). Part of the seminar series and public lectures in Vermont were published as ‘Technologies of the Self’ and ‘The Political Technology of Individuals’. In these essays and in the two last volumes of *History of Sexuality*, Foucault starts investigating the ‘technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being’ (‘Technologies’ 225). This new project would be a genealogy on how the self constituted *itself* as a subject. In *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault even reconceives his original project on sexuality as part of a ‘general history of the “techniques of the self”’ (11). In these later texts Foucault elaborates on the role of the subject or individual – the self – and the importance of individual agency in power relations and discourses. Foucault here focuses on the body’s own capacity for desire and pleasure, rather than its docility; the forms of elaboration that one performs on oneself, ‘not only in order to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule,

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<sup>73</sup> See McNay’s *Foucault and Feminism* for a critical reading of Foucault’s later writings on subjectivity.

but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behavior' (*Use* 27).<sup>74</sup> In other words, subjects are not just docile bodies, but 'actively refuse, adopt and alter forms of being a subject' (Oksala, *How to Read* 99).<sup>75</sup>

To understand the relation between gender and technology at the *fin de siècle*, the self-formation of the New Woman typist, we need to be able to account not only for dominant discourses, but also for individual agency and change. A critical reading of Foucault's notion of technologies as part of mobile power relations provides possibilities for this. While the Panopticon of *Discipline and Punish* is an (imagined) material object, Foucault's later technologies of the self take the form of certain techniques of forming oneself, as it were, from within. Most important in both these notions of technology is that technologies are defined as *part of* power relations. As power relations change, so do meanings and implications of specific technologies. McNay states that 'within the oppressive constraints that operate around ideas of femininity, there are contradictions and instabilities which, at times, have provided women with a base from which to undermine the very system which constricts them' (*Foucault* 42). Remembering that discourses are always socially embedded, we can locate individual agency without submitting 'either to extreme interpretations of Foucault's views of discourse as disembodied or to naive formulations of individualism' (Mills 85).

In the case of the typewriter and the female typist, we might consider the machine itself as a material object within power relations (Foucault's earlier definition), and the interrelation between the operator and the machine as a set of techniques of the self (Foucault's later definition). The New Woman typist can be seen as actively appropriating or incorporating the typewriter as a means of self-formation.

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<sup>74</sup> It is important to note that this active body is recognised throughout Foucault's works, not just in his middle and late writings. In a little-known 1966 radio lecture, translated first in 2006 as 'Utopian Body', Foucault states: 'Nothing is less *thing* than my body: it runs, it acts, it lives, it desires. It lets itself be traversed, with no resistance, by all my intentions' (231). He also stresses the centrality of the body in power relations, calling it 'the zero point of the world' (233). As McNay notes in *Foucault: A Critical Introduction*, for Foucault the human body is the 'most specific point at which the microstrategies of power can be observed' (91).

<sup>75</sup> The notion of technologies of the self, importantly, does not imply that there is a 'true self' that can be discovered, but that the self is 'something that had been – and must be – created' (Oksala, *How to Read* 97).

### 2.3 Typewriters and Typists in Fiction

Having delineated the notion of technology as part of mobile power relations, and situated Foucault's twofold definition of technology in this, I will continue examining the typewriter and the New Woman typist as a case in point. Debates concerning the naming of the female typist will underscore the ways in which material technologies and technologies of self-formation interrelate in the connection between the typewriter operator and her machine.

As noted in the previous chapter, the New Woman was often depicted in popular culture of the time as either an unsexed, mannish creature, or a hyperfeminine 'erotomaniac', or indeed as an entirely 'new gender' (Grundy 300). Authors often envisaged her as possessing a dual nature. Lyn Pykett describes how the New Woman thus challenged traditional gender boundaries in paradoxical ways:

The mannish New Woman threatened such boundaries from one direction by quitting the sphere of the proper feminine, aping masculinity and becoming a new intermediate sex. On the other hand, these boundaries were also eroded by the New Woman's hyperfemininity. The New Woman as hysteric threatened to invade and infect the whole of society with a degenerative femininity .... (141)

This sexual duality or ambiguity of the New Woman is mirrored in the ambiguous relation between the typewriter operator and her machine. At the end of the nineteenth century the term 'typewriter' had a double meaning: before 1910 it indicated both the machine for typewriting and the person who operated it (Olwell, 'Body' 50). Only gradually was the term later changed from a free-standing noun ('a lady typewriter') to an adjective ('a typewriter girl') and in the end separated from human operation by the term 'typist' (Price and Thurschwell 4).<sup>76</sup>

There is much debate in periodicals of the time about this semantic ambiguity. Whereas on the one hand the double subject of the typewriter is made a source of comedy and satire, many trade journals and women's journals call for a distinction between the operator and the machine. An 1892 issue of *The London Phonographer* presents an example of the typewriter ambiguity as a source of comedy: the short piece 'She was Angry', signed by 'Judge'. The joke here is a

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<sup>76</sup> Similarly, in the early telephone operating systems 'switches' referred to the women operating them (Lerman, Oldenzel, and Mohun 6).



wife's anger at her husband when he comes home having bought a ribbon for his typewriter. While the wife thinks that he has bought an accessory for his female typist, the husband cannot understand the fuss over him buying a new ink ribbon to put in his typewriter machine (255). There are numerous satirical postcards and other illustrations suggesting the same confusion between operator and machine (see Keep, 'Cultural').

The ambiguity of the term typewriter, and the proper naming of the typist's occupation, is already being debated in the first issue of *The London Phonographer* in 1891. An unsigned piece under the heading 'Typewriter Tappings' asks: 'When will the English public see the absurdity of calling typists typewriters? The typewriter is the machine, not the person operating it, any more than a telegraphist is a telegraph, or a pianist a piano! ... A "Lady typewriter wanted" suggests the question of sex in the machines! Don't you see?' (16). On the same page, there is another text regarding the same question, under the heading 'Typist or Typewriter'. Here the author mocks a piece in a 'Ladies' paper which has stated that "the skilful lady typewriter" is not likely to lack employment'. The author remarks: 'For the benefit of those who are still ignorant of the meaning of the word typewriter, & c., we give the following explanations, which were settled long ago: The machine is a typewriter; an operator is a typist; when working the typewriter she is typing' (16). There seems to be a consensus ('explanations, which were settled long ago') among the typists themselves. The issue is also debated in women's journals: the signature 'R. V. Gill' in the article 'Is Type-Writing a Successful Occupation for Educated Women?', in an 1891 issue of *The Englishwoman's Review*, complains of the lack of a proper title for the typewriter/copyist: 'By-the-way, it would be well if some fertile brain could create a suitable title for these "copyists." They are frequently called "type-writers," which is clearly a misnomer, as the *machine* is the "type-writer." Then, again, the name "typist" is often used, but this is a most objectionable title' (83). Gill places instead the title 'type-writer copyist' to be most correct, but fears that it is too long to be adopted.

This ambiguity is moreover seen in debates of the time regarding the nature of typewriting; the relation between the operator and her machine *at work*. Does typewriting allow for or even require an agency on the typist's part, or is it a mere

mechanical occupation? Just as in trade journals typists themselves call for a proper naming of their occupation – ‘typist’ instead of ‘typewriter’ – there is also a call for recognition of the capability, ‘brains’, and individual agency of the typist. An example of this can be seen among the ‘Typewriter Tappings’ in an 1892 issue of *The London Phonographer*, where the author ‘Tip Taps’ criticises the *Standard* periodical for a statement where a typist is referred to as a “‘purely mechanical typewriter.’” The author here corrects the *Standard*, stating that: ‘A typewriter is a machine, but it does not follow that the work performed upon it is “purely mechanical,” nor that the performer is either a mechanic or a *machine*, as one might imagine from the misapplication of the word typewriter’ (276). Unless guided by ‘a well-educated, intelligent brain’, the typewriter machine would not turn out anything intelligible. The author concludes: ‘Therefore I decline, on my own account and that of my fellow-typists, to have my occupation, calling, or whatever the *Standard* may be pleased to dub my *work*, termed “purely mechanical”’ (276). In addition, ‘C. L.’ in an 1891 issue of *The Ladies Treasure* states that business employers usually expect their ‘lady type-writer to be more than a mere copyist. ... [T]he educated and quick-witted woman who can manipulate her machine “with brains,” as the famous artist mixed his colours, is too scarce a being not to command a comfortable position and good salary’ (166). Typewriting is not to be considered as merely mechanical copying. Likewise Marion Leslie explains in her 1890s article on typewriting as an employment for women, in *The Woman at Home*, ‘that typewriting is not merely a mechanical action. ... [T]he woman who essays to become a really successful typist must be one of good education and general culture. She must bring not simply a delicate touch to the instrument, but brains to the work’ (579-580). The typist, it seems, must have some higher education, and knowledge of several languages is preferred. Indeed, *The London Phonographer* in each issue presents lists of useful business terms in French, German, Greek, Latin and more. Leslie further explains that typewriting is ‘an employment which appeals to the educated class of woman – the woman who has an acquaintance with literature, and a sufficient knowledge of history and geography’ (580). This strikes up an image of the independent and well-educated New Woman, graduate of Girton College.

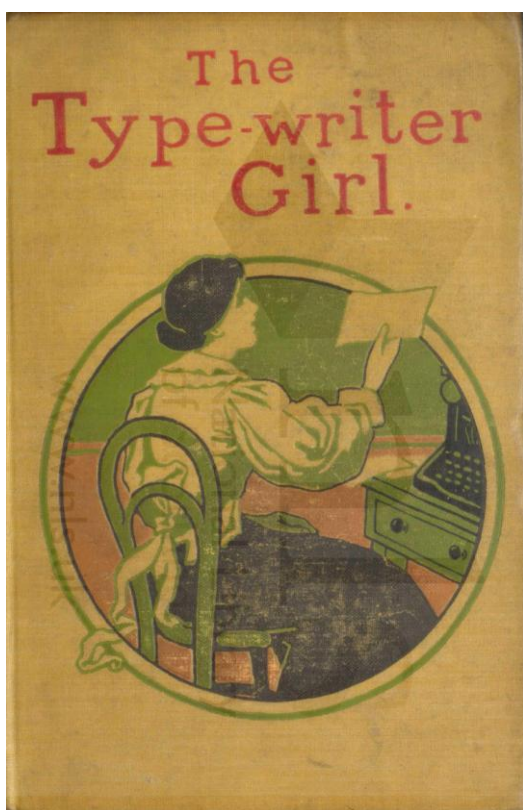
What is at stake here, in this semantic ambiguity, is more than a mere naming issue. The typist naming debate, with its discussion of the typewriting work, illustrates the instability and differing voices of discourses. The debate simultaneously highlights the specific technologies of self-formation, in the way that typists themselves define and defend their occupation. Recalling Joan W. Scott's notion of gender, explored in the previous chapter, as operating on different overlapping levels, we see that while at an individual level many typists call for a proper naming of their profession, this may be incongruous with discourses at other levels, such as those of office managers or satirists. Subjective elements of gender may well overlap but not be same as institutional or representational elements. Through two novels we will see the role that literary texts play in this naming debate, and in articulating a specific secretarial agency.

### ***The Type-Writer Girl (1897)***

Theories of the relation between technology and agency play out in Grant Allen's 1897 novel *The Type-Writer Girl*; indeed we may read the novel as an insertion into the contemporary debate regarding the female typist's character and profession. Like many of Allen's works, *The Type-Writer Girl* is written 'to the moment' (Lucas 53). That is to say, for a reading public of the time, a novel to be sold, bought and read quickly – probably not as a lasting monument. As such, it openly engages with themes and motifs of the time; the New Woman and new technologies are at the heart of both the plot and the description of characters. Neither *The Type-Writer Girl* nor Allen's other novel written under the pseudonym Olive Pratt Rayner (*Rosalba: The Story of Her Development* (1899)) excited the same response as his earlier New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did*. For both novels, there were only a handful of reviews, and reviewers seemed unaware that Allen was the author. Allen's authorship of these works was not publicly revealed until after his death in 1899, a revelation which did not seem to have a significant impact (Warne and Colligan 43-44).

The main character of *The Type-Writer Girl* is Juliet Appleton, a stereotypical New Woman: she has attended Girton College, holds radical political views, smokes, rides a bicycle and wears rational dress. Working as a typist, she is also economically

independent of any man: ‘I have nothing to live upon save what I can earn by typewriting’ (124). As the narrative proceeds, Juliet comes to work as a typist at two different offices, join an anarchist commune, and also unaccompanied take a trip to Venice. The original edition of the novel does not, as Allen’s later New Woman novels, have illustrations – but it does have a three-colour printed front cover. Here, in the middle of the cover, we see a woman (presumably Juliet) sitting by her typewriter, holding up a sheet of paper at which she is looking. The book title is in red at the top of the cover, while the colours in the illustration are black, green, and brown. The book is signalled as a ‘typewriter girl’ novel or even New Woman novel by the female typist (and her machine) already on the front cover.



(Front cover.) Grant Allen [pseud. Olive Pratt Rayner]. *The Type-Writer Girl*. London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1897. Illustrator unknown. National Library of Scotland watermark.

In the first chapter, Juliet argues that there is a distinct difference between masculine and feminine writing. She draws various examples from literature, history and mythology – ‘[f]rom all which you may guess that I am a Girton Girl’ (17) – describing her own journey as a modern Homeric odyssey.<sup>77</sup> In addition to the

<sup>77</sup> Rainey places the novel within literary history, considering the novel, with its episodic structure and light-hearted style of narration, a ‘picaresque tale that subtly reverses centuries of literary tradition’, providing a female heroine where heroes of picaresque fiction have typically been males (‘Secretarial’ 312).

recurrent analogy with the *Odyssey*, at other points in the novel Juliet compares herself with Esther from the book of the Bible (25 passim), Juliet in search of her Romeo (62 passim), Rosalind from *As You Like It* (201), Carmen from Bizet's opera (100 passim), or the princess Cleodolind awaiting rescue by Saint George (229 passim). Juliet criticises the failure of male novelists to depict women accurately, suggesting a fundamental distinction between male and female writing: 'Men novelists have depicted us as men wish us to be; we have meekly and obediently accepted their portrait: to some extent, even, we have striven against the grain to model ourselves upon it' (199). Allen, via the character of Juliet, here anticipates the late twentieth-century feminist critique of his own works, the gynocritical assumption (explored in the previous chapter) that men's and women's writing inherently bear different characteristics.

However, there is an irony in this claim of gendered writing, since the novel itself was published under a female pseudonym and has a female narrator. Allen even includes a dedication to lend credence to a woman named Rayner: 'To Theodore Rayner and Oliver Wendell Pratt, A Wife's Homage, A Sister's Love' (6). The text is itself an act of impersonation, signalling the constructed nature of gender. As Clarissa J. Suranyi argues in her introduction to the novel, this 'narrative cross-dressing' makes gender categories unstable already from the outset of the novel (10-11), or at least denaturalises these categories. In its narrative ventriloquism, the introductory discussion regarding the gender of writing indeed anticipates the blurred interactions between gender and technology regarding the semantic ambiguity of the term 'typewriter', and the sexual ambiguity of the New Woman.

Keep argues that Allen's use of a female pseudonym and first-person female narrator is a 'duplicitous' way to appropriate women's perspective in order to 'subvert effectively the gender radicalism of his character from within' ('Cultural' 43). This, however, is a reductive way of reading the novel; Allen's use of a woman's authorial identity is not as confident as Keep suggests (Warne and Colligan 43). As Warne and Colligan point out, there is no evidence to suggest that Allen wishes to undermine the radicalism of his New Woman protagonists; in fact, the literary heroines penned under pseudonym remain 'among the most unorthodox' of his New Woman characters since they do not finally 'capitulate to suicide, neuralgia,

or domesticity' (45, note 15). Instead, Warne and Colligan argue, Allen's adoption of a female pseudonym suggests the 'complexities surrounding male authorship' within the genre: it is the logical outcome of 'the kinds of complex and shifting configurations of gender that characterize both his own construction of authorial identity and the critical reception of *The Woman Who Did*' (43).

At the outset of the novel Juliet is in her early twenties, living alone and penniless without relatives in London.<sup>78</sup> Rather desperately, she spends her days reading place advertisements, in search of typing positions. Juliet ponders over the ambiguity of the term typewriter, when reading place advertisements. What comes to be her first workplace requires a "Shorthand and Type-writer wanted (female)" (21), whereas her second employer calls for a "Lady type-writer, with good knowledge of shorthand" (116). Juliet much prefers the latter title: 'My theory is that a type-writer girl should call herself a type-writer girl; but that an advertiser should do her the courtesy to speak of her as a Lady Type-writer, or something of the sort: certainly not as a (parenthetical) female' (116-117). There is a slippage here between the machine typewriter and the lady typewriter, and in the differing terms we see that what is at stake is more than a naming of a profession. As we have seen in the typist naming debate, the term 'typewriter' or 'typist' signals different ways of regarding the relation between the female typist and her machine. Whereas the first term hovers between machine and operator, the second term can only be applied to the operator herself. In a similar manner to that of the letters in *The London Phonographer*, the novel through Juliet's discussion partakes in the typist naming debate, accentuating the typist's own naming of her occupation.

The ambiguity of the term is also seen in *The Type-Writer Girl* in the relation between the female typist's body and her machine. Juliet starts working at the law office Flor and Fingelman's, which stood behind the first advert. However, she does not like the monotonous work there as a '(parenthetical) female' who is mostly

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<sup>78</sup> As Rainey notes, being an orphan or fatherless is a common trope among fictional secretaries and typists. This can be turned to the protagonist's advantage: 'not having parents, bereft of traditional constraints as transmitted by family, can both become a version of that "transcendental homelessness" that stamps modernity according to Lukács, and signal newly won freedoms of modernity, a liberation from family pressures that accentuates the questions of free ethical choice the heroine must face' ('Fallen' 293-294). In other words, 'orphanhood ... creates a solitary heroine largely in charge of her own destiny, free of parental constraint, pure agency. In an extreme formulation, she becomes the world of modernity incarnate' ('Secretarial' 327).

viewed as a machine by the other employees. Juliet and her typewriter at times seem to become one, when she identifies herself with her machine: ‘That click, click, click became to me like music’ (32). Even though she does not like the monotonous work there, she goes on mechanically: ‘So I continued to click, click, click, like a machine that I was’ (34). For her, the typewriter is her ‘entire stock-in-trade, the instrument of production’ (86). Being a ‘typewriter (female)’ becomes a basis of her identity. Not only do gender and technology work together, forming each other; but the female body and the technology in fact at times seem to become one, playing into the idea of the mechanised female typist.

Kittler explains this mechanisation of women, or conflation of woman and machine, with the subsumption, around the turn of the century 1900, of the Romantic equation of woman with nature into the modern equation of women with denaturalised recording media (*Discourse* 347). He argues that as the female typists enter the office and start working on the typewriter, these women are seen as mechanised, as machines themselves. Victoria Olwell notes this tendency to melt together woman and machine in typewriter pedagogy of the time, which in speed typing required the typist to ‘automate writing within the body’s organic reflexes, to create an instinctive link between the alphabet and the muscles and nervous system’ (‘Body’ 49). Typewriting was to be stored mechanically as ‘body memory’ (50).

But this static reading of the female typist as mere machine does not hold. Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* is considered by her employer not only as a typing machine, but also as a sexed being. As Pamela Thurschwell points out, Kittler’s notion of the mechanisation or desexualisation of woman does not take into account the simultaneous resexualisation or rematernalisation of women: ‘The typewriter can be imagined as bringing the comforting female presence into the male sphere. The angel in the house becomes the angel in the office. ... [W]omen are still expected to act like women even in the mechanized workplace’ (*Literature* 94-95). Female office workers are simultaneously expected to ‘mechanise’ and ‘feminise’ the office (Thurschwell, ‘Supple’ 158-159). When Juliet applies for the position at Flor and Fingelman’s, one of the clerks eyes her up and down, before asking how many words a minute she can type. At her reply the clerk again runs his eyes over her ‘as if I were a horse for sale’: ““That’s good enough,” he said slowly, with a side-glance at his

fellow-clerks. I had a painful suspicion that the words were intended rather for them than for me, and that they bore reference more to my face and figure than to my real or imagined pace per minute' (24).<sup>79</sup> The chief clerk also makes sure that both typewriters – the woman and the machine – are to his liking:

'Got your own machine?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'What sort?'

'A Barlock.'

'That'll do,' he said, eyeing the rest. And again I detected an undercurrent of double meaning. (24)

Not only must the machine be pleasing, but also 'the rest', that is, the outer appearance of the female typist. Juliet remarks that her new employer 'seemed to be expressing modified satisfaction at my outer personality' (24). Yet another example of this particularity of sex in the female typist can be seen when Mr. Fingelman himself inspects their new 'typewriter (female)': 'He perused me up and down with his small pig's-eyes, as if he were buying a horse, scrutinising my face, my figure, my hands, my feet. I felt like a Circassian in an Arab slave-market. I thought he would next proceed to examine my teeth' (26). Only after having approved of her looks does he ask her to transcribe a sample.

As signalled by the ambiguity of the term typewriter, the female typist is simultaneously sexed and machine, desexualised and resexualised, in texts of the time. While female typists could be seen as being decorporealised in their supposedly mechanised office duties, being viewed as machines, they are also simultaneously recorporealised, being viewed as particularly sexed beings. Olwell writes: 'Far from decorporealizing writing, then, the typewriter embodies a problematic subject in the material dimension of the text' – we must therefore investigate the body's presence, not absence, in the culture of writing (52).<sup>80</sup> Olwell argues that typewriting in Allen's

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<sup>79</sup> Juliet stretches the truth 'as far as its elasticity would permit' when declaring to type 197 words per minute (24). As a comparison, in 1897 'Miss Violet Potter, the fastest lady typewriter in England' keeps up an average speed of 90 words per minute when writing from dictation, while 'Mr. Charles H. McGurrin, an American' holds the record of 201 words per minute when writing the same sentence over and over again (Stevens 653). By these standards, Juliet must be one of the best typists in the country.

<sup>80</sup> The typewriter error can be seen as a material sign of the typist's bodily presence or even agency; spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes of the typist could be seen as asserting her material and subjective presence in the texts. Typographical errors, according to Olwell, become a 'locus for self-scrutiny, self-understanding, and self-representation' ('Typewriters' 70). They also evidence the



novel is imagined as decorporealising writing, in order to recorporealise it in the sexualised and at the same time automatised body of the female typist. At the same time as being made machine, the body of the female typist ‘spectacularized gender in the workplace’ (49).<sup>81</sup> We see this clearly in the office clerks’ treatment of Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl*.

This ambiguity of the term typewriter reveals a problem with Kittler’s and Heidegger’s determinist view of technology. Kittler refers to Heidegger’s definition of technology, in which the typewriter is seen as decorporealising writing: ‘The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand, i.e., the realm of the word’ (qtd. in Kittler *Gramophone* 198). By doing so, Heidegger argues (and Kittler with him), the typewriter degrades the word to a means of communication, removing human particularity from the texts. According to him, it creates a rift between the hand-made and the machine-made. Like Heidegger, Kittler here ignores the possibilities of the human subject and the human body of answering back, inscribing the technology. Kittler’s focus is on the impact that the typewriter has on society – not the use that the individual may make of the machine. What both Kittler and Heidegger ignore is that writing itself – handwriting – is also a technology, and that handwriting did not gain its importance as a mark of subjectivity until posed against the mechanical writing of the typewriter:

Historically, the handwritten mark came to signify the particular person only after a print culture developed against which handwriting could be differentiated. And until fairly recently, the particular person made legible in handwriting was not the individualized, authentic presence that developments in print cultures and cultures of the person have since taught us to seek in handwritten marks. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century handwriting registered a performance of social or mercantile character; only as late as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did handwriting, either in conjunction with or even opposed to its content, appear to expose individual identity. (Olwell, ‘Typewriters’ 65-66)

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double writing of the female typist: ‘The typewriter writes both a manifest text and a latent text – the text of the words she copies or composes and the text of her errors’ (70). Also a typewritten text bears marks of the typist’s body and individuality.

<sup>81</sup> The article ‘Ladies in the Office’ from an 1893 issue of *The London Phonographer* demonstrates how the presence of the female typist is made an issue: ‘The idea that a lady must of necessity have a separate room to work in, and practically be put in a glass case and hermetically sealed, is fast dying the natural death of such notions, and those who allot their feminine worker a desk in the general office, as a rule find that it is no hindrance but a decided help to office routine’ (Vol. 3: 57).

The typewriter cannot be seen as merely separating human particularity from the text, as Kittler and Heidegger claim, but at the same time it introduces a new body in the workplace: that of the typewriter operator. When Kittler and Heidegger mark the body as absent in the relation to the machine, they not only ignore the many potentialities of technology, but they further ignore the specific notions of gender implied in their argumentation. In this way technologies are taken out of their context as part of power relations, and the interrelation between technology and subject (in other words the technologies of the self), is disregarded. Whereas in fact, the semantic ambiguity of the term ‘typewriter’ at the *fin de siècle* highlights the (inter)relation between the typewriter as operator and as machine; it insists on the simultaneous presence and absence of the body in notions of the female typist.

The consequences of this error for a reading of Allen’s novel can be found in Keep’s analysis of *The Type-Writer Girl* as a ‘cultural fitting’ of the female typist. Keep argues that in order to be allowed into the workplace, female typists and office workers had to go through a process of ‘cultural fitting’; they had to adhere to a certain kind of accepted femininity. Cultural mediation was crucial for society’s acceptance of this new phenomenon of female typists and office workers. Keep points out in ‘The Cultural Work of the Type-Writer Girl’ that female typists, seeking work in the public sphere of business and commerce, seemed to undermine the association with domesticity which conventional notions of femininity had: ‘Working among men, machines, and money was felt to diminish a woman’s innate sensitivity and moral superiority’ (402). Keep argues that in order for this new phenomenon of female typists to be allowed and accepted by society, they needed a ‘refiguring of the typewriter within the cultural imaginary’ (403), that is, by ‘secure’ representations of such female typists in popular press, advertising and works of fiction. According to Keep, fictional typists indeed are not at all like they were in ‘reality’:

Most female typists, in short, lived a life very different from that of the Type-Writer Girl of the novels and plays. ... These novels do not so much document or mirror the life of the woman typist as produce her as the site of erotic attraction for the men who might otherwise be threatened by this sudden invasion of the spheres of masculine privilege. ... The Type-Writer Girl thus becomes an object of a particular intense form of male scrutiny that, in the very process of discovering her secret desires, effectively inscribes

upon her figurative body the tell-tale signs of an essential femininity that are required if she is to remain legible within the gendered semiotics of the cultural imaginary of the fin de siècle. (412-413)

Keep reads Allen's text as a conventional attempt to engender technology, reaffirming a conventional femininity, in order for the female typist to 'remain legible' within the (so-called) cultural imaginary. He argues that these cultural forms were 'a means of domesticating the uneasy association of women with the new machines of uniform transcription' (422). In Keep's reading, Allen's typewriter girl is constructed as 'the object of a scopophilic desire' (416); the female figurative body is being inscribed upon not only by technologies but also by a sexualising or objectifying male gaze.<sup>82</sup>

In the same way as Kittler, Keep sees the body as a site upon which the various technologies of our culture inscribe themselves. Like Kittler, Keep also refers back to Foucault, in particular to Foucault's notion of a disciplined body – a body to be marked, trained, and tortured. Keep uses a similar language when seeing the body of the female typist as 'inscribed' by technology, as a 'disciplined body'. Keep argues that '[t]hus evacuated, the body is possessed, occupied, or "boarded" by the needs of power' ('Blinded' 151). He adds: 'In the case of the typewriter, it is the bodies of women ... which first bore the full weight of endo-colonization' ('Blinded' 151).<sup>83</sup> Technologies are presented as something imposing and inscribing upon passive bodies.

Keep thus fails, as does Kittler, to acknowledge the ways in which technologies can also be appropriated, as a means of reworking power relations, by subjects themselves. As a previous quote by Foucault attests, the hold upon the body by power relations is to be conceived 'not as a property, but as a strategy': 'one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather

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<sup>82</sup> Linking back to Greenhalgh's comments about the New Woman's 'superfluous energies' contained in the role of the female typist, we may wonder whether the 'recorporealisation' of the typist as an erotic spectacle could in fact be seen as another way in which her threatening autonomy is contained within patriarchal structures. Both *The Type-Writer Girl* (in the fashion typical of Allen) and *The Girl Behind the Keys* contain several out-of-context references to an essentialist biological 'womanly nature', despite the main characters' New Womanish 'unwomanly' behaviour. The characters indeed seem at times to be struggling with the text in which they exist, an attempted containment that does not hold.

<sup>83</sup> Endo-colonization is Paul Virilio's term, signifying the way in which the culture of speed – for him, typical of modernity – produces its labour force. This is the process whereby the body is 'emptied out' and transformed into no more than a 'metabolic vehicle' (Virilio 76, 88).

than a privilege that one might possess; ... one should take as its model a perpetual battle rather than a contract regulating a transaction or the conquest of a territory' (*Discipline* 26). Accordingly, these mobile power relations, in which bodies take part, are also changeable. Technologies such as the typewriter do not themselves change subjects, but they are part of a system of power relations, wherein co-exist individual technologies of self-formation.

Keep's reading is incongruous with the plot of the novel in question – the character of Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* does not easily settle into that cultural fitting. Juliet herself actively moves between employments, even though she is dependent on earning her livelihood. Understandably, Juliet cannot stand the work at the law office for long. On her fourth day of employment, she overhears two men in a restaurant speak of a newly set up anarchist commune outside London. In anarchism, she sees a possible place for her individuality and own will: 'And anarchists, too! Why, I was born one. After Flor and Fingelman's – click, click, click, all day – what a vista of Eden!' (37). She goes home at once, sits down at her 'private and particular Barlock – the same on which I am inditing these present memoirs' (39), and writes out a resignation letter mocking their establishment. She is now once again 'a Free Woman' (40). While she is forced to pawn her typewriter in order to pay her landlady, she has another machine to help her: her 'faithful bicycle' (49). Juliet's bicycle enables her to travel where she likes, and like her typewriter provides her with a sense of freedom: 'How light and free I felt! ... A woman on a bicycle has all the world before her where to choose; she can go where she will, no man hindering' (50). Juliet puts on her cycling costume and rides out into the countryside to join the anarchists. However, she soon finds the anarchists too narrow-minded for her taste. Juliet wants to join the commune 'on equal terms ... I am all for the absolute equation of the sexes' (71), but here it is mostly the men who talk politics and toil in the fields – the women have followed their husbands, fathers and brothers. Juliet labours 'like a man' (74) in the fields, wearing her practical cycling suit. After a week, she finds herself "'too individual, too anarchic for the anarchists!'" (82) and goes back to London to find another typewriting position. As seen, Juliet refuses both to be treated solely as a machine and solely as a woman.

Keep does not acknowledge the mutual relationship between gender and technology; his imagery is instead one of the machine overpowering the sexualised woman: '[T]he woman, in becoming a product herself, superseded the very machine she was originally intended to promote. Indeed, the typewriter was now but an adjunct to the woman, a symbol not of the advantages of uniform transcription, but of a kind of eroticised womanhood' ('Cultural' 416). Seemingly blind to the passages in Allen's novel where Juliet works in the field with the anarchists, dirties her clothes, and where she cycles around the countryside in rational dress, Keep claims that the depicted typewriter girl 'was not at all that different from her more conventional counterparts. She still enjoyed wearing fine clothes and arraying herself as an erotic object for the male gaze' ('Cultural' 422). Keep's argument here is hard to follow, considering Juliet's earlier disgust when being stared at and examined by her male co-workers. His reading of *The Type-Writer Girl* as an example of the gendering of the typewriter as a settling or coming to terms with the unease concerning the female typist simply does not hold.

I have argued that the term 'typewriter' at the *fin de siècle* signifies an ambiguity in the relation between the typist and her machine. As I have previously mentioned, Kittler and Keep examine the ways in which women and machines, at the end of the nineteenth century, were often equated with each other. However, alongside this notion of the female operator as a machine, there are also many texts by typists themselves calling for the necessity of writing 'with brains' as well as mechanical capability. These texts stress the agency and skill of the typist, contradicting the notion of typewriting as a merely mechanical occupation. *The Type-Writer Girl* partakes in this debate. Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* of course has studied both languages and the classics, which is much appreciated by her employers. It also comes in handy in the multilingual anarchist commune, where she for example converses in French and tells stories in German to the children, and later when ordering gondolas in Venice. Throughout the novel Juliet makes educated references to literary works, mythological characters and historical events. Clearly, her work is not a mere mechanical occupation.

However, all typists are not as educated as Juliet. Her friend Elsie in *The Type-Writer Girl* is compared to a machine: 'she could type fairly well, though quite

unintelligently, like a well-trained Chinaman; but she had no machine of her own, and no money to buy one' (157). She cannot take dictation but 'given a copy, she could reproduce each word with mechanical fidelity' (157). Juliet lends Elsie her machine, helps her in the evenings, and finds copying work for her from an office. Elsie prefers routine to the 'exercise of intelligence', and Juliet believes that '[a]s long as she was permitted to go on copying like a machine, Elsie was perfectly happy' (159).

Leah Price argues that the disparity between Juliet as the intelligent secretary and Elsie as the mechanical typist reinforces the equation of the female body with the machine. This is, Price argues, because the typewriter of the novel's title is not Juliet but in fact Elsie (131). Following Heidegger's technological determinism, Price sees the typewriter as creating a rift between the hand-made and the machine-made, and also between subject and object (130). She argues that Allen's inability to depict the typewriter girl as a subject, despite his ambition to humanise the secretary and give her an inner life, instead makes her into an object (133-134). Thurschwell, too, considers the 'conflicting roles' of the secretary and the typist in relation to their eventual emancipation. Juliet succeeds in her part as New Woman figure, complicating Kittler's association of women with mechanical reproduction, Thurschwell states, perhaps 'because she is a secretary rather than a typist' ('Supple' 156-157).

Price (and to an extent Thurschwell) however fails to consider the agency of the typist; the technologies of the self involved. Contrary to Price's argument, and very importantly, Juliet throughout the novel actively posits herself not as a secretary, but as a typist. She defends herself and her profession by saying that some typewriter girls are ladies, and "I am a type-writer myself" (236). Likewise, the earlier quoted trade journals and women's magazines call for a consideration of typewriting work in itself – not of secretarial work. Having returned from her anarchist excursion, Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* goes back to her work as a typist, but this time in a publisher's office. She thoroughly enjoys the work here – she even manages to fall in love with her employer – and embraces the freedom that the position as a typist offers:

Poverty emancipates. It often occurred to me how different things would have been had my dear father lived and had I remained a young lady. In that case, I could have seen Romeo [her new employer Mr. Blank] at intervals only, under shelter of a chaperone; as it was, no one hinted the faintest impropriety in the fact that the type-writer girl was left alone with him half the day in the privacy of his study. (140-141)

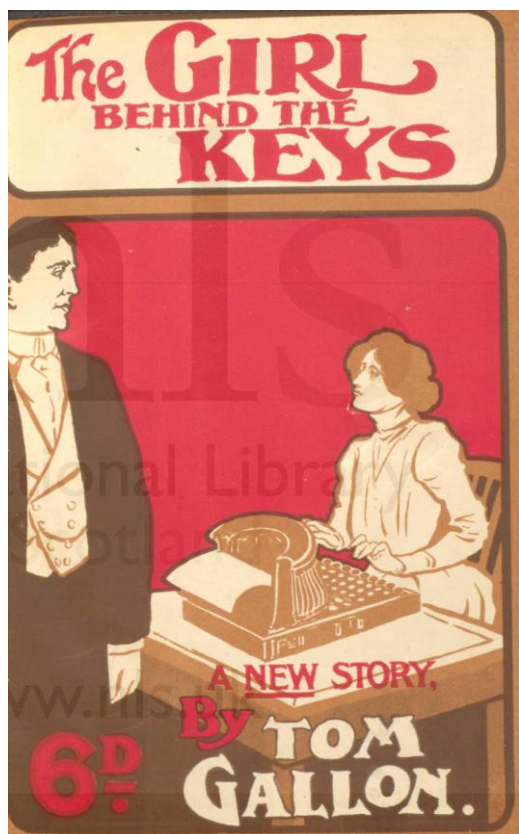
After having the choice to marry Mr. Blank and escape any economic worries, Juliet still chooses the independence of being a typist. She sacrifices her chance of love, announcing that ‘I am the type-writer girl!’ (260). In the end Juliet reclaims her position as a typist. In the final words of the novel she confidently expresses: ‘For I am still a type-writer girl – at another office’ (261). Clearly, Juliet identifies herself as a typewriter girl. The two typists in the novel might instead, rather than signifying the differentiation between secretarial and typing work, be read as part of the debate about the agency of the machine versus the agency of the human operator.

### ***The Girl Behind the Keys (1903)***

If Juliet and Elsie in *The Type-Writer Girl* can be seen as an interjection into the debate regarding the relation between the typist and her machine, the main character in Tom Gallon’s (1866-1914) 1903 novel *The Girl Behind the Keys* formulates the importance of considering the agency of the typist herself. *The Girl Behind the Keys* plays on the notion of the female typist as a mere mechanical transmitter – in fact, the centre plot and the main character’s life depend upon it. But as will become clear, the novel itself counteracts the determinist idea of the female typist as a merely passive body to be inscribed by outer technologies.

Like Allen, Gallon published many works around the turn of the century, works which by now are largely forgotten – his most well-known one might be *Tatterley: The Story of a Dead Man* (1897). Gallon began to write short stories around 1895, after illness forced him to give up a clerical career; he went on to write over forty novels, six plays, and numerous music hall sketches (Young, ‘Introduction’ 19-20). The front cover of the original edition of *The Girl Behind the Keys* shows a woman (presumably the protagonist Bella) behind her desk, by the typewriter, with her hands posited just above the keys – so that she is situated here, literally, behind the keys. She is looking up at a dark-suited man (presumably her

employer) who stares at her, she meeting his glance. The title, printed in red, is at the top of the page, whilst the illustration in red, dark brown, and light brown occupies the rest of the page. Similar to *The Type-Writer Girl*, the typewriter and its New Woman operator are signalled already on the front cover.



(Front cover.) Tom Gallon. *The Girl Behind the Keys*. London: Hutchinson & Co., 1903. Illustrator unknown. National Library of Scotland watermark.

In *The Girl Behind the Keys* the main character Bella Thorn, living in London with only sixpence in her pocket, starts her new job as a typist at the Secretarial Supply Syndicate. At first the position seems too good to be true; the salary is thrice as high as usual, and days go by without Bella having to do any actual work. However, as Bella soon realises, the Syndicate is a criminal organisation, ‘a den of thieves and worse’ (68), and by working there she is forced to assist in criminal acts. Bella’s first reaction is to leave her employer, but after persuasion by a journalist friend (who later becomes her husband) she decides to stay, in order to expose the gang. Bella continues to work at the office, pretending to be innocent and unknowing, while secretly plotting against the Syndicate.

By playing on the image of the machine-like typist, Bella manages to fool her employer and also repeatedly to stop their criminal acts: ‘Having always a placid exterior, I was, to all appearances, as much a machine as that at which I worked; and



I think, in time, he [her employer Neil Larrard] began to cease to think that I need be considered at all' (35). She posits herself in the role of the typist as possessing no brains or agency, being 'purely mechanical'. Bella, pretending not to know of his crimes, tells her employer Larrard: "You seem to forget that a typist in my position has to become a mere machine; her fingers are the only things that really matter about her" (11). The discussion in *The Girl Behind the Keys* regarding typewriting as a supposedly mechanical occupation can be directly situated in the earlier described debate on the brains required in typewriting work, and the ambiguity of the term typewriter involved in this. Bella's pretence not to be more than a mechanic tool counteracts the instructions of a 1900 typing manual, which states that

[t]he Typist's fingers must be made to be the ready, speedy, and reliable servants of the brain. ... The brain itself must, by regular training and concentrated thought on the part of the typist, be so trained as to direct the fingers and utilize the knowledge of the combinations [of language] alluded to; thus removing all hesitation in typing, so far as it is possible commensurate with the ability brought to bear upon the work. (Dalziel and Lumley, 4-5).

Unlike Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl*, Bella does not reflect upon the typist naming issue, and her employer-to-be escapes the naming issue by advertising for a "Young lady ... with knowledge of typewriting" (6). The terms 'typist' and 'typewriter' are then used interchangeably throughout the novel to describe Bella's occupation.

Larrard is never suspicious; neither do the victims of the Syndicate's crimes seem to consider Bella's occupation as other than an innocent one. At a hotel at which she is engaged to work, she finds that the hotel staff recognises her as 'that very harmless individual, a typist engaged for the day' (23). When for once Bella is suspected, by Madame Jevaux, an associate of the Syndicate, Bella replies by referring to her innocence and to her seemingly insignificant role at the office: "There's nothing much to fear about me, I think," I said. "You see, when one has to earn one's living, it makes a difference – doesn't it? I am only a typist, at a certain salary; it is not my business to enquire about matters which do not concern me" (36). Bella even goes by the nick-name 'the Lamb' among her employer and his associates, because of her supposed innocence: 'I determined to preserve, if possible, that character of the "Lamb" which had been bestowed upon me; and I think to all appearances I was merely the very ordinary little typist, prepared to receive

instructions, and to earn my salary as easily as possible' (39). She plays on her innocent looks and on the prejudices or ideas of the mechanical role of the female typist, for her own purposes.

As I have previously argued, Kittler and Keep consider technologies as imposing upon and inscribing upon bodies. By ignoring any potential individual agency, the technologies of the self in conjunction with other technologies situated within mobile power relations, these theorists inscribe and reinscribe bodies as passive. However, neither *The Type-Writer Girl* nor *The Girl Behind the Keys* allow for such a reading. By playing on the symbolic idea of woman as machine, Bella in *The Girl Behind the Keys* on an individual or subjective level actively fights against the gang and thwarts their plans. The novel in this way provides an almost schematic illustration of Scott's notion of gender as operating simultaneously on different levels, or involving different elements. The individual experience of gender may not be the same as the institutional or representational level, although they overlap and interact. In this way, *fin de siècle* discourses on gender are not static, but can be reformulated. The typists' call for a proper naming of their occupation, and Bella's agency in *The Girl Behind the Keys* in spite of the notion of woman as machine, can be seen as such reformulations.

We see such a reformulation in a particular episode in the novel, when the Syndicate tries to smuggle stolen diamonds by hiding them inside Bella's typewriter, and they think that she does not notice. To them it must have seemed a perfect idea, but Bella knows: 'I saw the plot in a moment. Who was to suspect a little typewriter, carrying home her machine, after the day's work, to her lodging. It was the safest and most ingenious hiding-place that could have been discovered' (31). However, Bella allows the diamonds to slip out of the Syndicate's grip, and she escapes suspicions yet again by playing innocent: "Really, Mr. Larrard – I'm afraid I don't understand," I said. "And what *have* you been doing with the machine?" (34). Bella in this way studies the methods of the gang for months, by preserving 'some of that stolid impassiveness which was my most valuable stock-in-trade' (17). Throughout it all, Bella pretends to be unknowing of the Syndicate's doings: "I don't in the least understand what you mean – and I don't wish to" (21). She ponders to herself, wondering 'how much my life would be worth, if Mr. Neal Larrard knew the part I

had played. Quite smilingly, I thanked him for his good opinion of me, and bade him good-night. ... I had to keep a calm, quiet face, and go about my work like a machine' (93-94). When she later again tries to leave she is threatened by Larrard.

At the end of *The Girl Behind the Keys*, in the capture of the criminals, the mobility of power relations, and the possibility to rework them (understood via a notion of technologies of self-formation), play out. Bella finds herself 'the human buffer between the forces of law and order, and that desperate band of criminals in the inner room' (118). Seemingly locked in an impossible position, Bella sees her chance and acts when Larrard for a moment has 'his suspicions disarmed' and drops his gun: 'In a moment, as it seemed, I cried out, and started to my feet; flung out one arm, which caught Neal Larrard squarely across the face, and tossed him backwards; and with the full weight of my body overturned the desk on which the typewriter rested' (124). With this, Larrard and the Secretarial Supply Syndicate is finally exposed and taken to court – all by Bella's doing.

Reading *The Girl Behind the Keys*, we must consider the female typist's body not only as an inscribed and passive surface, but as an agent capable of answering back. The New Woman typist engages in a kind of, as it were, double writing. She not only, at the institutional or visible level, copies documents, but she is at the same time rewriting or producing discourse, inscribing her corporeal presence into the clerical workplace, that previously exclusively male domain. The female typist herself inscribes the typewriter within a discourse of the self that this technology does not simply determine.

## Conclusion

The previous chapter highlighted the limitations of a gynocritical division of the New Woman debate in terms of two clearly opposed and homogenous sides. Similarly, the *fin de siècle* debate regarding the role of the female typist and regarding the nature of typewriting must be considered as containing various voices. On the one hand we have a notion of the typist as a mere machine, with no agency of her own – a mere 'typewriter'. On the other hand, as expressed in *The London Phonographer* and played out in *The Type-Writer Girl* and *The Girl Behind the Keys*, there is a defence from the side of the typists themselves arguing for the 'brains'

involved in the work, of the agency of the typists. This ambiguity is mirrored in the ambiguity of the term 'typewriter' itself, which at the Victorian *fin de siècle* indicates the complex relationship between the female typist's body and her machine, proving a case in point of the danger of reading the relation between technologies and individuals as a one-way influence.

By ignoring the many diversities and possible meanings of the term 'typewriter', and ignoring the many-sidedness of the debates on female typists, Kittler and Keep reinscribe these bodies, formulating a static idea of power relations which is at odds with the actual texts studied. As power relations are reinforced and negotiated, technologies are also changeable – their meaning and importance lie in how they are adopted. The typewriter is significant in this context not only as a means of earning a livelihood: it becomes a way of reworking power relations, producing discourse, and redefining notions of gender.

## Chapter 3

### The 'Freedom Machine': The New Woman and the Bicycle

#### 3.1 The New Woman as Literary Bicyclist

##### Introduction

Not only are radical political views and ideas associated with the New Woman, but also certain stereotypical emblems, accessories, or motifs through which the figure potentially questions established notions of gender. The specific technology most commonly associated with the New Woman and her 'unsexing' potential is the bicycle, with the loosening of social restrictions and the geographic mobility that it allowed. Indeed, Hugh Stutfield in 'Tommyrotics' (printed in *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1895) conflates the woman writer and the female bicyclist into one, in his analogy of the modern woman writer as a 'literary bicyclist': 'sometimes her machine takes her along some sadly muddy roads, where her petticoats – or her knickerbockers – are apt to get soiled' (238). Stutfield's image binds together questions of female authorship with both the technology of the bicycle and the late nineteenth-century debates on female dress. Often coupled with rational dress and knickerbockers, the bicycle became an emblem of female emancipation.

Different kinds of cycles had existed before the introduction of the modern 'safety' bicycle, but neither the high-wheeler (commonly called the 'penny-farthing') with its large front wheel nor the more expensive tricycle was widely adopted – these were reserved for men and women of a certain wealth.<sup>84</sup> First in the late 1880s did the 'bicycle craze' start to take shape, reaching its highest point in the mid-1890s. It was John Kemp Stanley's low-wheel Rover safety design of 1884, with a chain drive to the rear wheel and a year later featuring a diamond frame, that made the bicycle available to almost everyone. Coupled with John Dunlop's pneumatic tires which

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<sup>84</sup> For an early instance of a well-known female cyclist, see the books published by Elizabeth Robins Pennell and her husband Joseph Pennell, who cycled through Europe together in the 1880s: *A Canterbury Pilgrimage* (1885), *Our Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1893), and *Over the Alps on a Bicycle* (1898). Elizabeth Robins Pennell also authored the 'Cycling' section of Violet Greville's 1894 collection *Ladies in the Field: Sketches of Sport*, in which she describes cycling as the 'the youngest of woman's sports' (248).

were added in 1887, the safety bicycle became standard, leading to the stabilisation of bicycle design (Watson and Gray 120-121; McGurn 86-87; Herlihy 235-250). Easier and safer to ride than earlier models, the bicycle now very importantly was also affordable.<sup>85</sup>

The safety bicycle has been considered by both Victorian commentators and later critics to be a technology not only of modernity but of democratisation. David Rubinstein calls it ‘not only a practical means of transport but a symbol of emancipation’ (47), while Stephen Kern terms it a ‘great leveller’ that bridged social space and made travel over longer distances accessible to the middle and lower classes who would not afford a carriage or automobile (317). Making transport available to all, the bicycle opened up possibilities for both a loosening of social restrictions and an increased geographic mobility. Working-class people could now venture on holidays outside of the city, women could travel further without chaperones, and some of these women even advocated the less restricting rational dress.<sup>86</sup>

While the modern bicycle has been considered a technology of democratisation, it has been read all the more as the main technology of female emancipation at the *fin de siècle*. As the specific emblem of the New Woman, the modern safety bicycle was termed a ‘freedom machine’ (Larrabee 90; Smith 76) or ‘vehicle of liberation’ for women (McGurn 100). As opposed to horse-riding, an activity which like bicycling had earlier offered women ‘freedom, physical independence and a sense of personal control’, a bicycle was affordable and easy to keep (Wintle, ‘Horses’ 66). Thus the bicycle became popular among both women

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<sup>85</sup> Not only were the wheels of the chain-driven safety bicycle nearly equivalent in size, which made it far easier – and safer – to ride than the high-wheeler and other earlier bicycle models. As James McGurn notes, the safety bicycle was also democratic in that it was adjustable to suit riders of various body types. Handle bar and seat positions could be altered to fit different physiques (87).

<sup>86</sup> A clear instance of the link between democracy in the form of socialism and cycling in the 1890s can be seen in the formation of the Clarion Cycling Club. The first branch was formed in Birmingham in 1894, taking its name from Robert Blatchford’s socialist newspaper, and a year later was established as the National Clarion Cycling Club. The Club quickly grew, with sections all over the UK, bringing together working-class people and out on cycling tours in the countryside. Often these tours involved spreading the *Clarion* newspaper; the newspaper in turn soon included a cycling column and featured cycling advertisements (Rubinstein 68-70; see also Denis Pye’s *Fellowship is Life: The National Clarion Cycling Club 1895-1995* (1995)). The Clarion Cycling Club sported some well-known sympathisers such as the suffragettes Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst. Sylvia describes in *The Suffragette Movement* (1931) how she together with her mother chose a machine, and cycled the countryside with her sister and the Clarion members (139-141).

and men, among upper-class as well as working-class people (Wintle, 'Horses' 68). The American suffragist Susan B. Anthony famously stated in 1896 that bicycling had done 'more to emancipate women than anything else in the world' (10). Another well-known American suffrage campaigner, Frances Willard, learning to ride the bicycle in Britain, saw in the bicycle an opening for women's rights activists. She calls it a new 'implement of power' (73) and 'the most remarkable, ingenious, and inspiring motor ever yet devised upon this planet' (75). In her 1895 guidebook for female bicyclists *How I Learned to Ride a Bicycle with Some Reflections by the Way*, Willard rejoices greatly in 'perceiving the impetus that this uncompromising but fascinating and illimitably capable machine would give to that blessed "woman question"' (38). This 'impetus' would involve not only the improved 'physical development of humanity's mother-half' which the cycling exercise brought, but also an advancement in dress reform (38). New Woman writer Ella Hepworth Dixon more guardedly wrote in 1899 that even though the bicycle is seen as having 'finally emancipated women,' it is certain that 'there are other factors besides the useful and agreeable wheel' (86).

Implicit in this notion of the bicycle as an inherently democratic technology, is a technological determinism that measures only technology's impact as a one-way influence, while ignoring the different potentialities of technologies. But as Hepworth Dixon states, the bicycle did not alter society on its own; there are 'other factors' involved. As Watson and Gray note, '[s]ociety was obviously ready for a change in manners and morals so far as women were concerned, and the bicycle fitted conveniently into a wider changing pattern. The bike did not alter public mores or fashions of its own, any more than it could do nowadays' (139). Technological development does not happen in a vacuum, but in interrelation with the social world and potential user demand. Wiebe E. Bijker in *Of Bicycles, Bakelites and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (1995) indeed employs the safety bicycle as a case in point to demonstrate 'both the social shaping of technology and the technical shaping of society' (3).<sup>87</sup> As we will see in this chapter, the emancipating

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<sup>87</sup> See also Bijker 19-100; Oudshoorn and Pinch 1-2. Bijker is, as described in the first chapter of this thesis, one of the pioneers of the constructivist approach to technology, and what has become Science of Technology Studies (STS).

aspect lies not in the machine itself but in how the bicycle comes to be used, in the interrelation between society and technology.

Notions of gender play a crucial part in this interrelation. As I have explained in previous chapters, via Scott's definition of gender as working on various levels and always being bound up with power, the gender-technology interrelation operates at different levels, in layers of function and meaning. Gender works in symbolic, normative, and institutional ways, and also as a subjective identity (Scott, *Gender* 43-44). This multilevel structure of gender is embodied in the case of the safety bicycle, through which gender works and is reworked from identity to structure: 'Indeed, physical structures often regulate, reinforce, or impose gender, and gender difference structures the built environment' (Lerman, Oldenziel, and Mohun, 'Introduction' 5). The relationship is mutual; technologies shape notions of gender, while gender also shapes technology. Furthermore, as explained by Scott, gender is a primary part of those social relationships that make up mobile power relations (*Gender* 42). As we will see when examining literary and other texts on the bicycle, the impact of a certain technology can only be examined in its interrelation with other social agents.

If the bicycle is not inherently democratic, through what processes does it take on this political significance? As Rubinstein suggests, the bicycle is not a mere means of transport but also becomes a *symbol* of emancipation (47). The technology of the bicycle offers a concrete physical mobility, and by this also works as a more abstract image of social emancipation. Cycling thus works as a social practice, acting out an emancipation that does not only concern physical mobility. The literary figurations of the New Woman cyclist epitomise these two aspects of the late nineteenth-century bicycle, as the bicycle is employed as an emblem or trope of emancipation. Technologies such as the bicycle are not in themselves inherently progressive, but their 'modern' and emancipatory potential depends upon how they are employed (in social practice) or considered (given symbolic meaning).

In contemporary scholarship, the debate on female cyclists – similarly to the New Woman naming debate – is often simplified and constructed as a gendered battle between two clearly opposed sides: a 'dominant' discourse and a 'reverse'



discourse.<sup>88</sup> In this chapter I will consider the ‘unsexing’/‘sexing’ potential of the bicycle, and the fear or sex reversal by female physical exercise, in both medical, journalistic and literary texts; reading the figure of the New Woman cyclist as connecting these various discourses. I will examine the late nineteenth-century dress reform movement as bound up with female cycling, reading clothing itself as a technology. Seeing the New Woman cyclist as binding together concrete physical mobility and more abstract social and political visions of female emancipation, I will shortly map out figurations of the New Woman cyclist in *fin de siècle* fiction to demonstrate the various uses of the trope. Finally, I will examine how two novels from the height of the bicycle craze, H. G. Wells’s *The Wheels of Chance* (1896) and Grant Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures* (1899), complicate the conception of the bicycle as an inherently ‘democratic’ or emancipatory technology. Literary works such as these are major spaces through and in which the New Woman is formulated, and through which the bicycle is employed and questioned as a trope of emancipation.

### ***Fin de Siècle* Discourses on the Female Bicyclist**

The height of the bicycle craze or boom coincided with the New Woman naming debate of the mid-1890s.<sup>89</sup> Cycling first became widespread among both sexes in Britain in 1894, and it was in 1895 that ‘popularity became passion’

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<sup>88</sup> Most of the writings on cycling have been published within the fields of Sociology or History of Technology. Some of the major works are Robert A. Smith’s *A Social History of the Bicycle* (1977), Roderick Watson and Martin Gray’s *The Penguin Book of the Bicycle* (1978), James McGurn’s *On Your Bicycle: An Illustrated History of Cycling* (1987), Wiebe E. Bijker’s *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (1995), Paul Rosen’s *Framing Production: Technology, Culture, and Change in the British Bicycle Industry* (2002), David Herlihy’s *Bicycle: The History* (2004), and the collection *Cycling and Society* (2007, ed. Dave Horton, Paul Rosen, and Peter Cox). While there is a large amount of sociological writing on gender and cycling, including Patricia Marks’s *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (1990) which considers the media’s response to and stereotypes of the New Woman, the New Woman cyclist as she appears in late nineteenth-century fiction has been largely overlooked. David Rubinstein’s 1977 article ‘Cycling in the 1890s’ focuses specifically on cycling at the end of the nineteenth century, and mentions some examples of cycling in fiction of the time. For a study of the bicycle in relation to a somewhat later specific literary context, see Robert Poole’s article on the Bloomsbury group, in which he argues that the bicycle is the ‘one machine which appears again and again in the lives and works of Bloomsbury. ... It has been claimed, in fact, that the bicycle is a “fetish” with the Bloomsbury group’ (952). Horton, Cox, and Rosen in their introduction to *Cycling and Society* provide a comprehensive review of cycling literature in various academic fields (see pp. 8-10).

<sup>89</sup> As noted in the first chapter of this thesis, the term New Woman was popularised through Sarah Grand’s 1894 essay and in the debate that followed.

(Rubinstein 49; see also Herlihy 251-282). The popularity of bicycling then rose until 1897, when it steadied. According to Rubinstein, ‘almost everyone who could afford a bicycle and who was not physically incapacitated rode avidly during the boom of 1895-97’ (51). Cycling journals sprang up in large numbers, the most popular being *Cycling* which sold over 41 000 copies per week at the height of its popularity in 1896. Daily and weekly periodicals, society journals and women’s magazines provided space for cycle news (49). Guidebooks and cycling manuals were published in abundance, and cycling clubs were formed; Rubinstein estimates that London had about 300 cycling clubs in 1898 (50).<sup>90</sup> One of these was the first British cycling association particularly for women, the Lady Cyclists’ Association, set up in 1892 to provide rides, tours and social gatherings for lady cyclists, and also publishing a monthly journal (Gordon and Doughan 80). A. M. Thompson, of the *Clarion* press, writes in the October 1897 issue of the cycling journal *King of the Road*, regarding the bicycle craze of the 1890s:

The man of the day is the Cyclist. The press, the public, the pulpit, the faculty, all discuss him. They discuss his health, his feet, his shoes, his speed, his cap, his knickers, his handle-bars, his axle, his ball-bearings, his tyres, his rims, and everything that is his, down unto his shirt. He is the man of *Fin de Cycle* – I mean *Siècle*. (qtd. in Rubinstein 51)

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<sup>90</sup> The film short ‘Hyde Park Bicycling Scene’ (1896), by early filmmaker Robert W. Paul, depicts what appears to be Hyde Park’s main north-south road crowded with bicyclist swishing by the camera – at least half of them being female cyclists. This circa 20 seconds long film shows how this new transport and pastime, and perhaps the perceived spectacle of women cyclists, fascinated not only early filmmakers but also early audiences. There are several bicycle-themed film shorts produced in Britain around this time by the leading early film pioneers, many films also specifically figuring female cyclists. Another film from the same year is Esmé Collings’s ‘Bicycle Rider’ (1896). R. W. Paul, according to John Barnes the ‘founder of the British film industry’, was later joined by the companies of Cecil M. Hepworth and James Williamson as the leading British filmmakers of the time (8), and they all produced several bicycle-themed films. Some examples from Hepworth are ‘Ladies on Bicycles’ (1899), ‘Floral Parade of Lady Cyclists’ (1899), ‘Comic Costume Race for Cyclists’ (1899), ‘Egg and Spoon Race for Lady Cyclists’ (1899), ‘Military Cyclists’ Obstacle Handicap’ (1899), ‘One Mile Championship Bicycle Race’ (1899), ‘Victoria Cross Race by Military Cyclists’ (1899), ‘Cockade Fight on Cycles’ (1899), and ‘Cycle Polo Match’ (1899). Examples from Williamson include ‘Military Ride by a Lady Cyclist’ (1898), ‘Another of the Same / Lady Cyclists’ (1898), ‘Cycle Parade’ (1898), ‘Clever and Comic Cycle Act’ (1900), ‘Bicycle Polo’ (1901), ‘Cyclist Scouts in Action’ (1901), ‘A Lady’s First Lesson on the Bicycle’ (1902), ‘Professor Reddish Performs his Celebrated Bicycle Dive’ (1902), ‘The Rival Cyclists’ (1908). (Credits from the British Film Institute’s filmographic database via *BFI Screenonline: The Definitive Guide to Britain’s Film and TV History*. <http://www.screenonline.org.uk>) Even though most of these films have been destroyed, the sheer number of bicycle-related titles attests the popularity of the bicycle. See *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896-1930* (2002, ed. Andrew Higson) and Michael Chanan’s *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain* (1980/1996) for an introduction to early British cinema.

While the (male) cyclist was the focus of much discussion and publication in the 1890s, the question of the female cyclist was even more widely debated, both in popular and in medical press. Debates abounded not only regarding questions of female physical exercise, and in particular cycling, but also regarding female dress when practicing sports. Satirical verses and cartoons depicting the New Woman and her bicycle figured in periodicals such as *Punch* and *Blackwood's Magazine*.

Similarly to the way in which the New Woman debates have been read through a gynocritical lens, the debates on female cycling – if, how, and wearing what, a woman should cycle – have been considered by many scholars as a conflict between two opposite and gendered camps. A clear instance of this is Patricia Vertinsky who in *The Eternally Wounded Woman* (1994) formulates the debate as a two-way opposition between ‘male medical discourse’ and ‘women’s voices’. However, by reading both journalistic and medical press, and guidebooks on female cycling, from the time, we will see that while there did exist certain formations and constellations of opinion, the debates and discourses on female cycling were still (like those concerning the New Woman) multisided and complex. Reconnecting to Foucauldian discourse analysis (explored in the first chapter of this thesis) as a site in and through which power struggles are fought, these contemporary accounts regarding the bicycle make up a context for the novels and the intense debates in which they partake.

To understand why the issue of female cycling provoked so much debate in the 1890s, we need to consider the fear of ‘sexual anarchy’ at the *fin de siècle*; many saw the threat to the idea of Victorian gendered separate spheres as a collapse or reversal of sex roles (Richardson liv-lv). As we have seen in the previous chapter, the introduction of female typists in offices, working next to men and machines, was imagined to unsex women (Price and Thurschwell 5; Keep 402). Similar fears haunted the debates on women and the bicycle. Both male and female doctors either warned against or recommended this new pastime, and popular press ridiculed the supposed consequences for women cyclists (Marks 174-176).<sup>91</sup> The satiric verse

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<sup>91</sup> Although female doctors were still rare in the late nineteenth century, they did exist. From 1865 women in Britain were allowed to become doctors, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson being the first woman in the country to gain a medical qualification.

‘Sexomania’ by the signature ‘an Angry Old Buffer’, from an 1895 *Punch* magazine, articulates this fear:

‘WHEN ADAM delved and EVE span,  
 No one need ask which was the man.  
 Bicycling, footballing, scarce human,  
 All wonder now ‘Which is the woman?’  
 But a new fear my bosom vexes;  
 To-morrow there may be *no* sexes!  
 Unless, as end to end all the pother,  
 Each one in fact becomes the other.  
 E’en *then* perhaps they’ll start amain  
 A-trying to change back again!  
 Woman *was* woman, man *was* man,  
 When ADAM delved and EVE span.  
 Now he can’t dig and she won’t spin,  
 Unless ‘tis tales all slang and sin!  
 (‘Sexomania’ 203)

As this verse illustrates, the bicycle and other types of physical exercise (‘Bicycling, footballing, scarce human’) – like the typewriter – pose a threat to traditional notions of gender.<sup>92</sup> In the process of sex merging or even reversal imagined above, the woman and man finally ‘in fact become[s] the other’.

While debates flourished on whether women should ride, how and in what clothing, and with whom they should ride, the most threatening issue concerning cycling for women initially seemed to be the physical exercise. As Sarah Gordon comments in “‘Any Desired Length’: Negotiating Gender through Sports Clothing, 1870-1925’, the new physical culture of the late nineteenth century ‘infused and informed the emerging concept of the “New Woman”’ (25). Kathleen E. McCrone in *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of English Women, 1870-1914* indeed argues that sport was ‘an important site of feminist intervention, albeit indirectly’ (276). She claims that the emergence of women’s sport was tied to women’s entrance into higher education and universities – another characteristic of the Girton-educated New Woman – as it was in the public schools and Oxford/Cambridge women’s colleges that many first were able to participate in hockey, lacrosse, cricket, and more (21-99). ‘All forms of exercise’, writes Marks, ‘were forceable reminders that a woman’s body was her own to control ... Moving within the relative freedom of the

<sup>92</sup> Marks in *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers* offers a wide array of satirical figurations of ‘mannish’ or unsexed New Women similar to the one presented in ‘Sexomania’ (174-203).

gymnasium or playing field, or more independently wheeling down the road, however, she was responsible for her own health and well-being' (202). The bicycle and a specific sense of freedom, a control of one's own body, seem inextricably linked.

Willard in *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* notes the importance of the bicycle and physical exercise in questioning traditional gender formations:

The old fables, myths, and follies associated with the idea of woman's incompetence to handle bat and oar, bridle and rein, and at last the cross-bar of the bicycle, are passing into contempt in presence of the nimbleness, agility, and skill of 'that boy's sister'; indeed, we felt that if she continued to improve after the fashion of the last decade her physical achievements will be such that it will become the pride of many a ruddy youth to be known as 'that girl's brother.' (41)

In this quote Willard sees a future where a woman is no longer defined as wife/daughter/sister, and also acknowledges the importance of 'the last decade' in these questions. Willard remarks on the traditional 'fables, myths, and follies' that physical fitness was not considered appropriate for women. In addition to the threatening physical exercise, the bicycle offered geographic mobility as women were able to move – if only temporarily – outside the home. With this came a possibly immoral mixing of the sexes; women were able to travel unchaperoned on their bicycles, and there were stories of elopements by bicycle (Marks 200). Flora Thompson in *Lark Rise to Candleford* (1945), her semi-biographical trilogy on the modernisation of the English countryside, describes the considered 'unwomanly' potential of the bicycle in the late nineteenth century, and the possibilities for emancipation that it brought: 'If a man saw or heard of a woman riding he was horrified. "Unwomanly. Most unwomanly! God knows what the world is coming to," he would say; but ... the women suspended judgment. They saw possibilities which they were soon to seize' (492-493).

Following Willard's book, in 1896 when the safety bicycle was well-established and the bicycle craze was at its height, no less than three guidebooks for female cyclists were published in Britain: Lillias Campbell Davidson's *Handbook for Lady Cyclists*, F. J. Erskine's *Bicycling for Ladies*, and Mary E. Kennard's (usually published under the name Mrs. Edward Kennard) *A Guide Book for Lady Cyclists*, all sold at a shilling each. While the first two are practical and straightforward

guidebooks, Kennard's text has a more conversational tone, containing anecdotes from the author's life. Erskine includes illustrations of how to mount, ride, and dismount the bicycle, and the volume contains a detailed illustration (inside the front cover) of the parts of a safety bicycle.<sup>93</sup>

The safety bicycle in these handbooks becomes an almost prophetic sign of female emancipation, and also describes the spite that early female cyclists had to endure. Davidson, who had founded the Lady Cyclists' Association in 1892, comments on being a pioneer of the movement, and on the earlier fears – when women started cycling in the 1880s – that the bicycle might be 'unsexing' women: 'Cycling women were regarded with a kind of pious horror by society and by the public at large. It was openly said that a woman who mounted a bicycle hopelessly unsexed herself; she was stared at and remarked upon in town, and hooted and called after in country districts' (10). Cycling was then considered a 'masculine' and 'unwomanly' amusement (10).<sup>94</sup> Kennard, too, in *A Guide Book for Lady Cyclists* comments on the difficulty of being a pioneer in lady cycling, and the ideas of gender reversal that it involved: 'the few persons belonging to the feminine sex, who were bold enough to venture abroad on a wheel, were considered mannish and fast to a degree' (1). But by 1896, as Davidson remarks, the popular pastime is now the bicycle, and female cyclists abound: 'Fifteen years ago the women who cycled might have been counted by tens; to-day they number their tens of thousands – nay, hundreds of thousands. Day by day more of them join the ranks, till it is probable that before this century comes to an end those women who in civilised countries do

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<sup>93</sup> As Julie Wosk states in *Women and the Machine*, before the twentieth century men had been portrayed as strong and technically able, while women had been portrayed as frail or technologically incompetent. Women clearly existed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century industrial settings, but they were considered 'machine tenders', while men did the repairs (9). As Wosk explains, women were frequently denied training in technical skills, or their jobs were defined as unskilled and unmechanical. With the advent of the safety bicycle the number of women repairing their own machines had risen, with some of the lady cycling handbooks from the 1890s containing detailed instructions on operation and repair of bicycles (101, 111).

<sup>94</sup> Davidson, who was also the president of the Lady Cyclists' Association, had been cycling before the bicycle 'craze' of the 1890s (probably on a tricycle). Davison is also the author of the earlier *Hints to Lady Travellers: At Home and Abroad* (1889), in which she gives advice on both tricycling tours and travelling dress. She remarks upon the increased interest in women cycling: 'Tricycling has become so popular among women, and cycling tours such a feature of feminine travel, that a work of this sort would be incomplete without some reference to the subject' (35). In this earlier publication she sees fatigue and chill as the only dangers of cycling tours, and there is no mention of rational dress in connection to cycling.

not cycle will be altogether the exception' (2). Davidson, in a military language similar to that used by earlier typists and later suffragettes (as discussed in the previous chapter), expresses her hope that the matter in her guidebook will be of use to this 'ever-increasing army of women who cycle – an army which promises to become practically without limit in the coming years' (5). She even prophesies that '[t]he usual method of progression will no doubt be two wheels in the coming by and by', foreseeing a future when 'children will be taught to balance as naturally as they now are taught to dance, or even to walk' (2).

Even more than in these guidebooks by cyclists for cyclists, debates on female cycling were carried out in both the popular and the medical press. Medical journals such as *The Lancet* and *The British Medical Journal* debate the question of female physical exercise, displaying a multitude of views on the issue. Erskine in her 1896 guidebook refers the 'medical side of the question' of female bicycling to those better qualified to answer, but finds among them a plurality of opinions: 'On the one side there is, I think, almost exorbitant praise – other medical men award qualified or unstinted blame. Who is to decide when medical men cannot agree amongst themselves?' (14) This quote clearly speaks against any neat division between a dominant male medical discourse and an opposite camp of women's voices. Erskine however inserts an extract from a paper republished in the *Review of Reviews*, which strikes her as 'the most sensible conclusion that has yet been reached on the vexed question'. The extract claims that "there is reason not only to think, but to know, that many women are greatly benefited by the exercise" (14).<sup>95</sup> Erskine concludes, thus stating her position on the question, that '[s]o says Dr. Roosevelt, and his words are good words' (14-15).

The idea of sex reversal by physical exercise is prevalent in some of the medical discourse of the time, as well as in periodicals such as *Punch*. Sexologist

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<sup>95</sup> The extract in full: 'It has often been asserted that cycling is injurious to women. There is a little truth in the assertion. Paraphrasing one of Lincoln's sentences, I would modify it and say that cycling is harmful to *some* women *all* of the time, to *all* women *some* of the time, but not to *all* women *all* of the time. There is no reason to think that a healthy woman can be injured by using the wheel, *provided she does not over-exert herself by riding too long a time, or too fast, or up too steep hills, and provided she does not ride when common sense and physiology alike forbid any needless exertion, and provided also she does not get the bad habit of stooping over the handle-bar, and there is reason not only to think, but to know, that many women are greatly benefited by the exercise*' (qtd. in Erskine 14-15).

Edward Carpenter in 'The Intermediate Sex' (1894, later published in the 1906 collection *Love's Coming-of-Age*) considers the bicycle, and the New Woman's use of it, as one of the things having brought about if not sex reversal at least 'a *rapprochement* [sic] between the sexes' (114).<sup>96</sup> Cycling did – to some – seem to be threatening to 'unsex' women: not only might it cause the loss of the woman's reproductive abilities, but also of her feminine characteristics. Mental or nervous disorders were predicted (McGurn 100-101), and warnings were issued about getting a 'bicycle face' by moving against the wind at the bicycle's high speed (Kern 111; Kenealy 641 – 'the face of muscular tension'). Marks notes that just as in the record of complaints about women's education, careers, and clubs, 'gender transference was the root behind complaints about women's athleticism' (176). The same arguments were applied to athletics; both mental and physical exercise was argued to lie outside womanly functions (181).

The physician Arabella Keanealy argues that physical exercise detracts from feminine sensitivity. Already in 1890, in 'The Talent of Motherhood', Kenealy by a comparison between a physically and educated 'modern' woman and the more typical neurasthenic woman of the *fin de siècle*, debates which of the two types is best suited for motherhood. Kenealy comes to the conclusion that women's 'deliberate physical sensitiveness should not be blunted by extremes of exercise, their special intellectual and moral characteristics distorted and deformed by mental strain' (256). Clashing the discourse of eugenics and the discourse of fitness that mark the period, she claims that a physically active woman will bear sickly children. Kenealy in the 1899 'Woman as an Athlete' laments the present system 'which sets our mothers cycling all day and dancing all night and our grandmothers playing golf' (644). She here claims that it is 'the subordination and application of muscle-power to express idea, emotional, intellectual, or moral, which is man's especial forte' (638). The woman who exercises becomes brusque, her movements 'muscular and

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<sup>96</sup> Full quote: 'In late years (and since the arrival of the New Woman amongst us) many things in the relation of men and women to each other have altered, or at any rate become clearer. The growing sense of equality in habits and customs – university studies, art, music, politics, the bicycle, etc. – all these things have brought about a *rapprochement* between the sexes. If the modern woman is a little more masculine in some ways than her predecessor, the modern man (it is to be hoped), while by no means effeminate, is a little more sensitive in temperament and artistic feeling than the original John Bull' (Carpenter 114).



less womanly', and her voice becomes 'assertive' (640). She does not have time any more for nursing and helping others, as she 'is off bicycling upon her account' (640). Physical exercise, claims Kenealy, threatens to unsex the modern woman; that woman is 'debas[ing] her womanhood, in becoming a neuter' (645). In a reply to a critique of her article, Kenealy even states that by overexerting herself this modern woman is 'convert[ing] womanhood into mannishness by the artificial simulation of the masculine strain in her' ('Woman as an Athlete: A Rejoinder' 920).<sup>97</sup>

However, at the same time, as seen by Erskine's above quote, there were also many doctors who recommended female physical exercise. In December 1895 *The British Medical Journal* contains the piece 'Cycling for Women' as a reply to a correspondent asking if cycling is good for women. The journal, having requested opinions on the subject from 'several physicians likely to have good opportunities to furnish information on the subject' (1582-1583), presents replies from Dr. W. S. Playfair and Dr. Herman. Playfair claims to 'have never come across a single case, with one exception, in which I had the least reason to think that cycling had been in any way injurious' and that he does 'not see any reason why cycling should be hurtful, excluding, of course, falls and the like' (1583). In fact, he narrates having recommended cycling in several instances to young sickly girls, with 'very beneficial results' (1583). Herman states that while cycling is generally good for both men and women, he insists on ladies getting a saddle of proper height and shape, so as not to – by the friction caused – lead to 'bruising, even to excoriations, and short of this, in women of certain temperament, to other effects on the sexual system, which we need not particularise' (1583). Furthermore, E. B. Turner (F. R. C. S.) in an 1896 report on cycling also in *The British Medical Journal* states clearly that '[t]here is no reason whatever why any sound woman should not ride either a bicycle or a tricycle' (1399).

In this way, medical journals and periodical press from the time show that the *fin de siècle* debates regarding female physical exercise are not reducible to two gendered camps of dominant versus subversive discourse. Taking place

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<sup>97</sup> It is interesting that Kenealy, who here argues fervently against female physical exercise, in yet another article supports dress reform. She claims that extreme physical exercise and restricting clothing, by deforming the female body, is everything but 'womanly' ('The Curse of Corsets' 135). This is notable since physical exercise and dress reform usually are considered as going hand in hand.

simultaneously as the New Woman naming debate, the debates concerning female physical exercise and cycling might be seen as structured in a similar manner, as many-sided and complex.<sup>98</sup> As laid out in the introductory chapter of this thesis, through Foucault's notion of discourse as multisided, complex, and containing many voices, the debates can be examined without necessarily reducing them to a two-way dialogue. Foucault stresses the multiplicity of discourses: 'Discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other' ('Order' 67). There can exist 'different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy' (*Will* 102). This clearly goes against any reading of discourse as a debate of two stable and opposed sides. Keanealy's article is in fact met by a reply by Mrs. Ormiston Chant, who states that the modern woman cannot 'unsex herself by any phase of manner or custom' (754); indeed, '[n]othing can unsex short of death' (750). Chant, in opposition to Kenealy, rejoices that 'the bicycle, lawn tennis, hockey, golf, rowing, fencing, mountaineering, and a host of other pastimes enjoyed by the modern women' have taken the place of earlier disciplinary practices such as the backboard (used in Victorian schools to correct pupils' posture) (754). This reply is in turn met by another article by Kenealy. Evidently, late nineteenth-century discourses on cycling and physical exercise for women cannot be neatly divided into two gendered camps of opposition.

The issue of female dress is widely debated at this time in connection to female physical exercise, indeed there is a crucial link between women's participation in the bicycle 'boom' and the resurgence of the dress reform (or rational dress) movement at the end of the nineteenth century. All three 1896 guidebooks mentioned on female cycling include separate chapters on cycling dress, demonstrating the connection between the safety bicycle and dress reform. Davidson posits rational dress as 'certainly the first cause of the present popularity of cycling among women' (30). Willard in her guidebook sees dress reform as springing naturally from the introduction of the bicycle: 'If women ride they must, when riding, dress more rationally than they have been wont to do. If they do this many

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<sup>98</sup> See McCrone for a more extensive account of the medical debates on female physical exercise (192-215).

prejudices as to what they may be allowed to wear will melt away' (39). Cycling, according to Willard, proves the most effective way to promote reform in dress: 'An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory; and the graceful and becoming costume of woman on the bicycle will convince the world that has brushed aside the theories, no matter how well constructed, and the arguments, no matter how logical, of the dress-reformers' (39). I will return to this consideration of practice as well as theory, and the symbolic work performed by social practice.

The 'boom' of female cyclists thus spurred, in fact was inextricably linked with, the return of the dress reform movement. Popular figurations of the New Woman in publications such as *Punch* indeed most often star the female cyclist in full rational dress, including knickerbockers. The Rational Dress Society (from which later sprung the Rational Dress Association) came into existence in London in 1881, with F. W. Harberton as president and Emily M. King as secretary. Despite the earlier interest in dress reform it was not until the 1880s that rational dress and a trouser-like alternative to skirts regained public notice. Importantly, as in Willard's above quote on the 'graceful and becoming' costume of the female cyclist (39), the Rational Dress Association also place '[g]race and beauty' as one of their 'Requirements of a Perfect Dress' next to freedom of movement (*Exhibition 2*).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The object of the society is stated in every issue of their *Gazette*, which was published quarterly between April 1888 and July 1889: 'to promote the adoption, according to individual taste and convenience, of a style of dress based upon considerations of health, comfort, and beauty, and to deprecate constant changes of fashion that cannot be recommended on any of these grounds' (*Rational Dress Society's Gazette*, no.1, April 1888, p.1).

Even before the advent of the safety bicycle, cycling and dress reform were connected: the exhibition catalogue from The Rational Dress Association's show in Princes Hall, Piccadilly, in 1883, showcases several 'tricycle' dresses or outfits. The catalogue also sports illustrations and descriptions of, among other creations, cricket and lawn-tennis outfits. The catalogue gives information about the Rational Dress Association, and also its 'Requirements of a Perfect Dress', which are:

1. Freedom of movement.
2. Absence of pressure over any part of the body.
3. Not more weight than is necessary for warmth, and both weight and warmth evenly distributed.
4. Grace and beauty combined with comfort and convenience.
5. Not departing too conspicuously from the ordinary dress of the time. (2)

See also Ada S. Ballin's illustrated *The Science of Dress in Theory and Practice* from 1885 (revised and published in 1893 as *Health & Beauty in Dress, From Infancy to Old Age*). Ballin, lecturer to the National Health Society, was one of the few women to publish a book on the subject of dress reform in England (Cunningham 94). In *The Science of Dress*, Ballin discusses proper attire for women while engaged in sports, and also the subject of dress in relation to health in general.

See also the Pickering & Chatto publication *Clothing, Society and Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (general editor Clare Rose, volume editors Clare Rose and Vivienne Richmond, 3

While the dress reform movement had been marginalised since its beginnings in the 1840s and 1850s, the physicality of newly popular sports – such as cycling – toward the end of the nineteenth century gave it a new impetus, demanding ‘a genre of costume that would challenge prevailing ideas of decorum and women’s fragility’ (Gordon 24). Gordon sees sports and physical exercise as an opportunity for dress reform: ‘[C]lothing for sports engaged a wide variety of women in a discussion about their relationship with their garments. At a time when mainstream women rarely challenged fashion’s dictates, the novelty of sports offered an opportunity to rethink women’s clothing’ (25).

We see this intricate connection between physical exercise and dress in the 1907 piece ‘Dress Reform’ in *The British Medical Journal*, which comments on the enormous changes in ‘the machinery of a woman’s dressing arrangements’ that the last decade’s increased interest in women’s sports had involved:

A few years ago the case against corsets was no doubt a very strong one, but the modern hockey girl and her analogues, the young women of active habits if not athletic tastes, have of their own accord done much to abolish its old-time evils. We have never seen more than a decade of this class of young woman, and as she has grown up, dressmakers and corset makers together have been obliged to provide her with the sort of attire which she is prepared to wear. (‘Dress Reform’ 543)

In this quote, the *fin de siècle* is marked as the specific period of this sporting ‘class of young woman’, who by her ‘active habits’ has revolutionised female dress.

Perhaps even more than the safety bicycle, or in its connection with it, the wearing of rational dress is taken up as an emblem of female emancipation. While female bicycling after some years had been more widely accepted, rational dress was still considered controversial. Philip Gordon Mackintosh and Glen Norcliffe claim that as the safety bicycle was gendered female (after a decade of men using the high-wheeler), it was domesticated – and possibly made harmless (154).<sup>100</sup> But women in rational dress or ‘bicycle suits’ were still often ridiculed (Kennard, *Guide* 45-46). According to the 1898 handbook *Cycling*, nearly all female cyclist still used

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vol., 2010), linking the *fin de siècle* dress reform movement with the 1850s Pre-Raphaelite or Artistic dress and the 1880s Aesthetic dress.

<sup>100</sup> See also Garvey’s description on ways for manufacturers to neutralise the threat that women’s riding posed to gender definition; for example by differentiating models of bicycles for men and women, or by advertising that linked bicycles with codes of femininity (69).

traditional clothes – or at least not knickerbockers. *Cycling* contains a particular chapter on ‘Cycling for Ladies’, in which is stated that ‘a skirt is used ... [by] fully 99 per cent of our lady cyclists’ (72). In the 1890s, most horsewomen, female cyclists, golfers, rowers and other women exercising sports continued wearing big and heavy skirts (Cunnington and Mansfield 358). In this way, rational dress might be considered a more threatening technology than the bicycle itself – or as a more threatening sign of it.

Emily M. King, by this time honorary secretary of The Rational Dress Association, in *Rational Dress; or, The Dress of Women and Savages* (1882), sees fashion and the question of dress as epitomising questions of equality at the *fin de siècle*: ‘In these days the question of the equality of men and women is often discussed, being warmly claimed on one side, and as warmly denied on the other. To me there is no greater proof of the present inferiority [i.e. inequality] of women to men than the way in which women clothe themselves’ (3). ‘Not only’, she writes, ‘is this barbarous mode of dress a sign of inferiority, but it is also a cause of it’ (4). King’s notion of dress as not only a sign but also a cause of oppression can fruitfully be compared to the discussion regarding the New Woman cyclist, in which the bicycle *becomes* an emblem of emancipation. Here the technology of clothing – or rather, restricting clothing – becomes a ‘sign’ (in King’s words) or emblem of inequality, and also a cause of it. The freedom of movement aimed at through dress reform comes to signify or represent a quest for gender equality on a larger scale. As in Willard’s above quote, an ‘ounce of practice’ is just as important as a ‘ton of theory’ (39).

As we will see, literary texts partake in these debates regarding the female bicyclists and their dress; they work as social and cultural agents. However, before considering the ways in which novels and other literary works intervene in the intense debates regarding female bicycling, through figurations of the New Woman cyclist, I will attempt to formulate more clearly how the symbolic and material sides of the bicycle come together in the semi-fictional figure of the New Woman, how theory and practice are linked in transforming the safety bicycle into a symbol of emancipation.

### 3.2 Cycling and Rational Dress as Embodied Practice

As I have argued in the previous two chapters, the New Woman is to be considered as taking shape simultaneously as a textual concept and as a set of social practices. Rubinstein's above quote on the bicycle as being not merely a means of transport but 'a symbol of emancipation' (47) highlights this duality in figurations of the New Woman cyclist; as discursive concept and as social practice. In the case of the bicycle, the interaction of theory and practice was noted at the time: Willard, claiming cycling as the most effective way to promote reform in dress, states that '[a]n ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory' (39). Only when supported by female cycling as actual social practice, will the ideas (theories) on dress reform be understood. As I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, discourse is both constitutive and constituted; in Jørgensen and Phillips's words 'discourse is a form of social practice which both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices' (61). This section will examine how this dialectical relation of discourse and practice is formulated in the case of the safety bicycle and the wearing of rational dress. As Bijker states in *Of Bicycles, Bakelites and Bulbs*, '[a]lthough it later became an instrument for women's emancipation, the first cycles [tricycles and high-wheelers] in fact reinforced the existing "gender order"' (2). How can a technology or a social practice which in itself has no emancipatory or progressive value, thus attain political and cultural significance?

Rita Felski in *The Gender of Modernity* claims the importance of symbolic political practices such as 'language, imagery, clothing, gesture, and ritual in the maintenance and transformation of social relations' (150). Such practices, Felski writes, 'may play an integral part in the formation of political consciousness; rather than simply expressing an already constituted sphere of "real politics" grounded in the economy of the state, they may themselves operate as instruments of transformation, ways of reconstituting the social and political world' (150). In other words, social practices such as bicycling or wearing rational dress may take on symbolic and political meanings, thus operating as 'instruments of transformation' in

reconstituting society.<sup>101</sup> Wendy Parkins in *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship* uses this idea as a grounding assumption to argue the political significance that can be assigned to an item of clothing. Parkins views practices of dress and fashion ‘not simply as reflecting social and political change, but rather [and here she quotes Joanne Entwistle], understood as practices that are “always and everywhere *situated* within a society and a culture”’ (2). Dress is seen as a kind of ‘embodied practice’, working at the limits of discourse.<sup>102</sup> Practice and theory, in Willard’s terms, here come together.

Gordon’s claim that the new physical culture of the 1890s ‘infused and informed the emerging concept of the “New Woman”’ (25) can now be considered in a new light. Gordon argues that ‘the novelty and marginality of clothing for sports provided a space in which women contested notions of “feminine” and “appropriate” bodies, behavior, and appearances’ (24). Clothing, she argues, provides ‘a place to negotiate, both verbally and through images’, different ideas of womanliness: ‘At a time when sports posed a challenge to notions of womanhood, clothing for sports both smoothed and exacerbated the paradox of “sporting women.” Throughout this period, the clothing worn for sports displayed what can be seen as a social ambivalence over changing gender ideals’ (47). Indeed, Gordon states, the *process* through which the clothes were invented and popularised helped to rethink what it was to be feminine: ‘At a time of significant gender flux, the tension between traditional female roles and bodies and modern ideas of womanhood was created, negotiated, and at least partially resolved through the discussion and appearance of clothing’ (47). Social practice is here, as Felski argues, taking on a wider significance; female physical exercise, dress reform, and political demands go hand in hand.

Textual and visual figurations linked with this idea of symbolic or ‘embodied’ practice make up a discursive space in which to negotiate, or rework,

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<sup>101</sup> Feminists have since long known that politics signifies more than parliamentary action; the personal is political. As Jonathan Dean states in *Rethinking Contemporary Politics*, ‘politics is not an activity confined to specific types of spaces or institutions, but is, rather, a mode of action, unpredictable and impossible to fully master or domesticate’ (1, cf. 171-172).

<sup>102</sup> See Joanne Entwistle, ‘Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice’, *Fashion Theory* 4.3 (2000): 323-348. Parkins’s quote is from Entwistle’s *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 80.

established notions of gender – and also to assign the bicycle a political status. While the technology of the bicycle offers a concrete physical mobility, it also works as a more abstract image of democratisation and emancipation. Indeed, for much mainstream press, ‘cycling and rational dress provided visual emblems of the social, sexual and political disquiet caused by women’s demand for equality’ (Richardson and Willis 24). The bicycle could be read as merely a means of transportation, as increasing geographical mobility, but through its linking to the New Woman it comes to signify much more. This is shown in the earlier quoted Stutfield’s condemnation of the woman writer as a ‘literary bicyclist’ in knickerbockers, where the bicycle stands for the New Woman’s emancipatory politics rather than simply geographical mobility. By functioning as a visual emblem of female emancipation, figurations of the New Woman cyclist – also satirical ones – might work as part of that same cause. Through figurations of ‘modern’ women cycling in rational dress, the bicycle and the technology of clothing take on a wider significance.

Felski’s notion of symbolic political practice helps to unravel King’s statement in *Rational Dress* that contemporary restrictive clothing not only is ‘a sign of inferiority, but it is also a cause of it’ (4). For King, the way in which women clothe themselves is the ‘greatest proof’ of the inequality between men and women (4). The ‘machinery of a woman’s dressing arrangements’ lamented in the article ‘Dress Reform’ becomes simultaneously a visual emblem of gender inequality and the cause of it. In opposition to restrictive clothing, the bicycle and rational dress become emblems of emancipation. The freedom of movement aimed at through dress reform becomes also a quest for gender equality on a larger scale.

The safety bicycle and the rational dress movement can be seen as such ‘embodied’ or always socially situated practices. Social practices such as these, as Parkins argues, do not simply *reflect* social and political change, but rather they are *situated within* a society. Implicit in Felski’s, Parkins’s, and Gordon’s argument are Foucauldian notions of power and discourse not as suprastructural, but as ‘rooted deep in the social nexus’ (Foucault, ‘Subject’ 343), through the people who make up that discourse and who enact these power relations. Social practice (and its dialectical constitution of discourse) is literally ‘embodied’ in these agents. As I have argued in the previous two chapters of this thesis, a Foucauldian account of power



relations as mobile, and discourse as something which can be reworked as well as reinforced, allow for a potential for change, counteracting historically naïve and theoretically unsound arguments for technological determinism. Such an understanding is crucial for a reading of the New Woman cyclist as a proto- and early feminist figure. The very body that ‘embodies’ symbolic political practices should not be considered merely a passive subject in this process; the body of the New Woman or female cyclist is not simply being ‘inscribed’ by discourse.

However, as we have seen in the second chapter of this thesis, despite the prerequisite of a notion of agency in a feminist analysis, certain feminist and literary critics have read the body as a docile inscriptive surface, also in relation to social practices. In opposition to Gordon, who in the above quote defines social practices such as clothing and female physical exercise (for example bicycling) to be spaces in which to ‘negotiate, both verbally and through images’ different ideas of femininity (47), Sandra Lee Bartky in ‘Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power’ claims that such practices are simply made up of certain patriarchal disciplinary techniques. Building on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Bartky considers these gendered techniques as creating a ‘technology of femininity’; a disciplinary power that ‘inscribes femininity in the female body’ (74). She divides these practices into three categories: those that aim to produce a body of a certain size and configuration; those that bring forth specific gestures, postures, movements; and those directed toward the display of the body as an ornamented surface (95). Bartky claims that these practices all discipline and confine women, producing a “‘practiced and subjected” body, i.e., a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed’ (100). Furthermore, these disciplines that ‘construct a “feminine” body out of a female one’, Bartky argues, ‘are by no means race- or class-specific’ but shared by all women (101). Incorporating universalising psychoanalytic concepts, she instead claims that in modern society ‘a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman [sic] lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other’ (101). To Bartky, there seems to exist a kind of surveying phallogocentric Panoptikon inscribed upon and internalised in the bodies and minds of all women.

To a certain point, Bartky's discussion may highlight specific examples of gendered practices in the late twentieth century, and the reprimand received by persons of both genders who threaten established notions of gender. As we have seen in the debates regarding the female cyclist, and also in the discussions in the previous chapter regarding the sexing/unsexing of the female typist in office spaces, there are indeed many historically and socially situated discourses (norms, rules, prohibitions) regarding notions of gender. However, Bartky's argument implicates a major twofold problematic: while giving examples of certain gendered practices regarding mobility, Bartky ignores any account of individual agency, and also the historiospecificity of the practices that she describes (for example bodily movements, the wearing of make-up, dieting). I will briefly develop this problematic.

Firstly, Bartky fails to see that while the body is always in a political field, it is not a mere passive object.<sup>103</sup> Foucault indeed writes in *Discipline and Punish* that the body is 'directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (25). But then, this hold upon the body is to be conceived 'not as a property, but as a strategy': 'its effects of domination are attributed not to "appropriation", but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess' (26). For Bartky, the subject and the body are inscribed upon by an external force – this is a reductive reading of Foucault, in whose writings the body is always present as an integral *part of* power relations, a prerequisite for any notion of political struggle or change (and thus for any feminist reading of a text).

Secondly, Bartky's reading ignores the historical specificity of the practices that she describes. By so doing, she formulates an untenable notion of gender or sexual difference that can be applied universally and cross-culturally. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty states in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, while evidently there are varying balances of power relations throughout world history, socioeconomic and cultural conditions which we need to consider, there is 'no universal patriarchal framework ... unless one posits an

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<sup>103</sup> This is a common misreading of Foucault; see discussions in the previous two chapters.

international male conspiracy or monolithic, ahistorical power structure' (20). As I hope to have demonstrated in reading the diverse debates regarding the female cyclist, and will continue to argue through a reading of literary works, such a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of male dominance is historically naïve. Furthermore, such simplistic binary formulations of men and women as oppressors-oppressed are ineffectual in designing strategies to combat these same power relations, since they are simultaneously reifying them.

In the case of the female bicyclist, the body is indeed employed to produce signs or is ascribed symbolic meanings – but it also plays a part in constructing discourse. Social practices do not simply *reflect* but also embody social and political change. Thus, the New Woman cyclist is not merely a figuration 'appropriated' by discourse, reflective of disciplinary power – but the figure is formulated both in and through medical, journalistic, and literary discourses as well as social practice. With this theoretical framework, I will now turn to literary figurations of the New Woman cyclist, in order to more fully examine the processes through which the bicycle takes on a certain political and cultural significance. Literary figurations of the New Woman cyclist are major spaces through, and in which, the New Woman is formulated, and in which the bicycle and rational dress are employed as tropes of emancipation. However, as we will see, literary texts can complicate the notion of the bicycle as a 'freedom machine' or emblem of democratisation.

### **3.3 The New Woman Cyclist in Fiction**

Just as the New Woman cyclist is a recurrent figure in the periodical press of the *fin de siècle*, there is an abundance of New Woman cyclists in fiction of the time. As Chris Willis points out, popular fiction of the time often uses the figure of the female cyclist as a paradigm of the New Woman: 'If a character makes her first appearance on a bicycle, it is almost inevitable that she will turn out to be single and well-educated, with strong views on women's rights' ('Heaven' 53). Although often employed simply as an indicator of a character's politics, the bicycle also plays a central part in the narratives of several *fin de siècle* stories and novels, not only in

canonical New Woman fiction but also in commercial fiction of the period, often complicating the notion of the bicycle as a technology of democratisation.<sup>104</sup>

In A. C. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story 'The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist' (1903) the female cyclist is pictured as a danger to the prevalent patriarchal order. Published in *The Strand Magazine* in January 1904, the story is set in 1895, at the height of the bicycle 'craze'. Watson describes 'Miss Violet Smith, the solitary cyclist of Charlington' (3) as young and beautiful. Holmes, having 'observed the slight roughening of the side of the sole caused by the friction of the edge of the pedal' immediately discerns that she is an ardent bicyclist (3).<sup>105</sup> She seeks Holmes's advice because she is being followed by a strange man on a bicycle when she cycles to and from the train station. It later turns out that the man following Violet is in fact her employer, disguised, who has fallen in love with her and thus disapproves of her cycling unaccompanied. Violet's independence in going cycling on her own proves perilous, when she is abducted to be forced into a marriage with a rival of her employer. Arriving slightly too late, Holmes and Watson manage to stop this restraint of the New Woman cyclist's freedom, by proving the already realised ceremony to be illegitimate. While the bicycle in this story is employed as a trope of emancipation, it also offers an implicit warning to the New Woman cyclist – the frightened Violet will probably not go cycling on her own again soon.

While Conan Doyle's female cyclist narrowly escapes forced matrimony, the protagonist of Mary E. Kennard's *The Golf Lunatic and His Cycling Wife* (1902) uses the bicycle to escape temporarily her unhappy marriage. Kennard, author of the aforementioned guide book for lady cyclists and of various 'sporting novels' and stories that thematise female physical exercise, across her literary career employed various contemporary technologies to construct her stories, moving from horse-

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<sup>104</sup> Female cyclists appear in canonical New Woman works including George Egerton's short story 'Her Share' (1894), Alice Meynell's 'A Woman in Grey' (1896), Kate Chopin's 'The Unexpected' (1895), and Willa Cather's 'Tommy, the Unsentimental' (1896). The main character in Emily Morse Symonds's [writing as George Paston] *A Writer of Books* (1899) does learn to ride a bicycle when enjoying a 'new and delightful sense of freedom' away from her husband (205), but rather than the bicycle it is here the London omnibus that plays a central role in the narrative. These works are just some examples; the list goes on, even more so when regarding popular and mass magazine fiction (see for example Garvey).

<sup>105</sup> Note that Holmes almost mistakes Violet Smith for a typist, but after a closer examination of her hands he understands that she is a musician. The bicycle and the typewriter are the main technologies associated with the New Woman, so this might initially seem an obvious Holmesian deduction.

riding to cycling and motor-riding.<sup>106</sup> In *The Golf Lunatic and His Cycling Wife* the protagonist narrator Cynthia Jenningham clearly experiences the bicycle as a kind of ‘freedom machine’ for women:

What a field of new experiences the cycle opened up to modern womanhood! It freed her from a multitude of conventional shackles. She could wander at her will, go where she listed, stay where she elected; dependent on no man, no horse, no carriage, but solely on the clever bit of mechanism constructed by the ingenuity of human brains and hands. She owed them a debt of thanks, for nowadays she could fancy herself a beggar or a queen according to her proclivities. (63)

The bicycle is presented as breaking down boundaries of both class and gender, providing not only geographical mobility but a movement between being ‘a beggar or a queen’. While on a cycling tour with her friend Dora, Cynthia expresses her gratefulness to the ‘little wheel’, even calling the bicycle a ‘deliverer of the female sex’ (211). The freedom of the cycling adventures can only be temporary, however, as Cynthia always faithfully returns home, resigned to her unsatisfactory matrimonial life.

George Gissing’s short story ‘A Daughter of the Lodge’ (1900) examines the complications of class and the female cyclist. Kathleen E. McCrone argues that bicycling reached ‘all sorts of women’: ‘While only a few could play hockey, tennis or golf, almost all women could ride. Unlike other women’s sports, which were class specific and effected gradual reform, cycling transcended class barriers and brought about revolutionary changes in social behaviour and perception’ (184). Gissing’s story, however, complicates this notion. The daughter of the lodge is Miss May Rockett, a self-supporting young secretary with progressive views but without the means to buy a bicycle. The Rocketts inhabit the lodge of Brent Hall, which is the residence of a baronet’s family. The baronet’s daughter Miss Shale sports both a bicycle and an expensive cycling costume, and can – unlike May – take her independence for granted. Miss Shale cycles the countryside, and argues for women’s rights, but always demands to have the gates of the Hall opened for her by

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<sup>106</sup> Examples are *The Girl in the Brown Habit: A Sporting Novel* (1886) and *A Professional Rider* (1903), which both treat a young woman horse-rider. The collection *Sporting Tales* (1893) contains stories on horse-riding, staghounds, salmon-fishing in Norway, and more. See Wintle for a more extensive discussion of Kennard’s use of transport and technology (‘Horses, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move’).

her subjects the Rocketts when returning home. At a progressive meeting where they are both present (Miss Shale having arrived by bicycle, ‘as was declared by the short skirt, easy jacket and brown shoes, which well displayed her athletic person’ (269)), the baronet’s daughter ironically laments that not everyone can afford to bicycle, hinting at (or to) the daughter of the lodge: “‘It’s a pity the machines can’t be sold cheaper. A great many people who would like to cycle don’t feel able to afford it, you know’” (269). After May refuses to open the gates for Miss Shale when the latter returns home, the Rockett family are turned out of the lodge and are forgiven only after May’s forced apologies to her. Gissing’s story thus complicates any straight-forward reading of the bicycle as a tool of democratisation, by asserting that ‘all sorts of women’ could not enjoy one. While the safety bicycle provided opportunities for people of lesser means, these opportunities were conditioned by restrictions.<sup>107</sup>

Having briefly presented some examples of literary New Woman cyclists, I will examine two novels in closer detail, novels which provide a more detailed consideration of the ways in which the New Woman and the bicycle are connected. H. G. Wells and Grant Allen in these novels examine the bicycle as a sign of modernity and of emancipation, providing different aspects of the cycling craze and of the New Woman cyclist; employing the figure of the New Woman cyclist in different ways. Both novels complicate any reading of the bicycle as an inherently progressive technology. Wells’s *The Wheels of Chance* displays the class specifics of that female emancipation associated with the bicycle, while in Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures* the hyperbolic figuration of the New Woman is employed for commercial purposes.

### **H. G. Wells, Grant Allen, and the Bicycle**

H. G. Wells (1866-1946), like his contemporary Grant Allen, has a particular place in late nineteenth-century literary culture. While he is most celebrated as the

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<sup>107</sup> Gissing has two other short stories that thematise female physical exercise: ‘The Schoolmaster’s Vision’ and ‘Fleet-footed Hester’ (collected in Gissing’s *A Victim of Circumstances and Other Stories* from 1927). As a note, Gissing himself around this time was convinced, by his friend and cycling aficionado H. G. Wells, to try the bicycle. The incident is recorded by Wells in his *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), which describes how Gissing ‘mounted, wobbled a few yards, and fell off shrieking with laughter. “Ironmongery!” he gasped. “Riding on ironmongery!” and lay in the grass at the roadside, helpless with mirth’ (568).

inventor of the ‘scientific romance’, which Patrick Parrinder describes as ‘a combination of adventure novel and philosophical tale in which the hero becomes involved in a life-and-death struggle resulting from some unforeseen scientific development’ (ix), Wells wrote all kinds of fiction and non-fiction. Patricia Stubbs in *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1900* indeed sees Wells as a prime example of the *fin de siècle* writer of popular fiction, ‘its most typical novelist’ producing a ‘flamboyant amalgam of fiction, prophesy, science-fiction and utopian day-dreaming’, and of the social mobility possible for such a person (179). Despite his working-class background he was able to work his way into the literary market. Rosalind Miles, regarding the advent of many young women writers in the twentieth century, in fact refers to this social and intellectual mobility as the ‘H. G. Wells Syndrome’ (89). Also like Allen, Wells was a scientific writer and a committed socialist. According to Wells, Allen ‘had an earlier infection of that same ferment of biology and socialism that was working in my blood. He wanted not merely to enjoy life but to do something to it. Social injustice and sexual limitation bothered his mind, and he was critical of current ideas and accepted opinions’ (*Experiment* 546-547).<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Wells in his writings embraced the bicycle as a potential tool of both technological modernisation and democratisation.<sup>109</sup>

In fact, Wells in several of his works uses both imagery involving and direct references to cycling; the bicycle is recurrently employed as a metaphor for social relations and technological progress. A well-known bicycle novel is *The History of*

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<sup>108</sup> Wells in fact reviewed Allen’s New Woman novel *The Woman Who Did* (in *Saturday Review* 9 March 1895). Wells includes this review in *Experiment in Autobiography* together with an account of their friendship (546-552). For a further exploration of the relationship between the two, see Patrick Parrinder’s ‘The Old Man and His Ghost: Grant Allen, H. G. Wells, and Popular Anthropology’ (in *Grant Allen: Literature and Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Greenslade and Rodgers, pp. 171-184). David Y. Hughes in ‘A Queer Notion of Grant Allen’s’ sees Allen as a major influence on Wells, also noting that *The Time Machine* mentions Allen by name (in *Science Fiction Studies*, 25.2 (July 1998): 271-284).

<sup>109</sup> Wells himself learned to ride the bicycle in the mid-1890s when living in Woking. Wells claims the bicycle as ‘the swiftest thing upon the roads in those days’, since ‘there were as yet no automobiles and the cyclist had a lordliness, a sense of masterful adventure, that has gone from him altogether now’ (*Experiment* 543). He writes: ‘I learnt to ride my bicycle upon sandy tracks with none but God to help me; he chastened me considerably in the process, and after a fall one day I wrote down a description of the state of my legs which became the opening chapter of the *Wheels of Chance*. I rode wherever Mr. Hoopdrive [sic] rode in the story’ (*Experiment* 543). It was also in Woking that Wells planned and wrote *The War of the Worlds*, *The Wheels of Chance*, and *The Invisible Man* – he even ‘wheeled about the district marking down suitable place and people for destruction by my Martians’ (*Experiment* 543). Wells includes some of his ‘picshuas’ – his private, often humorous, cartoons – along with the text, of him and his wife on bicycles (544).

*Mr. Polly* (1910) in which the bicycle is the dearest of Polly's belongings. The book's hero meets the love of his life when out riding, and she asks of Polly why he is riding about the country on a bicycle. He replies simply: "I'm doing it because I like it" (90). Throughout the novel, the most important events of Mr. Polly's life take place when he is out on his beloved bicycle which momentarily lets him escape the ordinary life. The autobiographical sketches *Select Conversations with an Uncle (Now Extinct) and Two Other Reminiscences* (1895) contains a chapter called 'On a Tricycle', in which the uncle rides a tricycle, complaining about the stress and speed of the bicycle. The uncle also expresses his disparaging views of female bicyclists, considering the exercise unfitting to them.<sup>110</sup> In *War of the Worlds* (1898) there are heaps of bicycles on the side of the road after the Martians begin their attacks, possibly as a symbol of the destruction of civilisation. In *The First Men in the Moon* (1901) moon-walking is compared to learning to ride a bicycle. Wells in *Anticipations; of the Reaction of Mechanical and Scientific Progress Upon Human Life and Thought* (1901) proposes including cycles as infantry in the army, as a third option to horse and foot – this idea appears several times, and is fictionalised in the short story 'The Land Ironclads' (first published in the December 1903 issue of *The Strand Magazine*). In *A Modern Utopia* (1905) Wells famously writes, regarding freedom of movement in Utopia, that '[c]ycle tracks will abound in Utopia, sometimes following beside the great high roads, but oftener taking their own more agreeable line amidst woods and crops and pastures; and there will be a rich variety of footpaths and minor ways' (38). The novel *The War in the Air* (1908) is full of bicycles; the main character Bert cycles, as do several women and men in his company – and the bicycle plays a prominent role in the narrative. *The New*

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<sup>110</sup> The uncle states: 'A woman in a hurry is one of the most painful sights in the world, for exertion does not become a woman as it does a man. ... She has, in the first place, a considerable length of hair, and she does it up into rich and beautiful shapes with things called hairpins and with curling irons. Very few people have hair that curls naturally, George. ... Well, when a woman rides about, exerting herself violently to keep a bicycle going, her hair gets damp and the pleasing curls lose their curliness and become wet, straggling bands of hair plastered over her venous forehead. And a tragic anxiety is manifest, an expression painful for a man to meet. Also her hairpins come out and fall on the road to wait for pneumatic tires, and her hair is no longer rich and beautiful in form. Then she gets dirty, horribly dirty, as though she had been used to sweep the roads with. And her skirts have to be weirdly altered, even to the divided skirt, so that when she rides she looks like a short, squat little man. She not only loses her beauty but her dignity. Now, for my own part, I think a man wants a woman to worship – it is a man's point of view, of course, but I can't help my sex – and the worshipping of these zouaves is incredible. She is nothing more than a shorter, fuller, and feebler man. Heaven help her!' (*Select* 72-74)



*Machiavelli* (1911) hosts several cycling and exercising women; the Baileys, and the politically active Isabel who flies by on her bicycle, from committee room to doorstep conversations with dubious voters, and – ‘unwomanly’ enough – at one point climbs a tree. *The Research Magnificent* (1915) contains both women and men, of different social context, on bicycles and motor-cycles. In *Mr. Britling Sees it Through* (1916) the main character and his sons travel around on their bicycles, as does the telegraph girl included in the narrative. As we can see, Wells’s fiction presents not only the general democratic potential of the bicycle, but its widespread attraction to people of all sorts.

Alongside Mr. Polly, Wells’s most famous bicyclist is the heroine of the ‘discussion novel’ or New Woman novel *Ann Veronica* (1909), ‘probably the best-known portrait of the New Woman’ in the last years before the First World War (Scanlon 133).<sup>111</sup> After the publication of *Ann Veronica*, Wells states, ‘things were never quite the same in the world of popular English fiction’; young New Woman heroines such as Ann Veronica ‘increased and multiplied not only in novels but in real life’ (*Experiments* 472). The novel, by producing an image of a young New Woman, thus spurred ‘real life’ versions of her. In this novel, describing the life and feminist rebellion of science student Ann Veronica, the bicycle is recalled as a sign of emancipation. Ann Veronica’s father is shocked when she demands more liberties:

‘I want to be a human being; I want to learn about things and know about things, and not to be protected as something too precious for life, cooped up in one narrow little corner.’

‘Cooped up!’ he cried. ‘Did I stand in the way of your going to college? Have I ever prevented you going about at any reasonable hour? You’ve got a bicycle!’ (22)

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<sup>111</sup> Wells has several ‘discussion novels’, or ‘topical fiction’, on politics and actualities of the day, works which Stubbs calls part of a ‘literature of ideas – of commitment, argument and dissent’ (180). Parrinder considers *Ann Veronica* as such ‘an example of topical, controversial fiction, dramatizing and commenting on such issues as women’s rights, sexual equality and contemporary morals’, the first of Wells’s “discussion novels” in which his personal relationships were often very thinly disguised’ (xi).

Wells’s at the time controversial views on sexuality and women’s rights are formulated in novels such as *Ann Veronica* (1909) and *The New Machiavelli* (1911). These ‘writings about sex’, Wells states, ‘had their function in their time’ but are not long-lasting. He humbly adds that while these novels ‘helped to release a generation from restriction ... that is about all they achieved. Aesthetically they have no great value. No one will ever read them for delight’ (*Experiments* 467). In an earlier essay Wells proposes the novel as ‘the social mediator, the vehicle of understanding, the instrument of self-examination’ in which the novelist will ‘not teach but discuss, point out, plead, and play’ (‘Contemporary’ 203-204). Wells’s ‘discussion novels’ are thus placed as part of the ‘novel with a purpose’ genre, into which some of Allen’s books were sorted.

To Ann Veronica's father, the bicycle must be the epitome of freedom for a young woman. Ann Veronica later comments on the restricting female dress of the time, claiming it as a metaphor for the restricted life that she is forced to lead: "Have you ever tried to run and jump in petticoats, Mr. Capes? Well, think what it must be to live in them – soul and mind and body!" (157). This can be juxtaposed with King's statement in *Rational Dress* that clothing can be seen as a direct measure of the equality in society – for Ann Veronica this holds true. Freedom of movement in both body and mind correspond, the freedom of movement becoming simultaneously a trope for and the cause of a larger social freedom.

Like Allen, Wells has not been widely appreciated among feminist literary scholars, but his works have been read with gynocritical assumptions. Notwithstanding his at the time controversial writings on sexuality and women's rights, formulated in novels such as the aforementioned *Ann Veronica* and *The New Machiavelli*, he is usually seen as placing his socialist ideas before the rights of women. Stubbs claims that despite Wells's interest in issues of equality and feminism, and his incorporation (rare for the time) of sex questions into his socialism, feminism is still 'running second best to eugenics and the needs of the state' (189). Stubbs expresses it thus:

There are so many limitations to Wells's feminism, so many specious arguments and so much sexual self-interest in his apparently advanced views on women, that one has to ask, was he really a feminist at all? In answer to this all one can say is that he offers a confusing and complicated bundle of ideas about women and sex, and that while some of them were useful, other were dangerous. (193)<sup>112</sup>

Stubbs's position is problematic and reductive in several ways. Firstly, the issue of whether Wells called himself (or *was*) a feminist implies a biographical reading of his works, drawing a direct link between the author's intention and the potential meanings or politics of a text. But a literary text can hold multiple meanings,

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<sup>112</sup> Sylvia Hardy in 'A Feminist Perspective on H. G. Wells' (*The Wellsian* no. 20, 1997) and Cliona Murphy in 'H. G. Wells and Votes for Women' (*The Wellsian* no. 10, 1987) examine the relation between Wells and feminism. While both pieces employ *Ann Veronica* as their prime example, they do not mention *The Wheels of Chance*. They both perform a rather biographical reading of Wells's feminist potential, Hardy arguing that 'a feminist perspective on H. G. Wells must inevitably address the question: was Wells himself a feminist?' (50), and coming to the conclusion that Wells in fact 'cannot be seen as a feminist' (61). Like Stubbs, they both try to fit Wells into their own contemporary definition of feminism.

dialectics and tensions; meanings of texts can obviously depend upon how they are read. Secondly, Stubbs does not historicise, but reads Wells against her own contemporary definition of feminism, finding him unfit for her purpose. The eugenic tendencies of Allen's and Wells's politics must be placed in the context of late nineteenth-century discourses on evolution. A further complication is evidently the fact that the term 'feminism' dates only from 1894. Texts are not simply 'good' or 'bad', 'feminist' or 'anti-feminist' – this would entail reducing literary texts to 'simply' 'novels with a purpose'. As Felski states, rather than assigning 'an invariant kernel of feminist or misogynist content' to literary texts, we should aim to carry out a more 'historically attuned' approach while also acknowledging the text's capacity to 'challenge or change our own beliefs and commitments' (*Uses* 6-7). Instead of trying to decide whether Wells was a feminist or not, I will examine one of his works more closely in order to find problems and figurations in which are played out questions of protofeminist and feminist concerns.

### **Science, Socialism, and Feminism: *The Wheels of Chance* (1896)**

Wells had published a bicycle novel, figuring an exceptional New Woman cyclist, already in 1896, at the height of the bicycle 'craze' of the 1890s. Set in August 1895, *The Wheels of Chance* (1896) tells the story of Mr. Hoopdriver who on his first bicycling holiday meets the unconventional Jessie Milton, a stereotypical New Woman who wears rational dress and is an excellent cyclist. Hoopdriver himself considers the popularity or 'fashionableness' of bicycling at the time, imagining people talking about him and Jessie: 'the imaginary spectators would fall a-talking of the fashionableness of bicycling – how judges and stockbrokers and actresses, and, in fact, all the best people rode' (235). This is proved later when Hoopdriver and Jessie meet a clergyman who declares that he himself is a cyclist: "“We are all cyclists nowadays”" (277).<sup>113</sup> Wells's bicycle novel provides a rich exploration of issues of class and gender, late nineteenth-century socialism and early feminism, while placing the interrelation of gender and technology in focus.

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<sup>113</sup> However, the clergyman rides a tricycle rather than a bicycle, since the latter is considered too "“flippant by my parishioners”" (277).

In comparison to Wells's scientific romance published in the same year (*The Island of Doctor Moreau*), there seems to be close to no criticism on *The Wheels of Chance*, apart from references in a few essays and parts of larger works. When mentioned it is mainly concerning class issues and the character of Hoopdriver, not for the New Woman cyclist who he falls in love with.<sup>114</sup> An exception to this is John Hammond, who in *A Preface to H. G. Wells* regards Jessie as an 'embodiment of the New Woman', arguing for her controversial status in 1896 (123). He sees her as 'a clear anticipation of Ann Veronica Stanley' (122), the protagonist of Allen's aforementioned 1909 New Woman novel. Hammond also sees Hoopdriver as 'an embryo version of Arthur Kipps'; 'a characteristically Wellsian hero' (122). However, while Hammond regards *Wheels of Chance* as worthy of notice in itself, he considers it mostly as it 'foreshadows the central themes of the novels yet to come' (123).<sup>115</sup> I argue that, in her stereotypical appearance and her focus on ideas and

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<sup>114</sup> Arlene Young in *Culture, Class, and Gender in the Victorian Novel* considers the novel – Wells's 'first social novel' (103) – as an instance of Wells's focus on lower middle class-characters; what is new about his presentation of these figures is that 'while they may be socially marginal, they are the central characters of the novels' (101). John Hammond, too, calls *The Wheels of Chance* Wells's first 'social novel' or 'realistic novel' (121). Nicholas Oddy in 'The Flaneur on Wheels?' (in *Cycling and Society*) mentions *The Wheels of Chance* in reference to the stability of bicycle design and the second-hand market in bicycles: while Hoopdriver can only afford a second-hand cushion tyred safety bicycle of antique 'cross frame' design, both Jessie Milton and Mr. Bechamel have state-of-the-art cycles (Oddy 105). John McVey in 'The Hoopdriver Recycle' provides a study of Hoopdriver's cycling route throughout the novel (in *Cycle History: Proceedings of the Fifth International Cycle History Conference*, Cambridge, ed. Rob van der Plas (1995): 171-174).

Hiroshi So in '*The Wheels of Chance* and the Discourse of Improvement of Health' discusses neither gender nor the New Woman, but regards the novel and its countryside cycling in the context of late-Victorian discourses of urban degeneration and improvement of health, seeing this focus on fitness and eugenics as a response to the anxieties about and the increasing number of discourses of national degeneration in late nineteenth-century Britain (38). So quotes (among others) James Cantlie, who in *Degeneration amongst Londoners* (1885) recommends cycling in the countryside as a healthful occupation: 'By the bicycle and tricycle men and women can be carried rapidly out of town to country lanes and open air. ... It allows of really beneficial exercise when it carries its rider out of an ozoneless region' (qtd. in So 44). For more writing on Darwinian social theory, often in the form of eugenics, see So 39-40 and also Gagnier's *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*. For texts more specifically on the New Woman and eugenics, see Angelique Richardson's *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (2003).

<sup>115</sup> Hammond also points out Wells's experiments with conventions and assumptions of the nineteenth-century realist tradition, the unstable relationship between fiction and reality in his works: 'On entering a Wells novel – even those which on the surface appear to be realistic – one is continually aware of a blurring of the distinction between the fiction one is reading and the world beyond the text' (154). Hammond here mentions *The Wheels of Chance* as Wells's earliest 'realistic' novel, noting how even in its opening sentence, the relationship between fiction and reality is problematic. It contains the name of the drapery emporium where Hoopdriver works, followed by the words 'a perfectly fictitious "Co.," by-the-bye' (Wells, *Wheels* 3). 'This reminder', Hammond states, 'that what the reader has before him is a *novel* destroys the illusion of reality: an illusion which the author is at pains to erode at several points in the story' (154).

notions gotten out of books, the character Jessie of *The Wheels of Chance* is not a mere ‘anticipation’ of the New Woman, but a major figuration of her. As such, the novel does not just present an ‘embodiment’ of this figure of early feminism, but indeed takes part in creating the figure.

Hoopdriver is an undistinguished young draper’s assistant in a shop in Putney Hill, London. He is already at the outset described by his relation to cycling – and by not being good at it. His main characteristic is his conventionality: ‘if you had noticed anything about him, it would have been chiefly to notice how little he was noticeable’ (4). He wears the black and grey colours of his craft, has ‘small, but none ill-shaped’ features, and repeats the typical remarks of a draper’s clerk (4-7). However, what *does* mark Hoopdriver out is his recently acquired fascination for bicycling, denoted by ‘the Remarkable Condition of this Young Man’s Legs’ (8). Hoopdriver’s legs are full of contusions, abrasions, and many bruises – yellowish, purple and blotchy red. Bruises can also be found on his shoulders, elbows, and even the finger-joints; ‘[h]e had indeed been bumped and battered at an extraordinary number of points’ (9). These injuries are of course the marks of ‘the Mounting Beginner upon the bicycling saddle’ (9), as Hoopdriver has been spending many of the last few nights learning to ride the bicycle. The bruises also tell us that the machine ridden is ‘an old-fashioned affair with a fork instead of a diamond frame, a cushioned tire, well worn on the hind wheel, and a gross weight’ (10). In the first few pages, Wells has thus revealed the anonymous draper’s assistant as an individual with own pursuits outside of work, unable to buy a new machine but decided upon his mission to go on a cycling holiday in the countryside along the South coast. Repeatedly throughout the novel Hoopdriver is described by his habitual business manners – his tendency to bow and smile, and rub his hands (257), to call young women ‘Miss’ (38) and ladies ‘Madam’ (257), to carry pins on him and inspect tablecloths (258-259) – and also by his attempts to overcome these habits when on holiday. As the story opens Hoopdriver is about to set out on his annual ten-day vacation, his first-ever bicycle tour, before he has fully learnt to ride a bicycle.

With his new brown cycling suit, ‘a handsome Norfolk jacket thing for 30s.’ and thick chequered stockings (21), Hoopdriver is able briefly to escape his subservient role at the draper’s shop. At the beginning of his journey a heath-keeper,

annoyed because Hoopdriver does not want to stay and talk to him, calls out: “‘E’s a bloomin’ dook, ’e is. ’E don’t converse with no one under a earl. ’E’s off to Windsor, ’e is; that’s why ’e’s stickin’ his be’ind out so haughty. Pride!” (27) This scolding does not anger Hoopdriver – quite the opposite, he is satisfied at the prospect of having been mistaken as a duke. As he soars down a hill, with his feet upon the foot-rests, Hoopdriver says repeatedly to himself and laughs: “‘He’s a bloomin’ dook – he is!” (29) The bicycle here works as a ‘great leveller’ (Kern 317); on a bicycle outside of the city, Hoopdriver can momentarily escape class conventions:

It was having a decent cut did it. His social superiority had been so evident that even a man like that [the heath-keeper] noticed it. No more Manchester Department for ten days! Out of Manchester, a Man! The draper Hoopdriver, the Hand, has vanished from existence. Instead was a gentleman, a man of pleasure, with a five-pound note, two sovereigns, and some silver at various convenient points of his person. At any rate as good as a dook, if not precisely in the peerage. (29-30)

Later on, just after meeting Jessie, a nursemaid’s injunction to her patient to “‘Look at the gentleman wizzer bicitle” further exalts Hoopdriver (42). He thus sets out in his best mood, delighted by the sense of freedom offered by the bicycle: ‘Whoop for Freedom and Adventure! Talk about your *joie de vivre!* Albeit with a certain cramping sensation about the knees and calves slowly forcing itself upon his attention’ (31). The bicycle initially seems to be just that machine of democratisation acknowledged by critics such as Kern, a technology bridging social space and making travel over longer distances accessible to all.

Hoopdriver’s vacation turns into a real adventure when repeated chance encounters bring him together with a ‘Young Lady in Grey’: the New Woman cyclist Jessie.<sup>116</sup> Hoopdriver, as that ‘certain cramping sensation’ about his knees and calves tells of, is not an experienced cyclist: ‘He did not ride fast, he did not ride straight, an exacting critic might say he did not ride well – but he rode generously, opulently, using the whole road and even nibbling at the footpath’ (22). The greater therefore is the contrast to the accomplished cyclist Jessie when she comes along. As Hoopdriver

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<sup>116</sup> To be wearing ‘grey’ as a female cyclist might here signify wearing a bicycle costume or rational dress. See for example Alice Meynell’s short story ‘A Woman in Grey’ (1896), in which the protagonist (“the grey figure of a woman on a bicycle in Oxford Street’ (178)) speeds through London on her machine, her head full of thoughts.

sets out he has not yet learnt properly how to dismount, and therefore often falls over when attempting to do so.

Neither Hoopdriver nor his second-hand bicycle are accustomed to meeting women – Hoopdriver regards ‘the feminine sex’ as something to bow to and smirk at from the other side of the counter (32). On a bicycle in the countryside, however, these conventions do not hold. The bicycle becomes ‘convulsed with the most violent emotions directly the Young Lady in Grey appeared’; it begins to wobble unprecedentedly, shows off ‘the most decadent sinuosity’, and leaves a track ‘like one of Beardsley’s feathers’ (33). Hoopdriver suddenly realises that his cap is loose on his head and ‘his breath a mere remnant’ (33). At the mere sight of this woman on a bicycle, Hoopdriver is made insecure:

The Young Lady in Grey was also riding a bicycle. She was dressed in a beautiful bluish-grey, and the sun behind her drew her outline in gold and left the rest in shadow. Hoopdriver was dimly aware that she was young, rather slender, dark, and with a bright colour and bright eyes. Strange doubts possessed him as to the nature of her nether costume. He had heard of such things of course – French perhaps. Her handles glittered; a jet of sunlight splashed off her bell blindingly. She was approaching the high road along an affluent from the villas of Surbiton. (33)

Jessie herself, her rational dress and knickerbockers, her shiny new bicycle, and even the direction from which she is coming – the villas of Surbiton – overwhelm the young draper’s clerk from Putney.

As their roads converge slantingly, and the lady is travelling at the same pace as Hoopdriver, appearances point to a meeting at the fork of the roads. Hoopdriver is struck by ‘a horrible conflict of doubts’, when realising that ‘[b]y contrast with her he rode disgracefully’ (34). He considers getting off the bicycle and pretending that something is wrong with his treadle – but he has not yet learnt to dismount! To go slow seems ‘the abnegation of his manhood. To crawl after a mere schoolgirl!’, but to cycle before her seems an incivility – as a draper’s clerk, his training has made him ‘prone to bow and step aside’ (34). And meanwhile the roads converge: ‘She was looking at him. She was flushed, a little thin, and had very bright eyes. Her red lips fell apart. She may have been riding hard, but it looked uncommonly like a faint smile. And the things were – yes! – *rational*s! Suddenly an impulse to bolt from the situation became clamorous’ (34). This figuration of the New Woman cyclist in

rational dress, and Hoopdriver's reaction to it, illustrates Gordon's claim that 'the novelty and marginality of clothing for sports provided a space in which women contested notions of "feminine" and "appropriate" bodies, behavior, and appearances' (24). As Gordon states, women's sports clothing displayed 'a social ambivalence over changing gender ideals' (47). The 'bright eyes' and 'red lips' of Wells's female cyclist enchants Hoopdriver, but her rational dress takes him by surprise – making him want to 'bolt from the situation' – and he crashes right in front of her.

Peddalling convulsively to try to pass the young lady, Hoopdriver suddenly jerks against 'some tin thing on the road' which flies up between the front-wheel and mud-guard, twisting his machine round towards her. After several acrobatic tricks and hops, and Hoopdriver nearly running into the Young Lady in Grey, he jumps up on the pavement and rides straight into a wooden fence, striking this 'with a terrific impact' and shooting forward off his saddle 'into a clumsy entanglement' (37). He tumbles over sideways, and finally 'completed the entire figure in a sitting position on the gravel, with his feet between the fork and the stay of the machine. The concussion on the gravel shook his entire being. He remained in that position, wishing that he had broken his neck, wishing even more heartily that he had never been born. ... Bloomin' dook, indeed! These unwomanly women!' (37)<sup>117</sup> This 'figure' is wonderfully illustrated by J. Ayton Symington: an angered Hoopdriver crawling on the pavement, his legs tangled in his machine, his hat flown off, he himself staring up at the elegantly approaching female cyclist – this 'unwomanly' woman in knickerbockers and a perky little cycling hat.

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<sup>117</sup> In the future, Hoopdriver carefully avoids any similar accidents: 'Ever and again a cycle, or a party of cyclists, would go by, with glittering wheels and softly running chains; and on each occasion, to save his self-respect, Hoopdriver descended and feigned some trouble with his saddle. Each time he descended with less trepidation' (60).





‘A sitting position on the gravel.’ H. G. Wells. *The Wheels of Chance: A Holiday Adventure*. London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1896. Ill. by J. Ayton Symington. p. 36.

The Young Lady in Grey neatly dismounts and inquires if he is hurt. Hoopdriver’s position on the pavement, coupled with her cycling skills, is worsened by her being a woman – a girl, even: ‘She had a pretty, clear, girlish voice. She was really very young – quite a girl, in fact. And rode so well! It was a bitter draught’ (37). She supplies Hoopdriver with some sticking plaster for his newly acquired bruises, enquires about his machine, and then cycles off.

Infatuated with this young lady cyclist, Hoopdriver tries to overtake her to make closer contact, but despite his best efforts his poor cycling skills hinder him. Hoopdriver speculates on ‘what manner of girl she might be’: ‘Probably she was one of these here New Women. He had a persuasion the cult had been maligned. Anyhow she was a lady. And rich people, too! Her machine couldn’t have cost much under twenty pounds. His mind came round and dwelt some time on her visible self. Rational dress didn’t look a bit unwomanly’ (42). While when first falling over he had been dismayed by ‘unwomanly women’ on bicycles (37), Hoopdriver now considers Jessie graceful and ‘[not] a bit unwomanly’. This might be considered as a formulation of the ‘domestication’ of cycling proposed by Mackintosh and Norcliffe;

the specific gendering of the female cyclist. As seen above, both Willard and the Rational Dress Association emphasise the ‘womanly’ grace involved with cycling and rational dress; the former praises the ‘graceful and becoming’ costume of the female cyclist (39), while the latter emphasises the importance of ‘[g]race and beauty’ in clothing (2). The Young Lady in Grey, who at first seems ‘unwomanly’ to Hoopdriver, when now considered as a middle-class ‘lady’ in possession of a costly machine, does not seem ‘unwomanly’ at all. Later on in the novel Hoopdriver further notes ‘her ankles *gracefully* ruling the treadles’ (161, my italics). While physical exercise (and bicycling in particular) caused much debate because of its ‘unsexing’ potential, the female cyclist is here also specifically sexed.

But still, their encounter – two young people alone on a country road, a meeting between social classes – is a novelty made possible by the bicycle. Inspired by the earlier comments about him being a ‘gentleman wizzer bicitle’ and a ‘bloomin’ Dook’, Hoopdriver says to himself that he “‘can’t look so very seedy”” (42), and perhaps not all that unworthy such a ‘Lady’. Such are his thoughts, unknowing of the comment from an ‘other man in brown’ who stands by the road repairing a tyre on his machine of ‘dazzling newness’; when Hoopdriver greets this aristocratic man, the man calls him a “‘Greasy proletarian”” (52). Ignorant of this remark, Hoopdriver cycles happily through the green English countryside, enthusiastic about that ‘wide sympathy that binds all cyclists together ... the brotherhood of the wheel’ (52). The ‘other man in brown’ later becomes Hoopdriver’s rival, as his relations with the Young Lady in Grey are exposed.

The eighteen-year-old middle-class Jessie does indeed belong to the ‘cult’ of ‘these here New Women’. She is of course also a Socialist, as Hoopdriver later learns (255). In an attempt to escape from the confines of conventionality and her stepmother, she has left home on her bicycle.<sup>118</sup> Hoopdriver encounters her a second time when she is standing by the roadside waiting for Bechamel – the other man in brown who is now late because of the punctured tire. Hoopdriver manages to dismount to greet her, but is soon ashamed of the discrepancy between her ladylike

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<sup>118</sup> The stepmother is in fact a writer of ‘witty and daring’ literature (172) – New Woman fiction? – but always very conventional and correct in her private ways. Having been forbidden to read the stepmother’s daring works, Jessie still read these and ‘went on from that to a feast of advanced literature’ (173).

ways and his own ungentlemanly manners and slush accent. As it turns out, Bechamel is a family friend (a married man in his mid-thirties) who has promised to meet up with Jessie, in order to join her expedition – posing as her brother – and help her get an independent start in life. His real intention however is to make Jessie’s journey for independence seem like an elopement, compromising her and awakening her passion for him. When Jessie finds out, she calls him a ‘cad’ and declares her intention to ‘[g]o somewhere to earn my living, to be a free woman, to live without conventionality’ (102). Bechamel keeps expecting her to fall in love with him, to faint, or to give in like the women in the books that he has read – but she does not.

When Bechamel and Hoopdriver repeatedly run into each other, Bechamel suspects Hoopdriver of being a private detective, engaged (by either Jessie’s mother or his own wife) to follow the couple. This notion suits Hoopdriver’s imaginative mind, and he plays the role, pursuing them in order to protect the lady. Through this position, Hoopdriver and the reader take part in the earlier described debates regarding female physical exercise and in particular the New Woman cyclist. During one of Hoopdriver’s enquiries about the couple, a shocked barmaid claims to have had her ‘modesty’ much impressed by the young lady’s costume, and laments the young woman’s forward manner and way of bossing around her ‘brother’ (122). Paraphrasing a few lines about the ‘unsexing’ potential of the New Woman, from the above quoted *Punch* poem ‘Sexomania’, the barmaid states: “‘There’ll be no knowing which is which in a year or two”” (122).<sup>119</sup> The barmaid continues her lamentation, complaining that surely that young woman will “‘be a nice lot to marry ... She’ll be wearing the – well, b-dashes, as the sayin’ is. I can’t think what girls is comin’ to”” (125). Hoopdriver, the self-professed gentleman, defends both Jessie’s behaviour and her attire. He even tells the barmaid that, as fashion goes, she’ll be wearing them herself ‘before a couple of years is out’ (125).

Hoopdriver and Jessie also get a taste of the scorn that female cyclists – especially in rational dress – had to endure in the 1890s, when upon entering a village inn, Jessie receives an insulting remark from one of the men there. While the narrator declines to reveal what the precise remark was, it is explained that it ‘was a

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<sup>119</sup> The lines from the *Punch* poem are: ‘All wonder now “Which is the woman?” / But a new fear my bosom vexes; / To-morrow there may be *no sexes!* / Unless, as end to end all the pother, / Each one in fact becomes the other.’

casual piece of such satire as Strephon delights in' (236).<sup>120</sup> And in case any female reader would be curious as to its nature, the narrator states, 'you have merely to dress yourself in a really modern cycling costume, get one of the feeblest-looking of your men to escort you, and ride out, next Saturday evening, to any public-house where healthy, homely people gather together' (236). Hoopdriver later challenges the disrespectful man to a fight, after telling the man that his joke was "'downright disgusting ... A lady can't ride a bicycle in a country road, or wear a dress a little out of the ordinary, but every dirty little greaser must needs go shouting insults'" (244).

We see here how social practices such as clothing and bicycling function as spaces in which to, in Gordon's words, 'negotiate, both verbally and through images' different ideas of femininity (47). The barmaid considers Jessie's rational dress as diminishing sexual differences ("There'll be no knowing which is which in a year or two"), and questions Jessie's suitability for marriage on the basis of her bloomer-like cycling trousers. As the narrator states, if a woman puts on a 'really modern cycling costume' and ventures on bicycle ride, one will most certainly receive insulting remarks. These modern social practices clearly bear symbolic political value, since the mere sight of them will provoke criticism. While such criticism might be seen as part of those patriarchal disciplinary techniques described by Bartky, techniques that 'inscribe[s] femininity in the female body' (74), highlighting the punishments received by women who threaten established discourses of femininity, we must remember that the body in a political field is not a mere passive object. While for Bartky, the female body (and the social practices that it is involved in) is ascribed meaning by an external force, the signification of rational dress and female bicycling is challenged in Wells's novel. Jessie is not immediately disciplined into obedience by an all-encompassing disciplinary power or discourse of femininity. Indeed, the novel through its narrator defends such social practices by letting our draper's clerk hero Hoopdriver actively support the New Woman cyclist. Through these instances in the novel, Wells's text directly partakes in the *fin de siècle* debates regarding the female cyclist and her supposed 'unsexing' potential.

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<sup>120</sup> 'Strephon', according to Brewer's *Dictionary*, is a 'stock name for a rustic lover', from the languishing lover of that name in Philip Sidney's 1580 pastoral romance *Arcadia* (1038). (Strephon could also refer to the character in two of Swift's satirical poems, and was also the pseudonym of Edward Bradbury. Yet another Strephon figures in Gilbert and Sullivan's satiric opera *Iolanthe* (1882), which first played in London at the Savoy Theatre from November 1882 to January 1884.)

Jessie is impressed by Hoopdriver's bravery in fighting the man from the village inn, declaring that she 'thought only Ouida's guardsmen' did things like that (251) – Ouida refers to that popular writer of the *fin de siècle*. Hoopdriver now elevates himself from private detective to chivalrous hero; he is 'in the world of Romance and Knight-errantry, divinely forgetful of his social position or hers' (148). The cycling adventure thus makes possible a further breach of social conventions, helped by Hoopdriver's fantastic imagination. After repeatedly trying to leave Bechamel, Jessie escapes with the help of Hoopdriver: they depart riding Jessie's and Bechamel's bicycles. Jessie flees both the conventional life of her stepmother, and the tyranny of Bechamel, by *cycling* away from them. After this second escape, Jessie calls Hoopdriver her 'Knight-errant' (164), and asks him for his Christian name. Hoopdriver, ashamed of his ungentlemanly name, makes one up. Both Jessie, and the people at the hotels and inns that they pass, do believe Hoopdriver to be a gentleman. When he lights both their bicycle lamps, the two come closer than social conventions would usually allow: 'She came round obediently and took his machine, and for a moment they stood face to face. "My name, brother Chris," she said, "is Jessie"' (167). The bicycle functions as a bridge between the classes, reducing the social distance between Hoopdriver and Jessie. She now pretends to be Hoopdriver's sister, and they address each other by first names. When they spend the night in a hotel, even the narrator is shocked by the breach of social conventions:

Here is the girl – what girls are coming to nowadays only Mrs. Lynn Linton can tell! – in company with an absolute stranger, of low extraction and uncertain accent, unchaperoned and unabashed ... Then this Mr. Hoopdriver of yours ... in illegal possession of a stolen bicycle, a stolen young lady, and two stolen names, established with them in a hotel that is quite beyond his means ... There are occasions when a moralising novelist can merely wring his hands and leave matters to take their course. (171-172)

This is a breach of social conventions regarding both class and gender. The mention of Mrs. [Eliza] Lynn Linton refers to the notable Victorian novelist, journalist, and opponent to feminism (including the New Woman), who in several essays lamented 'The Girl of the Period' (1868) and 'The Shrieking Sisterhood' (1870).<sup>121</sup> The rescue party that later catches Jessie actually has a Mrs. Lynn Linton of its own, in the

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<sup>121</sup> Richardson and Willis name her a 'media spokeswoman for patriarchy' (8) as well as 'anti-feminist' (12).

figure of Jessie's former schoolmistress Miss Mergle. She cannot conceive "[w]hat girls are coming to ... Or where they get these extraordinary ideas. One can understand them in books –" (298). She declares that she can only ascribe Jessie's extravagant action to "that spirit of unrest ... that has seized so many women in these busily idle Latter Days –" (301). When Jessie tries to account for her actions, Miss Mergle continues 'her copious outpourings about Ideals, True Womanliness, Necessary Class Distinctions, Healthy Literature, and the like' (302). The novel itself in this way incorporates its own scandalised Mrs. Lynn Linton, letting the figure comment on the evils of books such as the one in which the character herself figures.

As a stereotypical New Woman – decried by Mrs. Lynn Linton and Miss Mergle – Jessie reads Books with Ideas, flees a conventional home, and bicycles in knickerbockers. The narrator records her flight thus:

Jessie, wearing a patent costume with button-up skirts, and mounted on a diamond-frame safety with Dunlops, and a loofah covered saddle, had ridden forth early in the morning, taking with her about two pounds seven shillings in money, and a grey touring-case packed, and there, save for a brief note to her stepmother – a declaration of independence. (175)

A declaration, it was said, containing 'extensive and very annoying quotations' from the stepmother's best-selling anti-marital New Woman novel (175). The narrator explains that 'her knowledge of the world was rather less than nothing, having been obtained entirely from books' (198). Remember here the popular *Punch* illustration from 1894, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, of the New Woman as a female Don Quixote, surrounded by books and also reading one, with the accompanying quote paraphrasing Cervantes's novel: 'A world of disorderly notions *picked out of books*, crowded into his (her) imagination' ('Donna Quixote'). Ideas and discursive concepts are taken out of books and applied in practice, in the social world. Such notions in this way become simultaneously a trope for and the cause of a larger social freedom. As Jørgensen and Phillips state, discourse is both constitutive and constituted: 'It does not just contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them' (Jørgensen and Phillips 61). Literary texts here work as agents of cultural and social change, and the dialectical relation between discourse and practice become slightly muddled. Wells's New Woman cyclist acts as

she believes that a New Woman cyclist *should* act – bicycling, wearing rational dress – and employs the very same idea that she has read about in books.

During a rest along the way, Jessie tells Hoopdriver: “I am resolved to Live my Own Life. ... I want to write, you see ... to write Books and alter things. To do Good. I want to lead a Free Life and Own myself. I can’t go back” (191-192). She continues: “I am resolved to be Unconventional – at any cost. But we are so hampered. If I could only burgeon out of all that hinders me! I want to struggle, to take my place in the world. I want to be my own mistress, to shape my own career” (193). This scene of intimate conversation, between the two of them alone in the countryside, is one of many such moments illustrated by Symington. In this specific illustration the pair’s bicycles are pictured in the foreground, the two machines posited close together, as if signalling the familiarity between their owners in the background.



“Here we can talk”. H. G. Wells.  
*The Wheels of Chance: A Holiday Adventure*. London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1896. Ill. by J. Ayton Symington. Frontispiece.

As the journey continues, Jessie is disappointed that things are not working out as she had thought – or, rather, as she had read about in books: ‘She had read her Olive Schreiner and George Egerton, and so forth, with all the want of a perfect comprehension of one who is still emotionally a girl. She knew the thing to do was to

have a flat and go to the British Museum and write leading articles for the daily papers until something better came along' (254). And if Bechamel had played his part correctly (as the male heroes of her novels, perhaps), all would have been well. She explains to Hoopdriver that she wants to live independently of her stepmother, but that she is "very unsettled" as to what exactly she will do. She is thinking of "writing Books ... [o]r doing Journalism, or Teaching, or something like that. ... I believe there are a great many women journalists, and sanitary inspectors, and black-and-white artists. But I suppose it takes time. Women, you know, edit most papers nowadays, George Egerton says" (281). Like the capitalisation of the initial letters of the *New Woman*, the initial capital letters here (Live one's Own Life, write Books, do Good, be Unconventional, do Journalism or Teaching, et cetera) signify these as *concepts*, abstract ideas, rather than concrete objects and occupations. These concepts thus take on a wider symbolic significance. Jessie does not want to write just any kinds of book – she wants to write books with ideals and ideas; in short, she wants to be a *New Woman* writer.

Jessie's schooling in *New Woman* literature, and Hoopdriver's tendency to daydream himself into different roles, comes out when she tries to discover Hoopdriver's profession. She guesses that he comes from the colonies, and more specifically, South Africa: "What made me think of South Africa was that novel of Olive Schreiner's you know – 'The Story of an African Farm.' Gregory Rose is so like you" (201). This Schreiner text is of course the first canonical *New Woman* novel, recognised as such by both contemporary and later critics. Hoopdriver, being born in a London suburb, happily agrees to her suggestions, with some additions of his own – such as being an ostrich farmer, shooting a lion, and chasing cattle robbers. This is just one of the instances in the novel where literature precedes 'real life'. As noted above, Wells points out in his autobiography that after the publication of *Ann Veronica*, *New Woman* heroines such as Ann Veronica 'increased and multiplied not only in novels but in real life' (*Experiments* 472). Jessie is formed or forming her ideas from notions gotten out of books, something which highlights the nature of the *New Woman* as a discursive concept as well as a set of social practices. Jessie's concept of the *New Woman* is as a bicycling *New Woman*, since popular imaginings of the figure would often involve a bicycle as a symbol of emancipation.



The novel further thematises this idea, of ‘notion[s] *picked out of books*’ as the ‘Donna Quixote’ *Punch* illustration formulates it, and binds it to the literary market of the *fin de siècle*.<sup>122</sup> The narrator states that nowadays, in the late nineteenth century, humans are governed by business and the literary market. While this is obvious in Jessie’s New Woman schooling, we can also see it in the cases of Hoopdriver and Bechamel. Hoopdriver fantasises about figuring in stories of his own, while Bechamel and Jessie both – in the words of the narrator – try to live their lives not by ‘a straightforward motive on the surface anywhere’ but by ideas from ‘a zeitgeist, a congestion of acquired ideas, a highway’s feast of fine, confused thinking’ (109). The girl is ‘resolute to Live Her Own Life, a phrase you may have heard before’, while the man has ‘a pretty perverted ambition to be a cynical artistic person of the very calmest description’ (109). Bechamel hopes for ‘the awakening of Passion’ in Jessie, since he knows that Passion ought to awaken, ‘from the text-books he has studied’ (109). And even more than Bechamel, Jessie bases her New Woman ideals upon books: ‘Her motives are bookish, written by a haphazard syndicate of authors, novelists, biographers, on her white inexperience’ (110).<sup>123</sup> Hoopdriver imagines himself the actor in one of his life stories, and, as seen, sketches himself as a gentleman from South Africa. The novel thus itself comments on the social and cultural agency of literary texts.

Emancipatory ideals and ideas, however, might not be as straight-forward in life as they are presented in novels. While Jessie is telling Hoopdriver about her ideas and aspirations in life, he is secretly calculating the costs of the journey. Just as he has noted the newness and probable cost of Jessie’s bicycle, and her clear upper-class diction, he has also been worrying about money throughout their entire journey. This, I would argue, is the main way in which the novel complicates the reading of the bicycle as a technology of democratisation and female emancipation. It shows the issue of social position and class, and of the New Woman as a primarily middle-class

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<sup>122</sup> There are references throughout the novel to contemporary literature: the detective skills of Sherlock Holmes (9, 120, 139, 260) the realism of George Gissing (71), *Punch* illustrations (98), Rudyard Kipling (108), Henrik Ibsen (108), Ouida (251, 272), and various canonical New Woman works and writers.

<sup>123</sup> This notion of ‘bookish’ motives is echoed later in *Ann Veronica*, hinting at the title of Grant Allen’s 1895 novel, when the heroine’s father bemoans the influence of ‘these damned novels. All this torrent of misleading, spurious stuff that pours from the press. These sham ideals and advanced notions, Women who Dids, and all that kind of thing’ (19).

construct.<sup>124</sup> We see this throughout the novel in Hoopdriver's submissive manner toward the young lady, and in his need to lie about his origins and occupation, but perhaps most clearly in Jessie's blatant ignorance regarding monetary issues. When Hoopdriver explains that he has been lying about his name and identity, and exposes his true position as a draper's assistant, Jessie can only understand this to be because he thought that she was 'too Conventional' to take help from one she might think 'her social inferior' (265), and she immediately forgives him for how he has misunderstood her. When Hoopdriver is at last forced to bring up the question of money, Jessie admits that she has never thought of that. Shocked, she stands staring and again admits: "I never thought of money coming in to stop us like this ... Money! ... Is it possible –? Surely! Conventionality! May only people of assured means Live their own Lives? What a curious light –!" (283) Clearly, this is the first time that Jessie considers her privileged position of even being able to become a (middle-class) New Woman, trying to Live her Own Life.

Their adventure ends when her stepmother, shocked that Jessie has 'flaunted her freedom – on a bicycle, in country places' (228) sends out a rescue expedition, which catches up with the couple. Hoopdriver laments to himself the way that Jessie's relatives now 'snatched her away from him as though he was scarcely fit to live on the same world with her. No more he was!' (303). Now that that their cycling adventure is over, 'they were sure not to let her talk to him alone; her mother would be there as, what was it? – *Chaperone*. What opportunities he'd lost' (303). The possible breach of social conventions that the bicycle brought with it is now gone.

The notion of the bicycle – and the New Woman – as a figuration of universal (or specifically female) emancipation is complicated in *The Wheels of Chance*; both are, at this point, a pastime for people of some means. Having realised this, Jessie agrees to come back home again. She explains to her stepmother: "Women write in books about being free, and living our own life, and all that kind of thing. – No one is

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<sup>124</sup> As Shaw and Randolph state, whether 'as a concept or as a reality', the New Woman was primarily a (white) middle-class phenomenon (4). Working-class women and destitute women are largely missing from New Woman writings. In much New Woman writing, class-related social hierarchies 'remain largely unchallenged by the very women (authors and characters) who struggle so hard to overcome sexual inequalities' (Heilmann 98). See the collection *Feminist Forerunners: New Womanism and Feminism in the Early Twentieth Century* (2001, ed. Heilmann) for a critique of this middle-class focus among New Woman criticism.

free, free even from working for a living, unless at the expense of someone else. I did not think of that” (299). Even as she and Hoopdriver part, she whispers to herself: “I did not know ... I did not understand. Even now – No, I do not understand” (309). And this is the last that the reader sees of Jessie, who presumably returns to her place in conventional Victorian womanhood.

At the end of Wells’s novel, Hoopdriver returns to his place behind the counter. For him, the supposed freedom of the wheel can only be temporary. However, he does return a somewhat changed man; he is full of memories and conversations with Jessie, and determined to improve his lot: ‘Tomorrow, the early rising, the dusting, and drudgery, begin again – but with a difference, with wonderful memories and still more wonderful desires and ambitions replacing those discrepant dreams’ (312).

While at first glance the bicycle may be read as the main trope of Wells’s interest in socialist politics and female emancipation, the possibilities of the bicycle in this sense are limited. The novel itself complicates the idea of the bicycle as an inherently progressive technology, by displaying the class specifics of that female emancipation associated with the bicycle. *The Wheels of Chance* is not simply to be read as a celebration of the possibilities of the bicycle, but it also problematises this idea. The novel in fact displays that it is through literary figurations that the bicycle *takes on* the significance of and thus *becomes* an emblem of that democratisation and emancipation.

Furthermore, the novel highlights the semi-fictionality of the New Woman; her simultaneous emergence as a discursive or literary concept and as a set of social practices, such as cycling or wearing rational dress. Jessie has taken her New Woman ideas from books, and tries to re-enact these in real life. This point is taken even further by Wells’s narrator insisting on the simultaneous fictionality and reality of the novel.

### **Commercialising the New Woman: *Miss Cayley’s Adventures* (1899)**

While Wells’s figuration of Jessie Milton complicates a reading of the New Woman cyclist as a purely emancipatory figure, Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures* (1899) through its New Woman cyclist comments upon the growing commercial

interests of the late-Victorian literary market. *Miss Cayley's Adventures* has been rather neglected critically, which could be connected with the fact that it had not been reprinted in its entirety until as late as April 2008, and the critical analyses of the work focus almost exclusively on its female detective.<sup>125</sup> Similar to certain feminist dismissals of Wellsian New Woman narratives, the stories of Lois Cayley have mostly been read as 'actually reinforcing traditional ideas of feminine inferiority' (Craig and Cadogan 26, on Allen's works). Only Chris Willis and Elizabeth Foxwell seem to consider the protagonist a noteworthy one, considering the commercialised New Woman as a progressive figure in the context of popular fiction (Willis, 'Heaven' 54, 64; Foxwell xiii).

Lois Cayley, the New Woman protagonist of *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, by her employment with technology builds up an almost hyperbolic image of the New Woman. Not only does she, like Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* and Bella in *The Girl Behind the Keys*, support herself by typewriting, but she also sets up a typewriting business in Italy, and travels the world by writing articles as a foreign correspondent – 'simply in search of adventure' (4). And not only does she, like Jessie in *The Wheels of Chance*, enjoy bicycling, but she wins a bicycle race against all male competitors, and sells bicycles in Switzerland as a commission agent for an American manufacturer. These technologies and social practices become spaces through which the character figures as a New Woman, embodying the emancipatory ideals associated with the figure. This hyperbolic figuration of the New Woman cyclist is however not wholly unproblematic; as with *Wheels of Chance*, this novel cannot be read simply as a celebration of female emancipation via the bicycle. Regenia Gagnier notes that there is a tension within certain New Woman literature 'between women's autonomy as represented in their own literature and women's

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<sup>125</sup> The first story was anthologised in Laura Marcus's *Twelve Women Detective Stories* (1997), and has been treated in various works: Chris Willis has written articles on the novel and its female detective, while Michele Slung in *Crime on Her Mind* (1975) briefly considers the stories. Joseph A. Kestner's *Sherlock's Sisters* (2003) provides an extensive account of the female detective in English literature, arguing that *Miss Cayley's Adventures* 'subsumes the detectival genre within the New Woman narrative' (126). Kestner's article 'The New Woman and the Female Detective: Grant Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (1899)' in *Redefining the Modern* (2004, ed. William Baker and Ira B. Nadel) is the only text solely focusing on *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, but provides not much more than a description and the same conclusions of his previous text. For a more extensive account of the research context, see Elizabeth Foxwell's introduction to the 2008 edition of *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (especially pp. x-xii).

subjection to commodity culture as represented by advertisers who sought to use women for their own ends' (*Insatiability* 175). As we will see, the figure of the New Woman is also bound up with commercial interests.

*Miss Cayley's Adventures* was published as a novel in 1899, but had previously been serialised as twelve stories in *The Strand Magazine* 1898-1899. Late-Victorian mass-circulation magazines such as *The Strand* can be read, as by Ross D. Petty and Ellen Gruber Garvey, in relation to the rise in advertising at the time. While Petty argues that bicycle advertising in such magazines led to 'the identification of the emerging middle class, particularly the "new woman" of the 1890s', and that bicycle advertisers by being among the first to present 'media images of women as active, independent people who enjoyed recreational pursuits thereby advanc[ed] the cause of women's emancipation' (33),<sup>126</sup> Garvey's analysis of the gender politics involved takes a rather different stance. She examines the commercial interests within debates regarding women cycling, seeing how advertising during this period makes its way into fiction, in certain commercialised '[p]roduct-focused stories' that embed products in a social context and associate them with romance, happiness, freedom, and social acceptance (67). In the case of the bicycle, Garvey argues, magazine fiction contains or defuses the threat of the new freedoms that the bicycle had come to signify. While there are also writings that parody or subvert commercialised formulaic fiction, Garvey proposes that mainstream magazines, by their advertising and formulaic fiction, reinstate conventions rather than subvert them, subsuming the potential conflict within a 'discourse of consumption' (89-90, 96). Taking both these readings into account, I will consider how potential commercial interests work to underscore or to contain the threat to gender definition that the New Woman cyclist seemed to pose, in the case of *Miss Cayley's Adventures*.

At the outset of the novel, Lois has just left Girton College, and is at age twenty-one left penniless in London by the death of her absent stepfather. Rather than deploring this as a hindrance, she views the situation as an opportunity: 'On the day when I found myself with twopence in my pocket, I naturally made up my mind

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<sup>126</sup> Petty sees the bicycle industry as a pioneer in 'developing mass marketing techniques to sell its products', arguing that the bicycle advanced the practice of advertising – for example in the new media of mass-circulating magazines – and developed new promotional techniques (32).

to go round the world' (1). This determination can be seen on the novel's front cover, which pictures the protagonist standing in front of a sunrise, bravely looking forward, with the one hand on her hip, and her right foot resting on a globe of the Earth – the whole illustration (by Gordon Browne) printed in gold colour. Lois starts her journey as a travelling companion to 'the Cantankerous Old Lady' Georgina, and already in the first adventure thwarts an attempt to steal the elderly lady's jewellery. Having made up her mind to go around the world, Lois soon leaves her employer to seek new adventures. While cycling in southern Germany, she is noticed by the American bicycle inventor and manufacturer Mr. Hitchcock who engages her to run in a racing competition.

Lois is repeatedly described in relation to the bicycle and physical exercise, often using the bicycle as an emblem of freedom or emancipation to describe her character. She explains her high spirits, despite being penniless, by 'having large dark eyes, with a bit of a twinkle in them, and being as well able to pilot a bicycle as any girl of my acquaintance' (6). Lois is marked not only by her sharp intellect, but even more so by her physical vigour. As the reader has been told earlier, Lois was one of the first female bicyclists, frightening the other girls at Girton College with her audacity. As attested by the above examples from guidebooks for lady bicyclists, early female bicyclists 'were regarded with a kind of pious horror by society and by the public at large' (Davidson 10). Lois's friend Elsie explains: "'You see, you had a bicycle ... and in those days, of course, ladies didn't bicycle. You must admit ... it was a startling innovation. You terrified us so'" (3). Allen thus poses his main protagonist as a genuine New Woman, bicycling even before most other women did. Furthermore, Lois is not just an expert cyclist, but she also tells her admirer Harold (Lady Georgina's nephew): 'I am a fairly good climber ... You see, at Cambridge, I went on the river a great deal – I canoed and sculled: and then, besides, I've done a lot of bicycling' (47). Her accomplishments run rather towards 'rowing, punting, and bicycling' (74). She later proves to be an excellent mountaineer, when rescuing Harold from a precarious mountainside. The New Woman's physical strength can be seen as posing a threat to traditional notions of gender – Lois's activities correspond well to the 'unsexed' woman of the earlier quoted parodic *Punch* poem ('Bicycling, footballing, scarce human, / All wonder now 'Which is the woman?' ('Sexomania'

203)). She indeed at one point receives a letter from her aunt, who writes to rebuke Lois for her ‘unladylike’ conduct in becoming a bicycle commission agent (119).

Lois’s character is built up in relation to technologies of the time; just as Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* identifies with her typewriter machine, Lois identifies with her bicycle. When first trying the bicycle prompted to her by Hitchcock, she describes a feeling of being one with the machine: ‘’Twas a pre-ordained harmony. After two or three trials I felt that the Manitou was built for me, and I was built for the Manitou. We ran together like parts of one mechanism. I was always famed for my circular ankle-action; and in this new machine, ankle-action was everything’ (74). Almost mechanically, Lois pedals away ‘like a machine’, her ankles flying round ‘so that I scarcely felt them’ (81).<sup>127</sup>

Hitchcock hires Lois to ride his newly invented four-g geared mountain bicycle, ‘the Manitou’, for him in a bicycle race, in order to introduce the machine on the market. Indeed, the practice of linking bicycle advertising to the performance of bicycle racers was commonplace during the late nineteenth century (Petty 40). However, Hitchcock does this not only because of Lois’s cycling abilities, but because she is a *woman* – and this bears commercial possibilities. Throughout the

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<sup>127</sup> Compare this passage to the sense of freedom experienced by the bicycling Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl*. Juliet has a ‘migratory instinct’ (116), and when she grows tired of typewriting work, she quits her place, puts on her ‘cycling costume, which like all else about me (I trust) is rational’ (49), takes her bicycle and rides out into the countryside to live in an anarchist community. Juliet praises the freedom gained from both the geographic mobility and the loosening of social constrictions offered by the bicycle:

How light and free I felt! When man first set woman on two wheels with a pair of pedals, did he know, I wonder, that he had rent the veil of the harem in twain? I doubt it, but so it was. A woman on a bicycle has all the world before her where to choose; she can go where she will, no man hindering. I felt it that brisk May morning as I span down the road with a Tam o’ Shanter on my head and my loose hair travelling after me like a Skye terrier. (50)

In the commune, Juliet teaches her comrades how to ride the bicycle, and she works in the fields wearing her rational cycling suit, labouring ‘like a man’ (74) alongside the anarchists.

Yet another of Allen’s New Woman heroines, the protagonist of *Rosalba: The Story of her Development* (1899) enjoys the freedom that the bicycle offers. This London-born Italian-bred vagabond New Woman, having returned to the ‘artificial conventionalities’ of English womanhood (6), states: ‘The bicycle emancipated me; it is the great emancipator’ (228). It takes her back ‘to something like the old freedom’ of her vagabond childhood, away from the conventionalities of imposed schooling: ‘Once mounted on a bicycle ... I was free once more to roam the highways of England, unaccompanied and unchaperoned’ (228-229). Rosalba’s guardian, however, does not approve of the machine: “[M]any of the women who bestride bicycles nowadays are of such an ungraceful type. ... Just look at that angular Miss Fitzroy, who is leaning on her machine over there, talking to Linda! ... And her feet – so unwomanly!” (231). He advises Rosalba to read some Dryden instead, but she declines: “Dryden says nothing about bicycles,” I replied, caressing my little steed as if it were a pet mare, and stroking the saddle fondly’ (231). Rosalba, of course, continues bicycling despite her guardian’s disapproval.

novel Lois's specific 'womanly' attributes are highlighted and play a crucial part in the narrative; her physical exercise is even more emphasised by being contrasted by her 'womanliness'. While Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl* is eyed by her employer at the typing office 'as if I were a horse for sale' (24), Lois receives the same examination by the American bicycle inventor: 'He looked me all up and down. "You're a lady of con-siderable personal attractions," he said, musingly, as if he were criticising a horse; "and I want one that sort"' (65). This visual evaluation is illustrated by Browne.



"Seems I didn't make much of a job of it." Grant Allen. *Miss Cayley's Adventures*. London: Grant Richards, 1899. Ill. by Gordon Browne. p. 66.

"SEEMS I DID N'T MAKE MUCH OF A JOB OF IT."

In his world of commercialism and advertisement, Hitchcock can apparently distinguish or construct women of this or that stereotyped 'sort'. The inventor tells Lois that there is some 'style' about her: "[Y]ou know how to use your feet; and you have good understandings" (65). Lois gathers by his glance that he is referring to her 'nether limbs' – her feet (65-66). Hitchcock explains that Lois is hired partly because of her 'attractiveness' as a woman: "It ain't only your skill, you see," Hitchcock said, with frank commercialism. "It's your personal attractiveness as well that I go upon. That's an element to consider in business relations" (74). Like Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl*, Lois is evaluated for her 'womanly' qualities.



As Clare Simpson notes, at a time when men's cycle races were no longer a novelty, thousands of people enjoyed 'the spectacle of women's cycle racing' (47). The popularity of women's racing, she argues, can be best understood through the commercial context of cycle racing; the appearance of female cyclists at large racing events played an important role in assisting manufacturers and retailers by marketing their cycles (58-59). The figure of the New Woman was even specifically linked to cycle racing; many advertisements showed New Women on racing models or at the very least 'riding swiftly and dressed in rational costumes', most often on traditional 'male' machines (Simpson 59).<sup>128</sup> *Miss Cayley's Adventures* shows an evident awareness of the commercial possibilities of women racing. When hiring her for the race, Hitchcock contently states: "You hev some go in you, you hev. There's money in your feet. You'll give these Meinherrs fits. You'll take the clear-starch out of them" (72). He is aghast when Lois at first does not understand his proposition, unable to fathom that she is not a professional and even more that she does not know "what all the cycling world is mad about" (73). Hitchcock explains: "Well, it's like this, don't you see; ef a female wins, it makes success all the more striking and conspicuous. The world to-day is ruled by advertizement" (73). As Hitchcock later tells her, once they let Lois 'run and win', the prize money does not matter to him (that is, he does not care if Lois is disqualified afterwards for being a woman): "It's the advertizement that tells. Jest you mark my words, miss, and don't you make no mistake about it – the world is governed to-day by advertizement" (75).<sup>129</sup> Via the

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<sup>128</sup> Bicycle models were early on differentiated by gender. The diamond-shaped frame (similar to present-day's men's bicycles) was presented as standard, and the drop frame (or open frame) that allows riding in a skirt became the women's version (Garvey 69). Whereas many female cyclists might choose to use the 'women's' model, female racers used 'male' or diamond-framed bicycle models, since these were structurally stronger and thus the most efficient and durable for racing purposes. These 'male' models of course required a rational and bifurcated costume (Simpson 59). Indeed, Simpson states that the strongest support for women's cycle racing came from people allied to the dress reform movement. See for example the women's cycling club Chelsea Rationalists, of which most members were also involved with the Rational Dress Association, for example Lady Harberton, the founder herself of RDA (53).

As a comparison, Petty notes that by 1896 every third bicycle that was ordered in the US was an open-frame model, in which you could ride wearing a skirt (42).

<sup>129</sup> At the starting point, The Herr Over-Superintendent of the contest does indeed object to a woman taking part in the race, since "the word 'rider' in the Kaiserly and Kingly for-this-contest-provided decree is distinctly in the masculine gender stated" (76). Lois, having prepared for this objection, replies in her 'very sweetest German' while 'pulling out a copy of Law 97 on the subject, with which I had duly provided myself': "if you will to Section 45 of the Bicycles-Circulation-Regulation-Act your attention turn, you will find it therein expressly enacted that unless any clause be anywhere to the

words of the American inventor, the novel not only acknowledges the advertising possibilities in female cycling racing, but also comments upon the commercialisation of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century.

Browne's illustrations provide yet another dimension to the text. Lois arrives at the starting point wearing her 'short serge dress and cycling jacket' (75). As seen in these illustrations, Lois still wears feminine attributes such as a skirt, a corset, and a dainty little hat – even when competing in the race. Earlier illustrations have depicted Lois on an open-frame 'women's' bicycle model. These feminine attributes are important: while Lois is a hyperbolic figuration of the New Woman, taking part not in a women's cycling race but as the sole female competitor in a men's cycling race, she still seems to retain the 'gracefulness' highlighted by cyclists such as Willard. Several illustrations depict Lois on her bicycle, competing with men.



“DON'T SCORCH, MISS; DON'T SCORCH.”

“Don't scorch, miss; don't scorch.” Grant Allen. *Miss Cayley's Adventures*. London: Grant Richards, 1899. Ill. by Gordon Browne. p. 78.

In the background we see Hitchcock, on horseback, encouraging her. The illustrations of Lois alone against all male competitors, on her bicycle, using her physical strength, underlines the complex relationship between gender and technology at the *fin de siècle*; the processes through which the bicycle as a symbol of emancipation comes to play a crucial part in questioning traditional gender roles.

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contrary inserted, the word 'rider,' in the masculine gender put, shall here the word 'rideress' in the feminine to embrace be considered.” For, anticipating this objection, I had taken the precaution to look the legal question up beforehand' (76). The Herr Over-Superintendent must accept this argument, and Lois is free to enter the contest.

However, while Allen's earlier New Woman heroine Juliet proudly wears her rational costume, Lois in Browne's illustrations manages to remain 'womanly' by keeping her feminine attributes and wearing an improbably long skirt.<sup>130</sup> Illustrations such as these, Garvey argues, provide 'visual reassurance' that women could ride the bicycle with grace and modesty; a kind of 'suitable women's mode for riding' is championed (70). The bicycle's perceived threat to gender definition is here contained or defused, as the New Woman cyclist is allowed only while remaining specifically sexed.

It is also important to note the riding posture that Lois keeps in this illustration: an upright, graceful, and 'womanly' riding position. As Garvey notes, '[t]he whole question of riding astride anything was problematic for women to begin with'; Victorian girls were prohibited to use toys with straddle seats, which could threaten their sexual innocence (74). With the advent of the safety bicycle and its female ridership, straddling could no longer be avoided, and (as we have seen in the earlier described debates regarding female physical exercise) medical advisers gave much attention to the issue of women straddling and its possible implications; the bicycle saddle might produce improper sexual stimulation (Garvey 75). The 'scorching' position – that is, the bent-over-the handlebars posture adopted by speeders – was generally condemned for women: 'deviations from upright decorousness and graceful riding are more serious, and bicycle-riding posture could be a significant measure of propriety and sexual innocence' (Garvey 75). Any deviation by a woman cyclist from an upright posture might thus suggest 'unwomanliness'.

In this light, Hitchcock's repeated calling out to Lois not to scorch can be further understood. For his advertising purposes, Hitchcock encourages Lois to ride, but *not* to scorch during the level riding as do the other cyclists: "'Don't scorch, miss; don't scorch; never mind ef you lose sight of 'em. Keep your wind; that's the point. The wind, the wind's everything. Let 'em beat you on the level; you'll catch 'em up fast enough when you get on the Taunus!'" (78) Even when she is last among the contestants, and their backers are telling her to give up, Hitchcock again calls out

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<sup>130</sup> Compare these illustrations with the ones in Allen's *Hilda Wade* (see following chapter), where the New Woman nurse Hilda flees an army of Matabele soldiers by cycling away from them while, dressed in her bicycling skirt, also carrying a baby in her arms.

to Lois to do “nothing of the sort, miss! You stick to it, and keep your wind! It’s the wind that wins!” (79) While this may at first seem a mere tactical advice from her backer, it can also be read as an instruction to (for commercial purposes) remain in her upright, ‘womanly’ posture. Keeping her wind – that is, keeping her breath, saving her energy for later – is what matters. But perhaps also keeping her wind as in riding calmly enough to keep her appearance, to look womanly and graceful, and not to scorch. The importance of riding posture is further highlighted in a later illustration of the race, when Lois has caught up with the other contestants.



“I am here, behind you, Herr Lieutenant.” Grant Allen. *Miss Cayley’s Adventures*. London: Grant Richards, 1899. Ill. by Gordon Browne. p. 83.

Here we see Lois next to one of her male rivals, the ‘Herr Lieutenant’, known to Lois for insulting her at the starting point. Herr Lieutenant has been leading the race up until now, but Lois outruns him, passing him in a gracefully upright position: ‘He answered not a word, but worked his hardest. So did I. He bent forward: I sat erect on my Manitou, pulling hard at my handles’ (82-83). She rides in an upright posture while he scorches, bent over his handlebars. Note the different positions of the handlebars on Lois’s and her rival’s bicycle in the illustration. As Garvey points out, riding posture could be enforced by the alignment of the bicycle; setting the handlebars higher for women than men, to prevent women from scorching (76-77). Allen’s New Woman cyclist defeats all her male contestants, but is allowed to do so only when riding gracefully, ‘womanly’.

These illustrations, similar to Allen's continual textual reminders of his heroines' 'womanliness',<sup>131</sup> might be an attempt to 'domesticate' the New Woman's progressive views to the more conventional readers. Other illustrations include Lois hauling herself down a mountain to save Harold (138), another one of her riding a camel (186), and yet another one of her shooting a tiger from the seat of an elephant's back (245) – all these in skirt and corseted figure. While Simpson draws a direct connection between women's racing and the New Woman, she points out that the marketing of cycles to more conservative female riders would use conventional images of women that aligned with traditional ideas about female respectability, grace, and modesty – that is, not in the context of racing (61). As Willis points out, the New Woman must also 'prove her "womanly" credentials' in order to be an acceptable heroine for popular fiction ('Heaven' 61). While Allen's recourse to the 'womanliness' of the New Woman might send 'mixed messages' about the relations between the sexes, it is important to note that these 'are not inconsistent with the period' (Foxwell xiii). Allen, like Wells, needs to be read with attention given to the historical context, not solely measured by twentieth- and twenty-first century conceptions of gender and feminism.

Lois not only wins the racing contest, but later on becomes a commission agent for Hitchcock's bicycle, touring Switzerland and selling bicycles. Seeing the bad business of trying to sell bicycles in winter, she leaves Switzerland for Florence, where she convinces her friend Elsie to join her in setting up "the Florentine School of Stenography and Typewriting" (144). After advertising their new enterprise, the typing agency quickly acquires customers. For the next twelve months, Lois tells the reader, 'we spent the greater part of the year in Florence, where we were building up a connection, but rode back for the summer months to Switzerland, as being a livelier place for the trade in bicycles' (170). Before long, Lois starts working as a corresponding journalist for the *Daily Telephone*, for which she travels around the world producing descriptive articles from Cairo, the Nile, Syria, and India. Having

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<sup>131</sup> Similar to Juliet in *The Type-Writer Girl*, despite attempts to be rational, Lois cries over lost romance: 'I dashed into my own room, locked the door behind me, flung myself wildly on my bed, and burying my face in my hands, had a good, long, hard-hearted, cruel, obdurate cry – exactly like any mediaeval woman. It's all very well being modern; but my experience is that, when it comes to the man one loves – well, the Middle Ages are still horribly strong within us' (140).

rescued an Englishwoman from white slavery in Egypt, and killed an attacking tiger in India (where she found that her ‘short bicycling skirt did beautifully for tiger-hunting’ (241)), Lois returns to England to help clear Harold from an accusation of forgery. While Lois throughout the stories rejects traditional marriage, afraid to be seen as a fortune-seeker or adventuress, she in the end marries her admirer Harold Tillington, after having saved him off a cliff when mountaineering, and in the midst of clearing him from the forgery accusation. She will only consider an offer from a man of equal economic and intellectual standing, and one who shares her emancipated views.<sup>132</sup>

The question remains whether *Miss Cayley's Adventures* constitutes a domestication or commercialisation of the New Woman cyclist, defusing the threat that the bicycle seemed to pose to gender definition, or if the novel might still be read as a progressive figuration of early feminism. Lois still remains ‘womanly’; she rides in skirts, not scorching but in an upright graceful position. While the use of the bicycle and physical exercise might threaten to ‘unsex’ women, the notion of the specifically sexed (or ‘womanly’) cyclist complicates the reading of the bicycle as an inherently progressive technology. However, considering the commercialisation of the New Woman cyclist solely as a containment of the emancipatory ideas linked to the bicycle, by insisting on the required ‘womanliness’ of the figure, might prove a too superficial reading.

While adhering to the notion of the specifically sexed cyclist of advertising, the novel itself comments upon the commercialisation of the bicycle business; it thematises and problematises this. Lois continually questions Hitchcock’s advertising plans, and ridicules his insistence that “‘the world to-day is governed by advertizement’” (75, cf. 73). When Lois is hired as commission agent, she is – ‘as a consistent socialist’ (90) – at first abhorred at the prospect of taking 25 per cent as a middlewoman. As Hitchcock tells Lois: “‘Advertizement, miss, may be the soul of commerce, but Commission’s its body’” (89). However, Lois soon learns to employ Hitchcock’s commercial language for her own and others’ purposes. In order to obtain a bicycle for her friend Elsie, Lois writes to the American stating that ‘two

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<sup>132</sup> Lois and Harold have earlier discussed their views on ideals and relations between the sexes, Harold declaring that “‘a man ought to wish the woman he loves to be a free agent, his equal in point of action’” (49).

Manitous would surely be better than one as an advertizement' (100). While Lois stands aghast at her own cheek, the inventor immediately sends her another machine, thanking her for her 'brilliant suggestion' and praising her 'way of doing business' (100-101). Imitating Hitchcock's ways, she explains to Elsie: "'Why, certainly, my dear," I answered, as if I always expected to find bicycles showered upon me. "It's a mutual arrangement. Benefits him; benefits you. Reciprocity is the groundwork of business. *He* gets the advertisement; *you* get the amusement"' (101). Similarly, when starting up the Florentine typewriting office, Lois obtains the typewriters gratis simply by using Hitchcock's business contacts. While Lois plays along with the rules of commerce, she also criticises it; when rejecting a marriage proposal from a London patrician, she rebukes him for his 'low and purely commercial nature' (222).<sup>133</sup>

When returning to England, the notion of the world being 'governed to-day by advertizement' is made explicit. After several months' absence, Lois is shocked by all the colourful advertisement in London: 'the polychromatic decorations of our English streets, looming up through the smoke, seemed both strange and familiar' (259). She drives through the city 'with a vague consciousness that Lipton's tea is the perfection of cocoa and matchless for the complexion, but that it dyes all colours, and won't wash clothes' (259). Advertising here takes on a directly physical aspect. Furthermore, when working as a corresponding journalist, Lois continually satirises the sensational 'new journalism' of the late nineteenth century: 'An unvisited oasis – and two Christian ladies to be the first to explore it: there's journalistic enterprise for you! If we happened to be killed, so much the better for the *Daily Telephone*. I pictured the excitement at Piccadilly Circus. "Extra Special, Our Own Correspondent brutally murdered!" I rejoiced at the opportunity' (183). The novel might thus be read as commenting not only upon the commercialisation of the New Woman, but also upon its own place in a late nineteenth-century literary market ruled by

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<sup>133</sup> In another of his New Woman novels, Allen shows a similar awareness of the commodification of women in marriage. Rosalba in the novel of that same name is ready to accept her guardian's offer of marriage – she feels bound to this, since he has paid her education and maintenance: "'I must. There is no help for it. I owe him so much that I cannot refuse him. 'T is a question of common honesty and the open market. I have become a commodity. I promised him; he has paid his sequins down for me; I must keep my promise'" (298). Echoing the words of Herminia Barton from *The Woman Who Did* regarding marriage as slavery, Rosalba soon realises 'the slavery into which I was selling myself' (305), and luckily enough the engagement is called off.

advertisement. While not as evidently self-referential as *Wheels of Chance*, *Miss Cayley's Adventures* thematises the commercialisation of fiction, through its figuration of the hyperbolic New Woman cyclist.

### Conclusion

As I have argued in this chapter, technologies such as the bicycle and rational dress are not in themselves inherently progressive, but their emancipatory potential depends upon how they are taken up and considered, figured both in literary and other contexts; how they are utilised as social practices in relation to existing social institutions. As in the debates concerning the naming of the New Woman, there is no straightforward divide in the medical and popular debates regarding female cyclists. Through sociohistorical and literary figurations of the New Woman cyclist, the bicycle is employed as an emblem of democratisation and women's rights, binding together concrete physical mobility and abstract visions of female emancipation. While physical mobility alone cannot offer emancipation, the former helps to realise (by providing an image of) that emancipation.

Wells's *The Wheels of Chance* and Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures* complicate the notion of the bicycle as a 'freedom machine'. By laying bare some of the processes through which the bicycle is given a wider significance, and through which it comes to be the New Woman's main symbol of emancipation, these texts problematise any reading of the bicycle as an inherently progressive technology. While Wells's figuration of the New Woman cyclist complicates a reading of the New Woman cyclist as a solely emancipatory figure, by insisting on the class specifics of the New Woman, Allen's novel through its New Woman cyclist comments upon the growing commercial interests in the late-Victorian literary market.

Jessie in *The Wheels of Chance* in the end goes back to her family, and Lois in *Miss Cayley's Adventures* does indeed marry happily in the end – after having repeatedly and single-handedly saved both the life and respectability of her husband-to-be. As Willis states, notwithstanding these 'conventional' endings, such New Woman heroines of popular or commercial fiction 'possibly did as much for women's rights as did the more serious fiction produced by the campaigners'



(‘Heaven’ 54). ‘By marketing the New Woman for mass consumption’, Willis declares, ‘the writers of commercial fiction ensured her a prominent and lasting place in popular culture’ (‘Heaven’ 64). The two novels thematise different aspects of the ‘bicycle craze’ of the mid-1890s, while complicating any one-sided reading of the New Woman cyclist as either defusing or highlighting the gender politics that the figuration envisioned.

## Chapter 4

### The New Style Nurse: The New Woman in Medical Modernity

#### 4.1 Modern Nursing and the New Woman

##### Introduction

As I have argued in the previous chapters, the latter half of the nineteenth century involved a specific technological modernity. Considering technologies as material objects, techniques, knowledges, in relation to certain technologies of self-formation, this chapter will locate another aspect of this technological modernity in medicine. Medical practice, as Ericka Johnson and Boel Berner note, ‘shapes and is shaped by different medical technologies, and ... these technologies and practices create specific, local understandings of the normal and pathological, bodies and machines’ (1). There is a crucial interaction between technologies, bodies, and medical professionals. Late nineteenth-century medical modernity involved new material technologies and systems of knowledge coming into use, coupled with new ways of interacting with these technologies.

Furthermore, there were crucial changes regarding gender configurations within the medical field – changes which, as we will see, were negotiated through the use of various technologies. As Catherine Judd notes, most feminist research on medicine at the *fin de siècle* has been done on the medicalisation or ‘hysterisation’ of women (11). This might be a simplified view, since the late nineteenth century was also the time of the emergence of modern nursing and of female doctors. As nursing schools were institutionalised, and the hospital-trained nurse emerged, the figure of the ‘new style’ nurse made her entry. Channelling questions of gender, technology and medical knowledge, the ‘new style’ nurse at the Victorian *fin de siècle* also figures as the emancipated New Woman nurse.

The engagement with technology is crucial to the emergence of modern nursing, and to the recognition of nursing as a legitimate knowledge. As Margarete Sandelowski states, whether or not they thought of them as technology, nurses have necessarily always used a variety of tools, instruments, and machines to treat

patients. Indeed, she writes, ‘it would be difficult to conceive of a nursing practice without these tools of the trade’ (1). Additionally, the relationship between nursing and technology has been of a troubling nature (Sandelowski 1). The boundaries between nurse and tool have at times been blurred; the nurse herself being seen as a doctor’s tool. Despite the fact that nursing and technology have been inexorably linked since the beginnings of trained nursing, the role of new technologies in the emergence of modern nursing has not been studied.

The definition of technology in this chapter will take on a manifold meaning. Firstly, in addition to the designation of technology as hands-on material tools and equipment, I will consider the clinical hospital itself as one of the medical technologies involved with modern nursing; a machine-institution producing – and gendering – knowledge. Secondly, I will engage with the specific relation between nurses and tools/techniques, and the idea of the nurse as tool or in control of tools. In both these definitions, the Foucauldian notion of technologies of self-formation play in, denoting the ways in which individuals form themselves and their surroundings. This manifold meaning of technology makes possible an analysis that highlights the mobility of power relations and the instability of gender roles.

I will examine the nursing-technology relationship and its theoretical implications in a reading of Grant Allen’s *Hilda Wade* (1900), seeing how this novel forms part of a late nineteenth-century debate on nursing and hospital hierarchy. Other professional nursing texts will provide a background for an analysis of the figure of the new style and New Woman nurse. I will examine the presence of the nurse figure, her interrelation with medical technologies of the time, and her part in producing medical knowledge. Simultaneously, I want to consider the ways in which novels and short stories of the time imbue the modern nurse with a specific social importance. The literary text itself is a kind of technology, a cultural and social agent that constructs and contests the image of the new style nurse, and the New Woman nurse, in discussion with medical discourse of the time. As we will see, the image of the orderly and healthy new style nurse negotiates the gendered roles within the medical profession at the *fin de siècle*, and becomes a way of making the nursing occupation into a respectable one also for middle- and upper-class women.

## The Emergence of Modern Nursing

The emergence of modern nursing, or indeed the transformation of nursing, is pictured in William Ernest Henley's 1877 collection *In Hospital*. In the two poems 'Staff-Nurse: Old Style' (13) and 'Staff-Nurse: New Style' (15), he describes his meetings with two kinds of staff nurses.<sup>134</sup> The old style nurse is an elderly figure, who only 'Rembrandt and good Sir Walter' could paint to the reader: 'experienced ease / And antique liveliness and ponderous grace; / The sweet old roses of her sunken face; / The depth and malice of her sly, grey eyes'. She has been '[t]hese thirty years' nursing there, and is held dear by both patients and students. She builds her occupation on 'experience' rather than education. The new style hospital-trained nurse, on the other hand, is painted as a handsome young woman: 'Blue-eyed and bright of face ... / Superbly falls her gown of sober gray, / And on her chignon's elegant array / The plainest cap is somehow touched with caste'. She is educated in both music and literature; she 'talks Beethoven', frowns at Balzac, and sighs at 'poor George Sand's' name. She is equipped with knowledge of languages and modern medical technologies: 'Speaks Latin with a right accentuation; / And gives at need (as one who understands) / Draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation'. In these two poems we see the change from, or the perceived opposition between, the old style nurse, relying on experience, to the Nightingale new style nurse with up-to-date medical knowledge and technical skills. Henley's old style nurse, however, is a more benign and maternal version than the stereotypical old style nurse – the new style nurse is being constructed rather differently later on.

The stereotypical image of the old style nurse in England, created as a 'slovenly, drunken battle-axe – Dickens's Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prig' (Porter 145), was opposed and taken over during the latter half of the nineteenth century by the well-read new style nurse in control of modern medical knowledge and technologies.<sup>135</sup> Judd juxtaposes the image of the old style nurse as 'aged, corpulent,

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<sup>134</sup> Rachel Norris explains the different kinds of nursing positions in a hospital. There is the Ward Sister or Head/Staff Nurse, who superintends the work, has contact with the doctors and manages the ward. Then it is the Night Nurse and the Night Superintendent. Additionally, there are several Probationers – nurses in training, whose practical training is superintended by the Ward Sister (2-3). Henley also has a poem called 'Lady-Probationer', where he speculates on the possible life of one of the probationers.

<sup>135</sup> Porter's example refers to the two characters in Charles Dickens's 1844 novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

slovenly and unconscious due to alcohol’ with the new style nurse ideal, of whom Florence Nightingale was the famous champion, distinguished by her ‘erect, vigilant managerial competence and dedication to her patients’ (6).<sup>136</sup> As we will see, this concept of the modern or new style nurse emerged, as a cultural stereotype, within and through a transformation of nursing that was intertwined with the new medical technologies of the time. There were many causes and events for this transformation, but a significant one was Nightingale’s restructuring of hospital planning in the Crimean War (1853-1856) – or as we will see, perhaps rather the construction of the Nightingale new style nurse in public discourse, via a long series of ‘nursing debates’ from the 1880s onwards; what Nightingale came to mean in later contexts.<sup>137</sup> The emergence of modern nursing is intertwined with the move of nursing training into the hospital; that is, the birth of the clinical hospital is a condition for new style nursing taking on its modern significance. Anne Summers notes that it was ‘through the establishment of hospital-based training programmes that the professionalization of nursing was ultimately achieved’ (366-367). Judd, too, acknowledges the ‘close connection between the creation of the nursing profession and the birth of the modern hospital’ (38) – I will return to this later when discussing the hospital as institutional technology.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Judd also emphasises the class aspect of the old and new style nurse distinction. In many ways, she argues, the nursing reform campaign created the image of the working class old style nurse and her transgressive sexuality in contrast to the image of the new style ‘saintly’ asexual nurse. However, she concludes that ‘the saintly nursing in and of itself conveyed a distinct eroticism that undermined claims for the new-style nurse’s function as a means of sexual purification’ (40). Of course, old style and new style nursing conjoin on many levels, even though they were constructed as opposites (see Judd 73).

<sup>137</sup> As Monica Baly points out, Nightingale alone did not reform nursing. Although the nineteenth-century nursing reforms came to be associated with Nightingale, ‘the circumstances produced the leader and the time was ripe’ (124). In the late nineteenth century, Baly writes, ‘a number of factors [medical advances such as antiseptic surgery, anaesthesia, and Koch’s discovery of the tubercle bacillus] came together to give the concept of “trained nursing” an impetus undreamt of by the mid-century reformers’ (124). As Robert Dingwall, Anne Marie Rafferty, and Charles Webster acknowledge, the care of the sick was already changing in many ways which were ultimately to produce modern nursing – Nightingale’s work was part of that process and made a major contribution to its outcome (35).

<sup>138</sup> Before the emergence of modern hospital-trained nursing, there were mainly four kinds of nursing: domestic nursing (by friends and family), the handywoman (often women from a lower social class who nursed against payment, like Dickens’s Sairey Gamp), the private nurse (women of a higher social class, engaged mostly as companions), and treatment assistants (medical attendants such as apothecaries and dressers) (Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster 7). The first three kinds were female, and all their nursing work took place in the home, whereas the fourth kind was male, and they often worked in hospitals. There were economic as well as gender distinctions: private nurses were

Nightingale played a large part in relocating nursing into the hospital, in constructing and planning hospitals, and through this also in creating the image of the new style nurse.<sup>139</sup> As a result of the public enthusiasm over her mission in the Crimea, Nightingale has been ‘almost universally accepted as the prime mover in shaping the public perception of nursing, either as the agent of its redefinition or as the quasi-mythic figure embodying the modern ideal’ (Young, ‘Entirely’ 19). Nightingale throughout her career published various books on nursing, helping to create the new style nurse as a public figure to be debated. The modern nurse that Nightingale came to symbolise denoted, as Mary Poovey points out, a reorientation within public opinion as well as within medical practice (174), involving public discussions on the nature of nursing.

A rather unknown text by Nightingale, which might help us explore what is at stake in the emergence of trained nursing, is the fragment ‘Cassandra’, which was written in 1852 and revised in 1859 after Nightingale’s return from the Crimea but never published during her lifetime. It appeared first as an appendix in Ray Strachey’s 1928 *The Cause: A Short History of the Women’s Movement in Great Britain*, placing Nightingale in a feminist tradition. While new style nursing was not yet a category in operation when Nightingale wrote this text, it displays clear links between new style nursing and female emancipation – links that would be made explicit in the 1890s with the New Woman nurse. In ‘Cassandra’, Nightingale criticises the institution of marriage and calls for a greater place for women in society: ‘Why have women passion, intellect, moral activity – these three – and a place in society where no one of these three can be exercised?’ (396) She criticises the ‘conventional’ society in which these three are suppressed: ‘What else is conventional life? *Passivity* when we want to be active. So many hours spent every day in passively doing what conventional life tells us, when we would so gladly be at work’ (405). Women desire a proper occupation, not just domestic ‘social life’ and embroidery, an occupation that demands both study and training: ‘How different would be the heart for the work, and how different would be the success, if we learnt

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integrated into the service of the affluent, while handywomen were autonomous workers among the poor (Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster 16).

<sup>139</sup> Judd calls Nightingale ‘Britain’s foremost nursing reformer and hospital architect’, her architectural plans being inextricably linked to her nursing reforms (39).

our work as a serious study, and followed it out steadily as a profession!’ (405) She calls for a systemised education of women into professions: ‘Women long for an education to teach them *to teach*, to teach them the laws of the human mind and how to apply them – and knowing how imperfect, in the state of the world, such an education must be, they long for experience, not patch-work experience, but experience followed up and systematised’ (406). Nightingale criticises the ‘home-is-the-woman’s-sphere’ notion that Sarah Grand in her famous 1894 article on the New Woman would later lament, and calls for the organising of women outside of the domestic sphere: humanity must give women the means to exercise their ‘moral activity, must give them intellectual cultivation, spheres of action’ (414). She calls out to the female reader to not just daydream but to act: ‘Awake, ye women, all ye that sleep, awake! ...The time is come when women must do something more than the “domestic hearth,” which means nursing the infants, keeping a pretty house, having a good dinner and an entertaining party’ (415). Modern nursing would come to be one such ‘sphere of action’.

Although in this early call for a system of training for women (for example as nurses) we might look for a critique of the idea of nursing as an inherently and essentially ‘womanly’ pastime – since one needs training for it – this idea goes against many of Nightingale’s other writings, which were published during her lifetime. Nightingale instead often emphasised the specifically ‘womanly’ nature of nursing, and resisted the professionalisation of nursing. In the preface to her most famous work *Notes on Nursing: What it is, and What it is Not* (1859), which sold 15 000 copies in just one month, Nightingale claims nursing as an essentially feminine profession: ‘Every woman or at least almost every woman, in England has, at one time or another of her life, charge of the personal health of somebody, whether child or invalid – in other words, every woman is a nurse’ (v). Nursing, Nightingale states, is ‘recognized as the knowledge which every one ought to have – distinct from medical knowledge, which only a profession can have’ (v). Nightingale also, for this reason, objected to statutory registration for nurses. Nursing is here considered as a feminine occupation; the care involved is considered fitting to a ‘natural’ womanliness. Indeed, Nightingale asks: ‘Can any woman wish for a more womanly work?’ (‘Health’ 396)

The stereotypical image of domesticity that Nightingale in her later writings constructed in the new style nurse figure, disguised the more emancipated ideas associated with working women as described in the unpublished ‘Cassandra’. As Mary Poovey claims in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, through reproducing the separation of spheres also within the hospital, modern nursing ‘proudly claimed a supportive, subordinate relationship to its male counterpart’ (166). This self-proclaimed subordination, Poovey states, ‘helped enhance the reputation of an activity overwhelmingly dominated by women, because it helped neutralize the specter of female sexuality contemporaries associated with independent women’ (166). Nightingale’s domestic rhetoric becomes a way of masking the radical aspects of nursing, making them acceptable for the public as well as for medical men. Poovey also argues, however, that in so doing ‘this representation of nursing helped preserve the domestic ideal it seemed to undermine’ (165). Indeed, one way of negotiating late nineteenth-century ideas regarding gender occupations is by emphasising the particular ‘womanly’ aspects of the charge – as we will see, this strategy is used in later debates on the nature of nursing.

With the success of the figure of the ‘lady with the lamp’, the first Nightingale nursing school started in 1860 in collaboration with St. Thomas’s Hospital in London – nursing education and training was taken into the hospitals (Porter 145-147).<sup>140</sup> With clinical training the number of nurses grew substantially: according to Joan Lane, before 1861 there were said to be less than a thousand nurses in hospitals, by the end of the century there were some 12,500, and in 1905 there were 11,038 nurses in voluntary hospitals and some 5000 in poor law institutions (130). Medical journal *The Lancet* reports in June 1896 from a great London nursing exhibition (organised by the journal *The Nursing Record*), held in St. Martin’s Town Hall, Charing Cross. The reporter notes that ‘[n]ursing as a profession is growing every year, and appliances for the care and comfort of the sick are daily increasing’ (‘A Nursing Exhibition’ 1589). In this exhibition ‘the latest and most approved

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<sup>140</sup> Although this was the first Nightingale training school, there had been earlier nursing schools. Among these were the Kaiserwerth Institution in Germany and St John’s House in London (founded 1848), and from 1856 pupil nurses had been admitted to King’s College Hospital in London (Poovey 237, note 3). Nightingale herself had been trained in Germany before going to the Crimea.



appliances for the comfort and welfare of the sick and injured' were put on display, hoping to prove 'of great educational value to the nurse as well as to the general public' (1589). The two weeks long exhibition hosted a conference of nurses, and 'papers of interest to the nursing profession' were read (1589). The exhibition itself with its intended wide audience demonstrates that nursing was of interest not only to the medical profession but also to the public.

Having moved into hospital settings, by the 1880s the new nurse leaders were starting to demand statutory registration of nursing, something which however was not pulled through until the first few years of the twentieth century (Baly 145-149).<sup>141</sup> The call for professionalisation of nursing sparked a long-lasting debate regarding the nature of nursing, and regarding the relation between (male) doctors and (female) nurses, a gender complication which, as Arlene Young states, 'would continue to influence relations between doctors and nurses and to shape the public debate over nursing for two decades' ('Entirely' 20). Furthermore, as we will see, it would shape the figuration of new style nurses and New Woman nurses in literature. These debates came to pinpoint questions or anxieties regarding gender, technology, and knowledge at the *fin de siècle*, embodied in the figure of the new style nurse and her place within the hospital institution. Young explains the extent to which the public took part in these debates:

Nursing was everyone's question. It was a contested field of endeavour that sparked debate not only in medical journals, such as the *Lancet*, but also in the pages of mainstream British newspapers and periodicals. The protracted public discourse over nursing spanned the mid- to late-Victorian period, encompassed issues of class and gender, as well as of hospital organisation and patient care, and played an important role in the evolution of the nursing profession. ('Entirely' 18)

While the debates before the 1880s had been well-meaning, in general appreciative of the modern nurse, the professionalisation of nursing (in Young's words: 'the alteration in the status of the lady nurse from philanthropist to potential careerist' ('Entirely' 24)) evoked criticism from many medical men. Thus, conflicts developed between doctors and new style nurses, which were also played out in the public debate. In a series of highly publicised crises in the 1870s and 1880s in large London

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<sup>141</sup> See chapters 2 to 5 in Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster for a more detailed account of the reformation of nursing into a modern profession.

hospitals – the most protracted one at Guy’s Hospital in 1880 – the ‘nursing question’ became a matter of public scrutiny (Young, ‘Entirely’ 27-28), forming a backdrop and context to figurations of the new style and New Woman nurse.

We find many attacks on and defences of new style nursing during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Underlying all the doctors’ public protests, Young states, was the fear of professional displacement (‘Entirely’ 31). The *British Medical Journal* provides an instance of this, when in April 1880 stating that doctors ‘ought to be the controllers, not controlled’ (‘The Nursing as Guy’s Hospital’ 526). Still towards the end of the century the debates were heated, with the *British Medical Journal* publishing pieces such as ‘Doctor or Nurse? – the New Danger’ (27 June 1896) and the critical ‘Nurses à la Mode’ (30 January 1897). There are recurring notices in the *British Medical Journal* of nurses having made mistakes, typically because of taking on a doctor’s role. The 30 October 1880 issue reports on the death of a patient who had his scalp-wound dressed by a nurse, on her own responsibility, instead of by a doctor. This incident, the journal states, comes of ‘the system by which the nursing ... has been made to supersede and override the responsibility of the medical staff, instead of being its docile and skilled instrument’ (‘Guy’s Hospital’ 713). A similar scolding can be seen in the report entitled ‘Poisoning by Misadventure: A Nurse’s Fatal Mistake’ (13 January 1894). In an exchange of letters published as ‘The Irrepressible Nurse’, Dr. H. in the same journal contends that ‘it is a new phase of medical practice which makes the “doctor” subsidiary to the “nurse”’ (1 January 1898 p. 51; see also 8 January 1898).

However, the conflicts between medical and nursing staff were not uniformly confrontational; nurses repeatedly stated that they did *not* aspire to be doctors (although some medical men ignored this in their responses), and several medical men wrote in defence of modern nursing. When Walter Besant claimed in April 1883 in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* that the first duty of a nurse is ‘blind obedience to the doctor’s orders’ and that it is ‘by no means desirable that nurses should be themselves students of medicine’ (364), the *British Medical Journal* two months later reports of a lecture by the surgeon Mr. Frederick Churchill, in which the surgeon ‘took exception to the doctrines recently advanced’ by Besant. The report states: ‘A nurse is not a doctor, and the doctor demands, not blind obedience, but an

intelligent, watchful, seeing, though implicit obedience' ('Lectures to Nurses' 1239). There are several supporting letters from medical men speaking for the statutory registration of nurses.

The debates on the 'nursing question' carried on for the remainder of the century, with the figure of the new style nurse being continually constructed and contested in this struggle for definitions and roles in the hospital institution. 'The real significance of these debates', Young suggest, 'lies not in the fact that nurses and nursing changed, but that many of these changes originated in response to publicly deliberated cultural or social demands, and that the public perceived and endorsed these changes' (19). The late nineteenth century witnessed a discursive battle regarding hospital hierarchies, the roles of and relationship between doctors and nurses, and regarding what constitutes medical knowledge. These issues were being fought out not only in medical journals but in public discourse and in literary works.

### **Gendering Knowledge**

Monica Baly in *Nursing and Social Change* describes the transformation of nursing, and its obtaining of status as a legitimate knowledge and profession:

For the first time in history people began to see medicine as scientific, and therefore the new image of the hospital nurse was associated with doctors, science and cure ... [The nurse] often taking over duties and techniques, and sometimes acquiring knowledge and skill once considered the prerogative of other professions and callings. (124)

The emergence of modern nursing indeed relies on the obtaining and claiming of medical knowledge, directly intertwined with the technological modernity of the late nineteenth century. In the 1882 text 'Nursing the Sick', Nightingale notes the necessity for nurses having just the latest knowledge and techniques: 'Nursing is, above all, a progressive calling. Year by year nurses have to learn new and improved methods, as medicine and surgery and hygiene improve. Year by year nurses are called upon to do more and better than they have done' (349). This is also seen in *The Nursing Record*, which started in 1888 as 'a journal for nurses, *written by nurses*' (1), and became the official magazine for nursing in Britain. In the article

‘The Nursing Profession’ (6 October 1894),<sup>142</sup> the transformation of nursing is described as a recent phenomenon: ‘Although from the earliest times the care of the sick and the suffering has been committed to the hands of women, it is only within recent years that there has arisen in this and in other countries an organised body of thoroughly-educated Nurses’ (213). This change is seen as springing from the hospital-based education of nurses: contrary to the ‘old idea that a Nurse, like a poet, was born, not made’, it is now recognised that a nurse must possess *both* certain necessary qualities (health, good temper, et cetera) and a ‘careful education in technical subjects’ (214). Modern medical technology, or training in ‘technical subjects’, is essential to new style nursing.<sup>143</sup>

There were several similar publications for nurses, providing information on technical subjects. Rachel Norris’s *Norris’s Nursing Notes* (1891) was to be used as a handbook for nurses in training. In addition to providing an account of human anatomy and pathology, Norris explains the day-to-day business of nursing. In the chapter on operations, she lists all kinds of medical technologies needed, which it usually is up to the nurse to collect: ‘basins, sand-bowl, bleeding cups (or “porringers,” as they are called), strapping can, syringes, a bit of elastic tubing, stethoscope, feeder, teaspoon, plenty of towels, ... tow, not forgetting thimble, scissors and needle, thread, and safety pins’ – and much more (38). In the section

<sup>142</sup> Also reprinted separately as ‘How to be trained as a hospital nurse’ a year later in *The Nurses’ Guide Series* (London: ‘The Nursing Record’ Offices, 1895), the article provides a list of nursing literature and an inventory of training schools in Britain. *The Nursing Record* ran from 1888 to 1956, from 1902 under the name *The British Journal of Nursing*.

<sup>143</sup> Not just medical technologies are essential to the modern nurse: there are several references in *The Nursing Record* to bicycles – that late nineteenth-century emblem of female emancipation – as being the favourite form of transport for the nurse. Laura Rotunno places the journal’s discussions of bicycles in the context of a wider interest in bodily health, along with reviewing and promoting other forms of exercise. The bicycle, however, remains for *The Nursing Record* the nurse’s specific mode of transport: ‘Bicycles themselves, bicycle flannels, nurses uniforms designed for bicycling, bicycles seats, biking maps, and a bicycle luncheon basket – all were reviewed with great enthusiasm’ (Rotunno). Medical journal *The Lancet* reports in June 1896 from the great London nursing exhibition (organised by *The Nursing Record*) that one of the first things noticed by the visitor is ‘the effigy of a nurse on a Humber bicycle’, exhibited in order to show ‘a special form of cloak for the use of district nurses who use the cycle in place of the somewhat expensive dogcart’ (‘A Nursing Exhibition’ 1589). As a September 1898 Notes section of *The Nursing Record* proclaims, when announcing a new bicycle luncheon basket especially suited to nurses: ‘The nurse who does not cycle is now the exception that proves the rule’ (‘A Bicycle Luncheon Basket’ 196). Other bicycle references in *The Nursing Record* are vol. 16, 382; vol. 18, 402-403; vol. 20, 283; vol. 27, 256; vol. 31, 277; vol. 42, 439 (thanks to Laura Rotunno for this).

A further example is the author of *Memories’ by A Hospital Nurse* (1910) who, as a district nurse, uses a bicycle to reach her patients: ‘I had a bicycle. I was a healthy woman, experienced in all kinds of nursing’ (150).

describing ward duties, lists of necessary technologies and techniques are set out; among others are for example cupping, fomentation, enemata, bandages, poultices, hypodermic injections, splints, disinfectants (140-151). Norris points out that this ‘the special and technical part of a Nurse’s training can only be acquired by actual Hospital experience’, but that beforehand knowledge of technical terms and anatomy will help. (5) This is what the *Nursing Notes* are to help with – a complement to hospital training. Modern nursing is thus bound up with both modern medical technologies and the specific move into the clinical hospital.

This interrelation between modern medical science and technologies, and the transformation of nursing, is acknowledged in the mainstream press. In June 1880, Seymour J. Sharkey (a doctor at St. Thomas’s Hospital) states in the *Nineteenth Century* that ‘[t]he development, if not the origin, of the art of nursing is mainly a result of the progress of medical knowledge’ (‘Doctors and Nurses II’ 1097). And in July 1893, Gertrude Dix remarks in the *Westminster Review*:

The progress of medical and surgical science has been followed, step by step, by a corresponding advance in skilled nursing, and the character of a nurse’s duties has completely changed. ... From having been considered a work any woman was capable of performing – a something ‘that came by nature,’ nursing is now a recognised profession, requiring a system of theoretical and practical training extending over a definite period. (‘Hard Labour in the Hospitals’ 627-628)

In these two articles, as well as in articles of the medical press, we see clearly acknowledged the role of modern medicine (science and technology) in changing the conception and practice of nursing in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This obtaining of knowledge by nurses allowed the profession an unconventional power dynamic, a reworking of power relations, between men (doctors) and women (nurses). There was a strict hierarchical organisation in the hospital: a probationer answers to the head nurse, who answers to the doctor (Norris 7). Nightingale had earlier, in *Notes on Nursing*, questioned the idea of the nurse as entirely subordinated to the doctor:

I have often seen really good nurses distressed, because they could not impress the doctor with the real danger of the patient. ... The distress is very legitimate, but it generally arises from the nurse not having the power of laying clearly and shortly before the doctor the facts from which she derives her opinion, or from the doctor being hasty and inexperienced, and not

capable of eliciting them. A man who really cares for his patients, will soon learn to ask for and appreciate the information of a nurse, who is at once a careful observer and a clear reporter. (101)

While Nightingale's text was published already in 1859, it became part of the construction of modern or new style nursing in later debates. This quote proposes that even though nurses are not advised to, they not only can but *ought* to question the doctor's authority. This might be the 'sphere of action' called for in 'Cassandra'. The nurse's scientific knowledge and technical skills, and her position in the hospital, can be seen as legitimating nursing as valid knowledge, as giving her an authority of their own.

A later interjection in the nursing debate is *'Memories' by A Hospital Nurse* (1910), by an anonymous author, which offers an account of the life of a nurse at the end of the nineteenth century. Here the author recounts her cases, describing the technicalities of inserting stitches, sterilising instruments, and more. At several occasions she questions or even disobeys the doctor's orders: '[O]ccasions do occur when one can be justified in setting aside "orders"', as experienced medical men 'do not claim infallibility or omniscience for themselves' (104). When working as a district nurse she might have better access to knowledge of the situation:

So I did what I could for them; I thought I would not be going beyond my sphere in advising and providing some simple, well-known and proved (in efficacy and harmlessness) drug or remedy, in addition to giving advice as to food, etc. I had an advantage over the doctors, in understanding the ways and habits of the people. ... Now, was I wrong or was I right? Should I have left those poor creatures to suffer, rather than commit even the slightest breach of professional etiquette? I knew I would probably do them much good, and could do no harm, by my innocent 'doctoring.' ... Let the whole body of district nurses put the question to the whole body of medical men. Under such circumstances what are we to do? (155)

This entrance into previously male-dominated grounds of science and technology is however not made easily. Another quote from Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing* formulates the novelty at the time of medical knowledge being obtained – and questioned – by women: 'It is constantly objected, – "But how can I obtain this medical knowledge? I am not a doctor. I must leave this to doctors"' (3). It is this fear, of women obtaining medical knowledge, that new style nurses must negotiate. Many of the late nineteenth-century nursing publications, following Nightingale,

encounter this threat by referring to the specifically ‘womanly’ or domestic nature of nursing. While Nightingale referred to nursing as ‘the knowledge which every one ought to have – distinct from medical knowledge’ (*Notes* v), and as the most ‘womanly work’ (‘Health’ 396), Norris in 1891 argues that: ‘[t]o be either a good sister or Head Nurse requires all the qualifications it is possible for a Nurse to have; she should, in fact, be the very highest type of Nurse – I may go further, and say the very highest type of woman’ (3). The threat to male medical authority that modern nursing may have caused was thus restricted, or contained, by specifically feminising nursing. While before the emergence of modern nursing, the nurses could be both male and female, until the last few decades nursing has been very much a gendered profession.

The belittling titles of these nursing accounts – starting with Nightingale’s *Notes on Nursing* (1859) and her *Notes on Hospitals* (1863), continuing with Norris’s *Norris’s Notes on Nursing* (1891) and the anonymous *Memories by A Hospital Nurse* (1910) – all seem to downplay their own importance, claiming a subordinate role to the works of medical men. There are further examples of humble titles of nursing accounts: for example, *The British Medical Journal* on September 28 1889 favourably reviews *Recollections of a Nurse* (by E. D. or ‘Sister Emma’). This genre of ‘notes’, ‘memoirs’, or ‘recollections’ could be seen as an attempt on the part of nurses themselves to validate their knowledge, claims made about their own role and status being made on the basis of ‘experience’ as opposed to ‘science’. While nurses were not entitled to label their medical knowledge as such, these titles allow nurses to formulate their – if subordinately feminine – experience. In *Notes on Hospitals* Nightingale fully explains how a hospital should be constructed, planned and managed. She systematically goes through aspects of the clinical hospital, from architecture, sanitary proceedings, management, to describing different systems of hospitals and of nursing. She also engages in a debate on surgical operations, which are usually the surgeon’s realm. Despite the humble title, the book proposes some drastic changes on how a hospital should be organised. By naming these ideas simply ‘notes’ the nurses are able to negotiate and claim their own positions, viewpoints, and knowledges.

## The Nurse as Tool

In addition to positing nursing as a specifically feminine occupation, another way to negotiate the new gender relations within the hospital was to posit the nurse as a tool in a merely mechanical occupation. As attested above by the nursing handbooks, new style nursing is defined in relation to the technologies of the time: the hospital into which training had recently been moved, the up-to-date medical knowledge, and the modern tools of the trade. However, while the new style nurse is in charge of new medical technologies, she herself at times is referred to as a tool or machine for the physician. Sandelowski states that for most of the history of nursing, nursing and technology have been represented as servants to doctors: ‘Physicians thought of nurses much like stethoscopes and surgical instruments, as physical or bodily extensions of physicians. ... Nurses have been regularly referred to as the physician’s eyes, hand, an “operational right arm”’ (3).<sup>144</sup>

In this way, the nurse is a double-sided character, simultaneously embodying both scientific technological care and ‘womanly’ sympathetic care: ‘[W]as the nurse separate from the x-ray machine, stethoscope, and thermometer nurses and physicians used to care for patients, or was she herself an object that physicians and others used? Did nurses use thermometers, hypodermic syringes, and monitors, or were nurses themselves thermometers, needle bearers, and monitors?’ (Sandelowski 6) References to both nurses and machines as technologies have tended to reduce nursing to being considered as merely mechanical work, thereby blurring the boundaries between nurse/human and machine/not-human.

A case in point is the author of *Memories by A Hospital Nurse* who, when first arriving at a big hospital, feels like an automaton: ‘I felt no longer a human being with warm, quick sympathies, but just a tiny bit of a mighty machine revolving in its ceaseless daily grind. Life was a treadmill’ (17). But, as time passes, she gets used to the work and sees that the life in a big hospital ‘need not necessarily destroy “the woman in one,” as I have heard it asserted of hospital training on the large scale’ (17). Being a true nurse does not just involve mechanically keeping charts: ‘If that is

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<sup>144</sup> The nurse at times refers to herself as tool in order to gain respect for her work, describing oneself as thermometer, barometer, or monitor: an 1893 American textbook on nursing encourages the nurse to think of herself as the ‘ward thermometer and barometer [alert for] any change in the ward atmosphere’ (Sandelowski 74).



nursing, one might as well have an automatic machine with clockwork arranged to give an alarm at specified hours, and jerk out a ledge containing a feeder of milk, etc., or a medicine glass with a correct dose of the mixture, placed by one's bedside' (*Memories*' 100). A nurse is more than this – she needs specific 'womanly' nursing qualities in order to prevent nursing from becoming a mechanical occupation.

At the same time, *Norris's Nursing Notes* (1891) presents knowledge and modern technology as ways of preventing nursing of becoming a merely mechanical profession. The author states her intention 'to give such a general idea of anatomy and physiology as will enable you to be intelligent Nurses, and not mere machines' (8). Knowledge of anatomy and physiology, and medical techniques, is what hinder nurses from becoming a doctor's tool. To possess knowledge, to be in control of technologies, according to Norris, works as an antidote against turning nurses into machines.

As we have seen, modern medical technologies are essential to the emergence of modern nursing and the construction of the new style nurse figure in the periodical press. The rest of this chapter will explore the dialectic between seeing the nurse as, due to the technologies of modern nursing, provided with a privileged position from which to speak, and between seeing the nurse as merely being made into a tool for doctors. As we will see highlighted and problematised in the novel *Hilda Wade*, knowledge is being gendered in many ways, in order to negotiate the new space taken up by nurses in the hospitals. Before analysing the literary works, however, we need to consider more fully the specifics of technological medical modernity in the context of new style nursing.

#### **4.2 Medical Modernity: Institutional Technology and Modern Tools**

In order to examine the relation between gender and technology within figurations of modern nursing, and how nursing comes to be seen as a feminine knowledge, we need an exploration of the functioning of knowledge as such before exploring literary figurations of the new style and New Woman nurse. Nurses did not gain authority until they entered that key medical institution, the clinical hospital. The author of *Memories' by A Hospital Nurse* refers to the hospital as a 'mighty

machine' (17), and indeed the hospital itself is a kind of technology; a machine that orders, sorts, diagnoses, produces and also genders knowledge.

### **The Hospital as Technology**

The hospital as a medical institution is a fairly recent phenomenon. While pre-modern hospitals provided treatment, food, and shelter for the sick and needy, these hospitals were not (with rare exceptions) centres of advanced medicine. They were more like hospices – that is, places providing refuge and care – and generally religious (Porter 136-139; Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster 19-21).<sup>145</sup> This disparity can be noticed in Nightingale's prefatory words in her 1863 edition of *Notes on Hospitals*, where she states that the duty of the hospital is to make people well, not ill:

It may seem a strange principle to enunciate as the very first requirement in a Hospital that it should do no harm. It is quite necessary, nevertheless, to lay down such a principle, because the actual mortality *in* hospitals ... is very much higher than any calculation founded on the mortality of the same class of diseases among patients treated *out of* hospital would lead us to expect. (iii)

Whereas pre-modern hospitals were merely to house the inmates or patients, the modern clinical hospitals were to *cure* them. The clinical hospital works as an enabling context for the new style nurse, so it is worth exploring what the technology of the hospital entails.

The change in hospital organisation took place at the end of the eighteenth century, through a medical take-over of hospitals in Western Europe. This started in Paris where doctors took the clinic as their major theme in the institutional reorganisation of medicine (Foucault, *Birth* 83). The doors were opened to medical students, as professors with access to clinical beds started to use instructive cases as teaching material. Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* analyses this transformation of

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<sup>145</sup> In London, the oldest hospitals were St. Bartholomew's (founded in 1123) and St. Thomas's (1215). These early hospitals were brought down in the sixteenth century, but a handful of them were then re-established on a new and secular basis, including St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's and also Bethlem (Bedlam). Beyond London there were no medical hospitals at all in Britain as late as 1700 (Porter 137). In the eighteenth century new hospitals were founded on a secular basis, and the first half of eighteenth century saw five further general hospitals set up in London (Porter 138).

the hospital into a clinic, that is a teaching hospital with advanced medicine.<sup>146</sup>

Modern medicine, states Foucault, emerged as this medicalisation of the hospitals took place; when the medical perception or gaze changed into the form of the clinic (xi-xii). Medicine was thus established as science, shifting from an intellectual system based on religion to one based upon a scientific model of research. Following this shift, the clinical hospital gained authority: for doctors, association with a hospital became a source of professional leverage (Porter 144-145; Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster 21-22).<sup>147</sup>

The birth of the clinic involved a change not only in the medical profession but in the production of knowledge, as producing and legitimating medical knowledge became dependent upon an idea of scientificity – this is what later makes it essential in the context of modern nursing. Foucault states that the reform of the teaching system soon assumed a much wider significance: it was recognised that the clinic could reorganise the whole of medical knowledge and establish ‘more fundamental, more decisive forms of experience’ (*Birth* 77). As Foucault writes in ‘Truth and Power’, changes in knowledge ‘are not simply new discoveries; there is a whole new “régime” in discourse and forms of knowledge’ (112). This means that truth (or what is considered as knowledge) is not to be understood as a universal fact or value, but as a historically situated ‘system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements ... linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it’ (‘Truth and Power’ 133). In other words, knowledge is to be considered in relation to power; what counts as knowledge or truth at a certain time is inextricably linked with current power relations. Knowledge and truth are thus produced and reinforced in complex ways. The clinical hospital and the new anatomo-clinical medicine established such a new ‘régime’; the institutional technology of the hospital produced notions of knowledge and scientificity.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Note that, as stated in the translator’s note, Foucault’s notion of *la clinique* has a twofold meaning; it refers to both clinical medicine and the teaching hospital (vii).

<sup>147</sup> See Terrie M. Romano’s *Making Medicine Scientific* (2002) for a British perspective on the transformation of medicine into a science, through an account of the life of Victorian medical man John Burdon Sanderson.

<sup>148</sup> Note that simultaneously as the clinic emerged, other institutions such as prisons and workhouses did as well. The conceptual changes in medicine which led to the reorganisation of the hospitals were

The organisation of a system of teaching within the hospital meant new medical approaches based on physical examination, pathological anatomy and statistics; a new anatomico-clinical medicine was born (Porter 144). Medicine came to be organised by rules of empiricist and positivist science, and was thus made ‘scientific’: ‘The clinic is both a new “carving up” of things and the principle of their verbalization in a form which we have been accustomed to recognizing as the language of a “positive science”’ (Foucault, *Birth* xx). Modern medicine was not born just from new technologies and theories, but moreover the *formal* reorganisation of hospital into clinic is ‘essential to the scientific coherence’ of the new medical organisation (Foucault, *Birth* 85). This mutation in medical knowledge involved a change in how knowledge is produced. New senses of knowledge do not imply merely new discoveries, but new ways of organising and reasoning; new ways of *producing* knowledge. Porter states that as anatomo-clinical modern medicine was born, the hospital was turned ‘from a refuge for the indigent into a machine for curing, the saviour of the seriously ill’ (Porter 148). In this way, the hospital not only functions as a machine for curing, but also as a machine that produces knowledge.

As stated, the production of knowledge is bound up with the current power relations. Foucault famously objects to notions of ‘power’ as an entity; the state and institutions such as the hospital do not ‘possess’ power. There is ‘no such entity as power, with or without a capital letter’ (‘Subject’ 340). However, while power relations are mobile, they can also be examined in the context of larger institutions and disciplines – such as the clinical hospital and anatomo-clinical medicine. While power, as Foucault states, ‘exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action’, it is also ‘inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures’ (‘Subject’ 340). There are “blocks” in which the adjustment of abilities, the resources of communication, and power relations constitute regulated and concerted systems’; for example an educational institution such as the hospital (‘Subject’ 338). While there is no such entity as power, in a knowledge-producing institution such as the hospital the available possibilities are

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driven as much by these institutional ideas as by changes in medical technology (Dingwall, Rafferty, and Webster 26).

still ‘underpinned by permanent structures’. There exists a hierarchical organisation within the institution.

However, as I have highlighted in previous chapters, Foucault also argues that one must analyse institutions from the standpoint of power relations, relations between *people*. What characterises power is that it brings into play relations between individuals (or between groups): ‘if we speak of the power of laws, institutions, and ideologies, if we speak of structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others. The term “power” designates relationships between “partners”’ (‘Subject’ 337). Power relations are mobile, changeable, and take the form of a constant struggle – not a set of rigid patterns. Within a hierarchical institution such as the hospital there still exist individual agency and possibilities for change. When studying an institutional technology such as the hospital (and the role of nurses within it), one must also account for certain technologies of self-formation; those practices whereby individuals make themselves and are made into selves (Foucault, ‘Technologies’ 225). Material and institutional technologies are part of power relations, and therefore do not merely inscribe people; individuals also have an impact on these technologies. As we will see, the doctor-nurse relationship is a clear formulation of this.

While the ‘birth of the clinic’ and new style nursing do not occupy the same time period, the transformation of nursing is bound together with the birth of the clinical hospital. The emergence of the teaching hospital is a condition for nursing taking on its modern significance. Roy Porter states that with ‘the appearance of the modern, medically oriented hospital, nursing too underwent transformation, becoming more professional and acquiring its own career structures and aspirations’ (145). As the organising of medical training in the hospital had earlier given medicine the status of science, so also the organisation of a system of nursing training within the clinical hospital helped legitimate nursing as a knowledge of its own. Nursing, which in England up until now had been rather improvised, through the authority of the clinic became institutionalised, modern. As we will see, in literary figurations the hospital becomes the enabling context which makes possible the self-making agency of the late nineteenth-century new style nurse.

Moving from the hospital as technology, I will engage with the specific medical tools and technologies at hand, seeing how they interrelate with the production of medical knowledge.

### **Diagnostic Tools**

The birth of the clinic and anatomo-clinical medicine involved a changed medical perception, the invention of a medical ‘gaze’. Foucault in *The Birth of Clinic* describes this change in producing medical knowledge as a step from the language of fantasy into ‘a world of constant visibility’ (x). The physician no longer formed his (or later, her) knowledge through imagining but by the act of *seeing*, observing, by his ‘positive gaze’. Language now ‘turned into rational discourse’, and the focus shifted to the visible, scientific and measurable (*Birth xi*). The medical gaze in this way involved a reorganisation of knowledge, changing the relation between words and things, ‘enabling one to *see* and to *say*’ (*Birth xiii*). This new anatomo-clinical perception embraces more than is said by the word ‘gaze’ alone; it contains within a single structure different sensorial fields (sight/touch/hearing) that defines a perceptual configuration (*Birth 202*). This proves to be the ‘pure’, objective and scientific gaze of the doctor, the gaze of scientificity and of legitimation by science.

This medical perception and knowledge, based on seeing and physical examination, evolved simultaneously as and in relation to new diagnostic devices; new technologies and tools participate in the transformation of medicine. Examples are the stethoscope (1816), the ophthalmoscope and the laryngoscope (mid-Victorian), the hypodermic syringe (1853), the thermometer (1860s), fever charts, sphygmomanometers, and the X-ray (1895) (Porter 41-42, 75). Technologies such as these helped make medicine scientific in that they made possible the production of knowledge by relying on seeing, visibility, and empiricism. These ‘sense-extending implements’ made it possible to measure, monitor, analyse and record body functions (Sandelowski 92) in a positivist scientific manner. By help of these diagnostic tools the doctors could carry through their physical examinations, explore the human body, and make diagnoses.

The medical gaze is indeed embodied in the ability to make a medical diagnosis, something which was exclusively reserved for doctors. This ‘allegedly

scientifically determined' gendered division of labour within the hospital could be seen as one of the main manifestations of the patriarchal nature between the two sets of relations: nurse-doctor and female-male (Gamarnikow 109). Diagnosis became a critical component of the doctor's hegemony within medicine – even the nurse's access to patients depended on prior (male) medical intervention through diagnosis (Gamarnikow 120). Sandelowski states that 'the new diagnostic technology was instrumental in both reinforcing the rhetorical and subverting the actual division between nursing and doctoring' (96). Although nurses shared many new diagnostic devices with physicians, they had different relations to them: while the nurses gained new knowledge, they did not gain the prestige that using the technologies might involve. The privilege of medical knowledge was reserved for the doctors: 'Indeed, physicians derived much of their cultural authority from their association with a technology that was seen to embody science' (Sandelowski 92). The hierarchical organisation of the hospital is upheld by the exclusivity of doctors to make diagnoses.

Through the clinical gaze, the physician was to detect the disease, produce knowledge, and find a cure. This gaze was not, however, the gaze of the nurse. The nurse's main duty was instead *observation*. Nightingale in *Notes on Nursing* states that '[t]he most important practical lesson that can be given to nurses is to teach them what to observe – how to observe – what symptoms indicate improvement – what the reverse – which are of importance – which are of none – which are the evidence of neglect – and of what kind of neglect' (88). She further states that in the nurse's calling, observation is 'essential': 'For it may safely be said, not that the habit of ready and correct observation will by itself make us useful nurses, but that without it we shall be useless with all our devotion' (94). While observation was one of the nurse's main duties, she was not authorised to give a diagnosis – that was a privilege reserved for doctors only.

As we have seen, technology in medical modernity can be observed both in the knowledge-producing institutional technology of the hospital and in the specific diagnostic devices that help form the positivist 'gaze' of modern medicine. Modern nursing emerges as it moves into the hospital, and by this also gains status as a legitimate knowledge. However, this nursing knowledge is gendered and limited.

Systems of power relations may work to ‘engender’ a specific knowledge or technology; in this case nursing as a feminine occupation. While the clinical hospital and medicine gain authority as science, the hospital – in addition to producing ideas of what constitutes knowledge – also produces certain hierarchical patterns in which knowledge is gendered and valued differently.

However, as stated above by Foucault, although the choices available are ‘underpinned by permanent structures’, there is space for individual agency also in the hierarchical organisation of the hospital. As I have presented in previous chapters, these are the technologies of self-formation, ‘which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being’ (Foucault, ‘Technologies’ 225). As seen earlier in the professional nursing texts, the nurse-doctor relationship is not fixed. The technology at work in the emergence of modern or new style nursing is not just the institutional technology of the hospital but also technologies of self-formation: the (female) nurse *can* question the (male) doctor. Henley in his poem claims that the new style nurse gives ‘Draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation’ – despite her main occupation as feminine *observer*. In addition to the nurse-doctor relationship, also the nurse-patient relationship opens up for new configurations of power. The nurse is placed in a situation where she is in control and the bedridden patient is not, and the nurse can give or withhold her attentions as she pleases. New style nursing might be considered as a way of negotiating the strict hierarchical organisation of the hospital, allowing the nurse a certain authority. As the figures of the new style nurse and the New Woman are conflated in literature, the possibilities can be more fully explored.

### 4.3 The New Style Nurse in Fiction

While doctors, both male and female, are frequent in literature of the Victorian *fin de siècle*, hospital-trained nurses are not as common.<sup>149</sup> If they are

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<sup>149</sup> Works about a female doctor include Arabella Kenealy’s *Dr. Janet of Harley Street* (1893) and Margaret Todd’s *Mona Maclean, Medical Student* (1894). The short story ‘The Doctors of Hoyland’ in A. C. Doyle’s *Round the Red Lamp* (1894) features a meeting between an old-fashioned male doctor and a New Woman doctor – the latter has all kinds of new medical technologies in her surgery.



present, they figure mostly in the background, without major significance to the narrative. The example of doctor and author A. C. Doyle illustrates this: neither in his collection of medical stories *Round the Red Lamp* (1894) nor in most of his *Sherlock Holmes* stories (where of course the doctor Watson plays an essential part) does he give any space to trained nurses. There are some exceptions, however, of modern nurses in literature of the time. Edward Berdoe's novel *St. Bernard's, or, The Romance of a Medical Student* (1887) features a romance between a research-focused doctor and a Nightingale new style or New Woman nurse. Further examples include Mary Augusta Ward's *Marcella* (1894), in which the New Woman Marcella among other trades pursues a career in nursing, and L. T. Meade's *A Sister of the Red Cross* (1901), a romantic story in which the main character works as a nurse in the Boer War. Meade also wrote *Engaged to be Married* (1890), in which nursing is presented as a possible profession, and *The Medicine Lady* (1892), where a woman takes over her husband's apothecary work after he dies.<sup>150</sup>

Critical writing on nurses in *fin de siècle* literature is equally scarce. Catherine Judd's *Bedside Seductions* (1998) treats the nurse as trope in the (mostly mid-)Victorian imagination, by analysing works of fiction and non-fiction, and also biographical accounts. Kristine Swenson's *Medical Women and Victorian Fiction* (2005) examines representations of nurses and female doctors, also mostly in the mid-Victorian era. While these books concern the nurse in earlier fiction, Keaghan Kane Turner's *In Perfect Sympathy* (PhD Diss., 2006) examines representations of nursing in New Woman fiction – however, not of the New Woman nurse as such. In general there has been a surge of scholarly interest in the intersections between nineteenth-century science and medicine, and Victorian fiction, but these studies generally do not reach the 1880s or 1890s. And as Judd writes, although the history and reformation of nursing in general has been studied, sparse notice has been paid to images of nursing and nurses created in Victorian *literature*, of the role that literary

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The protagonist of M. McDonnell Bodkin's *Dora Myrl, Lady Detective* (1900) is a bicycling Girton graduate who works as a doctor before turning detective.

<sup>150</sup> Additional examples are Belton Otterburn's *Nurse Adelaide* (1897) and L. T. Meade's *Nurse Charlotte* (1904). A fascinating figuration of the nurse is actually a male one: Gregory in Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). In the chapter named 'Gregory's Womanhood', Gregory cross-dresses, pretending to be a female nurse, in order to take care of and be allowed to nurse the New Woman Lyndall when she is dying.

texts play in the formation and negotiation of new conceptions of nursing (7-8).

Locating the new style and New Woman nurse in the specific context of the hospital as institution may open up not only such literary constructions of modern nursing, but also new gender formations as figured in the New Woman.

Conflicting images are being created of old style and new style nurses in L. T. Meade's *Stories from the Diary of a Doctor* (two series, 1894-1896), which although focusing on the male doctor's (Doctor Halifax) work also presents images of nurses. In 'The Wrong Prescription' an incompetent old style family nurse supplies her mistress with deadly doses of morphine, despite the doctor's orders. Suspicious of the nurse's qualifications, Doctor Halifax goes to the hospital and searches the books for her name. As it turns out, the nurse had been dismissed from her education at Guy's Hospital after only one year in training. Upon learning this, the doctor exclaims: "Then ... the woman is not even a medical nurse. If she is still with that poor girl, her wretched victim may be dead before we can rescue her" (164). At the end of the story the nurse even gives her patient the wrong prescription, further endangering the girl's life. The text formulates an imagination of the old style nurse as lacking sufficient clinical training, and unknowing of the risks of administering drugs. It thus provides a warning of the damage that a nurse without clinical training (an old style nurse) can do, stressing the importance of proper training for nurses. A figuration of a new style nurse can be found in another Doctor Halifax story, 'The Ponsonby Diamonds'. Here, the new style nurse is the 'strong-minded and brave girl' Beryl Temple who wants above all to be trained as a hospital nurse (339). The doctor helps her to become a probationer at one of the large hospitals, and after her training is completed she is placed on his own staff of nurses. By her professional skills she then helps Doctor Halifax solve the case of one of their patients. In these two stories, it is only through the hospital institution that a modern nurse can gain legitimation, her experience acknowledged. Rather than nursing being figured as a naturally 'womanly' calling, proper nursing is here signified by a degree from the key medical institution. Apart from these two stories, however, nurses are strangely absent in *Stories from the Diary of a Doctor*. In the story 'My First Patient' the nurses are mentioned in passing, as being present at an important surgical operation: 'The two nurses were like trained automatons in our hands' (12). The

nurses in this story, although silently present, are posited as mere tools for the doctors.

New Woman novels with a nurse figuring include Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* (1887), Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894), and Florence Marryat's *An Angel of Pity* (1898).<sup>151</sup> *A City Girl* and *The Story of a Modern Woman* both problematise the notion of nursing as a specifically gendered occupation. Nelly, the unmarried working woman of *A City Girl*, has a baby who falls ill. After being turned out of her East End family home, she takes her child to a West End women's and children's hospital. In the clinical hospital, modern medical technology and the perceived specific femininity of nursing blend together:

'Everything in the room was perfect. The walls were ornamented with all sorts of devices, the doors had painted panels, the tables were covered with flowers, the floor was stained to match the doors and windows. Nurses tripped in and out, wearing dainty dresses, roses at their throats, and steel instruments at their waists' (158).<sup>152</sup>

Coupling roses and steel instruments, a nurse's duty is not only to help cure the patients, but also see to it that the patients' rooms are pleasant and have flowers. Nightingale in *Notes on Nursing* even gives prescriptions for how to walk and dress in order not to disturb the patients. While the scientificity of the clinic (reinforced here by the perfection and cleanliness as well as the medical instruments) legitimates nursing as a proper occupation, there seems to be a specifically feminine behaviour required: nurses 'trip' in and out wearing 'dainty dresses'.

This feminine spreading of well-being is also seen in *The Story of a Modern Woman*. At a visit to the hospital, the 'modern woman' Mary Erle and her friend Alison notice the nurses, who are described simultaneously as sexless and as spreading well-being:

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<sup>151</sup> Many New Woman writers themselves trained as nurses. Kathleen Mannington Caffyn ('Iota') trained as a nurse at St. Thomas Hospital before beginning her literary career (Shaw and Randolph xi). George Egerton (pseudonym for Mary Chavelita Dunne) also trained as a nurse in London (Shaw and Randolph xiv). Olive Schreiner (although dreaming of a doctor's career) started nursing school in Edinburgh and London, but had to end her studies because of poor health (Schreiner, 'Letter').

<sup>152</sup> This perfected hospital environment can be compared to the chemist's grubby shop, where Nelly goes before consulting the hospital. Here 'the sun beat through a closed window, and a hundred flies buzzed about, lean-looking creatures that fed on pills and powders and lived among surgical instruments' (147). After examining the baby, the chemist declares that there is nothing the matter with the baby, except that she keeps it too clean: "'Let it grub a bit'" (148). New style nursing (especially as promoted by the miasma theory advocate Nightingale), such as found in the clinical hospital, emphasises open air and cleanliness.

At intervals down the long room, with its shining white boards, blazed large fires, lighting up, here and there, the bland, unemotional features of a nurse, under her smooth hair and white cap – the sexless features of a woman who has learnt to witness suffering without a sign. Yet they brightened the room, these girls, in their lilac cotton gowns and ample aprons, with their practical faces, and their strong, helpful hands, suggesting an out-of-doors where people were healthy and happy, a place where no one was agonising. (188-189)

Despite this specifically feminine quality of hospital nurses, the mothers in both novels distrust them. Nelly in *A City Girl* cannot trust her baby to a nurse unless that nurse is a mother, saying that “‘it’s cruel and wicked to let women nurse children that never had them’” (165). When the baby dies in hospital, Nelly swears ‘the most terrible oaths against childless wives and unmarried women who dared to call them nurses’ (169). Alison’s mother in *The Story of a Modern Woman* refuses to hire a hospital nurse when her daughter falls ill: “‘I will not, while I have health and strength,’” said Lady Jane severely at the breakfast table, when the question of a trained nurse was mooted, “‘consent to have my child nursed by a hireling. It is a mother’s duty’” (220). Instead, Mary is to nurse her friend. In these texts, old style nursing in the home is preferred by the two mothers, who do not trust new style hospital nurses to be caring or motherly enough. These ‘womanly’ nurses, wearing ‘dainty dresses’ and carrying ‘steel instruments’, somehow do not seem womanly enough.

*An Angel of Pity* not only takes part in the late nineteenth-century debate regarding the relation between doctors and nurses in the hospital, but also interjects in the contemporary discussion on vivisection.<sup>153</sup> Most of the novel takes place in the hospital where the main character Nurse Gordon works. The hospital nurses (‘all dressed alike, in the regulated costume’) present the Nightingale ideal: ‘They were a set of fresh, healthy, intelligent young women, aged from five-and-twenty to five-and-thirty’ (7). Nurse Gordon, Girton-educated and with a medical degree from Edinburgh, however gets into trouble when questioning the established hospital hierarchies. When Nurse Gordon objects to the famous surgeon Mr. Lesquard cruelly

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<sup>153</sup> Vivisection (surgery on a living organism, typically an animal, for experimental rather than healing purposes) was a topic of heated debate in Britain during the turn of the century. See the three-volume *Animal Welfare and Anti-Vivisection 1870-1910: Nineteenth-Century Women’s Mission* (ed. Susan Hamilton, 2004) for an exploration of the ties between the late nineteenth-century women’s and anti-vivisection movements.

operating on dying patients, just for the sake of experimenting, the Matron quickly corrects her: “I can’t have any remarks of that kind made here! The visiting surgeons of the hospital know their own business best, and the nurses have nothing to do but to obey their orders. ... Yes, yes, of course the doctors know best” (9, 14). The machinery of the hospital, as well as offering the modern nurse an active position within medical modernity, produces hierarchies of knowledge: the nurse must ‘obey’ the doctor who ‘know[s] best’. But when ‘Mr. Quinton Lesquard, the great operator’ (17) mistreats one of her own patients, Nurse Gordon intervenes directly, calling him ‘cruel, inhuman’ (18). Another doctor disciplines the nurse: “Hush! hush!” exclaimed Doctor Marshall, “you are forgetting yourself, Nurse. Remember, all you have to do is to obey” (19). The cruel surgeon demands her dismissal, and laughs off the advice of his fellow doctor to keep Nurse Gordon as a friend rather than as an enemy: “Why! What harm could a *woman*” – contemptuously – “do to a man like me? ... Women have no business in the profession at all! As nurses, they are useful enough; but for nurses we don’t require these very highly-educated young ladies” (21). The famous surgeon’s words display an anxiety regarding the unstable hierarchical system. Presenting Dr. Lesquard as a cruel and contemptuous character, the text encourages the reader to side with the New Woman nurse heroine.

Surprisingly, Dr. Lesquard proposes to Nurse Gordon, tempting her with promises of setting up a nursing home. She initially objects, stating to be instead “in love with [her] profession, and want no other lover in return” (135). She criticises the institution of marriage, declaring that she “won’t marry anyone at all! ... Marriage is just what I always said it was – a mistake and a nuisance. ... I shall keep as I am, and do as I choose. ... No petty restrictions for me. Fancy trying to restrict a woman who is a B.A., and passed with honours at Edinburgh” (139-140). However, even more surprisingly, Nurse Gordon then accepts the offer. The promised nursing home does not come into being, and the marriage is unhappy; the doctor is annoyed with his wife’s insistence on continuing working as a nurse, and with her disobedience in the home. When Nurse Gordon discovers that Dr. Lesquard is a vivisectionist – she catches him in the act of dissecting her own dog! – she finally leaves him, having first thrown a surgical knife at him in her rage. When she finds

out that his knife-wound has become infected, Nurse Gordon returns to nurse her husband back to health, and promises to stay with him – on the condition that he lays off vivisectioning.

*An Angel of Pity* manages to critique medical authority (and in extension the hospital as knowledge-producing institution) and vivisection by, from a nurse's point of view, pointing out the inhumanities that can exist in a hospital. Marryat adds a further critique that explicitly highlights the gender specifics of hospital hierarchies, by emphasising the parallel labour division, struggles and themes in the clinic and in the home. At the hospital, Dr. Lesquard experiments on living patients, and at home on living animals (he keeps a laboratory there for the purpose). At the hospital there are certain power structures between doctor and nurse, as there are certain power structures between husband and wife in the home. Note that Nurse Gordon continues to work as a nurse throughout the novel, and ends by up nursing her husband back to health. While he agrees to stop vivisectioning, she continues nursing. In the end, the famous Dr. Lesquard admits a space in the medical world for the professional – but still marriageable – modern nurse, and the novel becomes an interjection in the late nineteenth-century nursing debate.

These texts give an idea of the complex interrelation between gender and technology in the figure of the new style nurse, and of the role of hospital in constructing this ideal. While nurses wear 'dainty dresses' and seem to spread a specifically feminine well-being, they are at the same time involved with and in control of authoritative knowledge, enabled by the clinical setting to a certain self-making agency that distinguishes the late nineteenth-century nurse from her earlier generation. In this ongoing medical and also literary debate, nursing knowledge might indeed *have* to be coded in such femininity, gendered, in order to be acknowledged – in a similar manner to that in which Nightingale 'masked' her radical ideas in domestic rhetoric. We find an even clearer interjection in the debates on new style nursing and hospital hierarchies in Grant Allen's 1899 novel *Hilda Wade*. In this novel, gender and technology (both as the hospital institution and as material medical technologies) work together to create the image of a new style or even New Woman nurse, putting forward a critique of medical authority.

### **The New Woman Nurse: *Hilda Wade* (1900)**

*Hilda Wade* (1900) was first published in twelve instalments between March 1899 and February 1900 in *The Strand Magazine*. Allen died before finishing the story, so the two last tales were finished by his friend A. C. Doyle (Kestner 158). The novel presents the New Woman nurse and detective Hilda Wade, who by her knowledge and skill overpowers the most esteemed medical man in London. Accompanying the text are illustrations by Gordon Browne, who a year earlier had illustrated Allen's *Miss Cayley's Adventures*. Browne also illustrated the front cover, which shows Hilda standing upright, her left fist clenched by the waist, turning her head around worriedly – and behind her we can make out the contours of her enemy the menacing Professor Sebastian lurking in the shadows, looming over her shoulder. The whole illustration is printed in gold colour.

Allen's last novel has received little critical attention, and only in the context of detective fiction. Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan in *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (1981) mention the novel alongside *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (25-28) as one of Allen's female detectives. Joseph A. Kestner treats the novel (157-170) in *Sherlock's Sisters* (2003), in which he examines the female detective in Victorian and Edwardian fiction. Kestner acknowledges the centrality in the novel of the debate regarding 'female epistemology, whether women are intuitive or rational' (159), but apart from this provides no more than a recounting of the narrative. He places the novel in the context of detective fiction, within its 'sub-genre of the physician-detective narrative' and lists some predecessors of the kind (158). Chris Willis in her essay 'The Detective's *Doppelgänger*: Conflicting States of Female Consciousness in Grant Allen's Detective Fiction' mentions the novel as an instance of what she calls the 'dual consciousness' (151) of the New Women in Allen's detective fiction, but she does not analyse the novel itself.<sup>154</sup> Unlike *The Type-Writer Girl* and *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, the novel has not yet been republished in a scholarly edition (only in various unedited reprints).

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<sup>154</sup> This remark by Willis is the only mention of *Hilda Wade* in the entire collection by Greenslade and Rodgers. Willis instead focuses on Allen's 1890 novel *What's Bred in the Bone*, in which a debate similar to that in *Hilda Wade* on 'feminine intuition' takes place.

The narrator, Hubert Cumberledge, is a doctor at St. Nathaniel's hospital, where Hilda works. The novel begins not with a description of Hilda herself, but instead with a description of the famous doctor at St. Nathaniel's: Professor Sebastian. After mentioning Hilda's 'gift' in only a sentence, the focus turns to this 'eager, fiery-eyed physiologist' who with his 'new methods' inspires every young man (that is, doctor) at the hospital 'to work in his laboratory, attend his lectures, study disease, and be a scientific doctor' (1). Indeed, Sebastian is the 'greatest authority in Europe on comparative anatomy' (2), and Hubert even names him 'the Master' (1). Sebastian has, Hubert explains, only 'one overpowering pursuit in life – the sacred thirst of knowledge ... an End to attain – the advancement of science' (3). As the reader will later see, this makes Sebastian ignorant of any moral issues. Sebastian is presented as modern medicine embodied, and clearly he is the star of the hospital.

But Hilda too has one overpowering goal in life – she is, as the title of the edition republished in 2006 sets out, a woman with tenacity of purpose – and that goal is to clear her father's reputation and expose Sebastian. As found out later in the novel, Sebastian once poisoned a patient and blamed Hilda's father, who died of heart failure while awaiting trial. When Hilda and Hubert first meet, at a mutual friend's dinner party, she asks him to help her get a nurse's place at St. Nathaniel's. Hubert is shocked:

‘A nurse's place!’ I exclaimed, a little surprised, surveying her dress of palest and softest Indian muslin; for she looked to me far too much of a butterfly for such serious work. ‘Do you really mean it; or are you one of the ten thousand modern young ladies who are in quest of a Mission, without understanding that Missions are unpleasant? Nursing, I can tell you, is not all crimped cap and becoming uniform.’ (72)

Hilda replies that she does know it, since she is a nurse already at St. George's Hospital. But Hilda wants to go to St. Nathaniel's 'to be near Sebastian' (72): “‘It is my object in life to be near Sebastian – to watch him and observe him. I mean to succeed...’” (73). As expressed by Nightingale, to observe patients is one of the main duties of the modern nurse – but Hilda also observes her superior. Hubert notices early on that Hilda is watching Sebastian: ‘Gentle and lovable as she was in every other aspect, towards Sebastian she seemed like a lynx-eyed detective. She had some



object in view, I thought, almost as abstract as his own – some object to which, as I judged, she was devoting her life quite as single-mindedly as Sebastian himself had devoted his to the advancement of science’ (6). Their mutual friend Mrs. Mallet tells Hubert that whatever Hilda’s goal may be, “‘Hilda’s life is bounded by it. She became a nurse to carry it out, I feel confident. From the very beginning, I gather, a part of her scheme was to go to St. Nathaniel’s”’ (7). Hilda becomes a nurse at St. Nathaniel’s to be near Sebastian – but while Hubert takes this to be because of Sebastian’s revolutionising methods and inspiring manner, it is really in order to bring him down. Unknowing of all this, Sebastian makes Hilda the Sister of Hubert’s ward, and attaches her to his own observation-cots as a ‘special attendant for scientific purposes’ (96).

Hilda is clearly a New Woman; a New Woman nurse. She works and earns her own living, she cycles – she even brings her bicycle with her to South Africa, to where she travels unaccompanied. And, of course, Hilda enjoys physical exercise: ‘In spite of her singular faculty of insight, which sometimes seemed to illogical people almost weird or eerie, she was in the main a bright, well-educated, sensible, winsome, lawn-tennis-playing English girl’ (70). While she does not repudiate marriage as an institution, she has told Mrs. Mallet that she does not intend to marry. Hilda has enough money to live upon without working, but: ‘she didn’t intend to marry, she said; so she would like to have some work to do in life’ (6). Hilda refuses to marry Hubert before she has attained her end in life. As a stereotypical New Woman, she has read Ibsen (who, as noted in the first chapter of this thesis, is often seen as a precursor to New Woman writing), and Hilda defends the writer stating that Ibsen ‘is leavening England’ (335).

When Hubert still cannot figure out what Hilda’s precise plans are, he draws the conclusion that: “‘It is very odd,” I mused. “But there! – women are inexplicable!”’ (7) Throughout the novel, Hubert thus disclaims Hilda’s knowledge, trying to explain its mysteriousness by gendering it. The scientificity or authority of knowledge is not available for all to claim. The novel itself, however, notes the unstable construction of these gender binaries.

### **‘a rare measure of feminine intuition’: Gendering Knowledge**

Already at the outset of the novel there is a debate regarding what constitutes knowledge. As seen in the discussion on the emergence of modern nursing, a part of the struggle regarding hospital hierarchies and the doctor-nurse relationship concerns what exactly can be called knowledge. Hubert describes Hilda as ‘a girl of strong personal charm, endowed with an astounding memory and a rare measure of feminine intuition’ (70). While the male doctors at the hospital possess medical knowledge, Hilda’s knowledge is only to be named ‘feminine intuition’. As Willis states, ‘feminine intuition’ was a concept often used ‘to denigrate women under the guise of praising them’ (‘Detective’ 145). Hubert posits what he sees as two kinds of knowing as gendered opposites:

The man of Nathaniel’s was revolutionising practice; and those who wished to feel themselves abreast of the modern movement were naturally anxious to cast in their lot with him. I did not wonder, therefore, that Hilda Wade, who herself possessed in so large a measure the deepest feminine gift – intuition – should seek a place under the famous professor who represented the other side of the same endowment in its masculine embodiment: instinct of diagnosis. (3)

Knowledge is here clearly gendered: the medical/ising scientific gaze, as described by Foucault, is seen as the male counterpart to feminine intuition. As observed in the exclusivity of doctors to diagnose a patient, the valuing of medical skills and tools is dependent upon *who* utilises them. Sandelowski states that the user context determined the prestige of implements that both physicians and nurses used: ‘Nursing continued to be legitimated not by science but, rather, by gender. The nurse’s use of a device depended on “skilful manipulation”; the physician’s use, on “scientific training.” Nurses watched out for patients the way nurturing women did; they did not watch them the way scientists did’ (98). There is a perceived gendered difference between the doctor’s scientific gaze and the nurse’s observation. Whether a skill was viewed as simple or complex, Sandelowski states, depended also on who performed it: ‘From the beginnings of trained nursing, the very definition of skill was “gender-biased”’ (99). While the male characters in the novel do not recognise it, the text itself however highlights the instability of this gendered division of knowledge, in calling the doctor’s gift an ‘instinct’ of diagnosis. An ‘instinct’ must surely be as

un-scientifically ‘feminine’ as ‘intuition’ – not based on scientific training. Furthermore, when Hilda later reveals Sebastian’s true nature as a man who would stab another man without remorse, “‘if he thought that by stabbing him he could advance knowledge’”, Hubert at once recognises ‘the truth of her diagnosis’ (132). He likewise recognises the truth of her processes of ‘detection’ (149). Clearly, while Hubert does not consider the gender confusion of his own narration, the text itself problematises the gendering of knowledge produced within the hospital machinery.

Sebastian himself recognises Hilda’s value as a nurse; not only as an assistant, but he also admits that ‘her subtle knowledge of temperament sometimes enabled her closely to approach his own reasoned scientific analysis of a case and its probable development’ (4). He here genders and, like Hubert, posits Hilda’s ‘subtle knowledge of temperament’ as merely approaching his own ‘reasoned scientific analysis’; she may come close to his approach but it is not the same kind of intelligence. He states that while most women are “‘quick at reading *the passing emotion*’”, they cannot judge underlying character that well (4). With men it is the other way around: most men “‘guide their life by definite *facts* – by signs, by symptoms, by observed data’” (5). But Hilda is an exception; according to Sebastian, she “‘stands intermediate mentally between the two sexes’” in that she recognises “‘*temperament* – the fixed form of character, and what it is likely to do – in a degree which I have never seen equalled elsewhere. To that extent, and within proper limits of supervision, I acknowledge her faculty as a valuable adjunct to a scientific practitioner’” (5). He considers Hilda, if her feminine skills are controlled, as valuable not in herself but as a help to the man of science.

Hilda early on in the novel displays an example of her extraordinary mental abilities, in a case at St. Nathaniel’s. Sebastian is experimenting (firstly, on animals) with a new anaesthetic which he names ‘lethodyne’. The problem is that while in some cases the patients recover, in other cases they die. While Sebastian cannot make out any pattern from ‘his great researches’ (7),<sup>155</sup> it is Hilda who draws the connection. She suggests to Sebastian what types of animals will recover, and what

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<sup>155</sup> Details of these great researches, Hubert mentions, can be found discussed at length ‘in Volume 237 of the *Philosophical Transactions*. (See also *Comptes Rendus de l’Academie de Médecine*: tome xlix. pp. 72 and sequel.)’ (10). These details might have been included to give the doctor an air of scientificity, or the novel a sense of trustworthiness, or perhaps to mock a scientific establishment.

types will not. Sebastian protests but after experimenting further he is convinced. However, he still cannot bring forth a satisfying answer to *how* the lethodyne works. After further unsuccessful experiments the professor is forced to ask Hilda about her principle, which turns out to be judged by the analogy of Indian hemp, learned by her experience as a nurse:

‘This is clearly a similar, but much stronger, narcotic. Now, whenever I have given Indian hemp by your direction to people of sluggish, or even of merely bustling temperament, I have noticed that small doses produce serious effects, and that the after-results are most undesirable. But when you have prescribed the hemp for nervous, overstrung, imaginative people, I have observed that they can stand large amounts of the tincture without evil results, and that the after-effects will pass off rapidly.’ (12)<sup>156</sup>

While it was the Professor who prescribed the Indian hemp, only Hilda with her hands-on experience as a nurse could observe the patients and draw these conclusions.

Hilda’s suggestions, and her knowing more than a doctor, displease Sebastian. He mutters: “‘That young woman knows too much! ... We shall have to suppress her, Cumberledge... But I’ll wager my life she’s right, for all that. I wonder, now, how the dickens she guessed it!’” (10-11) The gendered division of knowable knowledge is noticeable: Hilda is a great nurse, but when questioning the doctor’s authority within the hospital she needs to be suppressed. Hubert tries to account for her explanation by denying its scientificity or status of knowledge, again referring to Hilda’s ‘guessing’ as intuition. Sebastian however judges it as “‘just rapid and half-unconscious inference’” (11). The two men of science discuss how a woman can obtain such knowledge – in their eyes she cannot have obtained it by scientific methods (since these are in the masculine domain), but rather she must have ‘guessed’ it by order of that specifically feminine intuition. To the reader, however, this distinction between Sebastian’s ‘instinct of diagnosis’ and Hilda’s ‘half-unconscious inference’ must seem unsound.

Hilda offers herself as a human trial subject to the new drug, and after she wakes up unharmed Sebastian too insists upon taking the drug: “‘Science can only be

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<sup>156</sup> The animals that Hilda suggests are cats (at least domesticated ones) and weasels. Sebastian tries this out immediately: the lethodyne kills the matron’s two lazy Persian cats, while the weasels experimented upon wake up ‘as lively as crickets’ (11).

advanced if men of science will take their lives in their hands,” he answered.

“Besides, Nurse Wade has tried. Am I to lag behind a woman in my devotion to the cause of physiological knowledge?” (15) They both make it through well, although Sebastian not as fresh as Hilda.

When St. Nathaniel’s receives a young woman in need of surgery, Sebastian is determined to perform the dangerous operation by help of lethodyne. While the patient responds to the drug very well, both Sebastian and his medical colleagues (the best surgeon in London is there to perform the surgery) are certain that she will die after the operation. Hilda however, recalling many relatives of the patient who have been in her and Sebastian’s care and recovered, is certain that the patient will survive. By Hilda’s care – feeding and comforting (which Sebastian denies as being nursing, but Hubert thinks to himself that ‘that was just what it *was*’ (23)) – the patient recovers. Sebastian is made furious over this:

“Cumberledge, this is disgraceful! A most disappointing case! A most provoking patient! ... She *ought* to have died. It was her clear duty. I *said* she would die, and she should have known better than to fly in the face of the faculty. Her recovery is an insult to medical science. What is the staff about? Nurse Wade should have prevented it.” (27-28)

Hilda, as a nurse, is scolded both for knowing more than Sebastian, and for not seeing to it that his and the faculty’s ideas of ‘medical science’ are adhered to. After this case, Sebastian gives up on lethodyne, denying the status of Hilda’s methods as scientific knowledge simultaneously as he discards the drug: “The weak point of lethodyne is this: nobody can be trusted to say *when* it may be used – except Nurse Wade, – which is *not* science” (29). To the reader, the Professor’s criteria for scientificity seem arbitrary; the novel thus lays bare and satirises the ways in which knowing is valued differently depending on gender and place in the hospital organisation.

Hilda’s knowledge is examined already the first time that she and Hubert meet, at the house of a mutual friend. When Hilda, after seeing Hubert’s card with his name and workplace, recounts his family history, he is astonished and, as he says to her, fails to perceive her train of reasoning: “Tell me how you guessed it” (68). Hilda’s response to this is rather quizzical. She laughs and replies:

‘Fancy asking *a woman* to give you “the train of reasoning” for her intuitions! ... That shows, Dr. Cumberledge, that you are a mere man – a man of science, perhaps, but *not* a psychologist. It also suggests that you are a confirmed bachelor. A married man accepts intuitions, without expecting them to be based on reasoning.... Well, just this once, I will stretch a point to enlighten you.’ (67)

As Kestner points out, the point here is that of course women have and can reason (161). Hilda goes on to explain systematically how, by her extraordinary memory of details such as newspaper notices, and her deduction skills, she knew his family history: “So there you have ‘the train of reasoning.’ Women *can* reason – sometimes” (68). As the reader cannot fail to notice, Hilda in fact by her observation and experience uses ‘the train of reasoning’ not sometimes but always.

Hubert still cannot recognise Hilda’s train of reasoning as other than ‘guessing’ or ‘witchcraft’. He repeatedly throughout the novel calls Hilda his ‘sibyl’ (11 *passim*) or ‘witch’ (65 *passim*). Other names Hubert uses for her are ‘Cassandra’ (75), ‘[Delphic] pythoness’ (75), and ‘prophetess’ (76). She has a ‘sphinx-like’ (10), ‘sibylline’ (99), or ‘Chaldean’ (185) smile. He even declares: “It is witchcraft!” (65) To this, Hilda replies that it is not witchcraft, but memory: “Though I say it myself, I never met anyone, I think, whose memory goes as far as mine does. ... [A]s far *in extent*, I mean. I never let anything drop out of my memory. As this case shows you, I can recall even quite unimportant and casual bits of knowledge, when any chance clue happens to bring them back to me” (65-66). When Hubert fails to understand Hilda’s reasoning, he falls back on the ‘witchcraft’ simile, and argues his own standpoint as a man of modern science: “You are trying to mystify me. This is deliberate seer-mongery. You are presuming on your powers. But I am not the sort of man to be caught by horoscopes. I decline to believe it. ... Woman’s intuition is all very well in its way: but a mere man may be excused if he asks for evidence” (74-75).

When others do not understand Hilda’s knowledge, they name it ‘intuition’. But Hilda offers to explain her methods fully to Hubert: “I think I can make you see and feel that I am speaking, not at haphazard, but from observation and experience” (74). She declines Hubert’s notion of her knowledge as being any kind of mystery: “No, not second sight; nothing uncanny, nothing supernatural. But prevision, yes:

prevision based, not on omens or auguries, but on solid fact – on what I have seen and noticed” (76). Hilda protests and repeatedly corrects Hubert: ““Have I not often explained to you that I am no diviner? I read no book of fate; I call no spirits from the vasty deep. I simply remember with exceptional clearness what I read and hear” (99). While the male characters in the novel refuse to acknowledge Hilda’s methods as science, the text itself highlights this arbitrary distinction of gendered knowledges.

At this point it might be useful to consider Hilda’s detective and nursing skills in comparison to another literary detective of the same period: A. C. Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes (who was, in turn, famously based on the Edinburgh surgeon Joseph Bell). This is in order to further highlight the problematisation in Allen’s novel regarding the gendering of knowledge. Holmes’s methods are positivist scientific, to be compared with the diagnosis of modern medical science. Hilda explains her methods as prevision based on ‘observation and experience’ – and her extraordinary memory. Holmes similarly describes his methods as ‘observation and deduction’. Holmes’s methods of detection are laid out in the two first Holmes stories *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890).

There is a stress on the scientificity of Holmes’s profession, which seems important to legitimate it. Holmes in *The Sign of Four* calls himself a ‘scientific detective’ and states that detection is ‘an exact science’ (65). Holmes has indeed written several scientific articles and books, ‘all on technical subjects’ that are relevant to his profession (65). Dr. Watson in *A Study in Scarlet* narrates that Holmes is very interested in science and that he sometimes ‘spent his day at the chemical laboratory, sometimes in the dissecting-rooms’ (14). Holmes refuses to take the easiest way in detection, he demands empirical evidence. In *The Sign of Four* he, like Hilda, declares: ““No, no, I never guess. It is a shocking habit – destructive to the logical faculty” (67).

In *A Study in Scarlet* Dr. Watson gives an account of Holmes’s methods. Even though Holmes is not a physician he has an extensive knowledge of anatomy and poisons. Holmes’s methods of investigation or detection could be compared to a Victorian medical examination, his scientificity relying on the anatomo-clinical methods of seeing and listening in order to produce knowledge. His examinations of callers indeed resemble that medical experience described by Foucault in *The Birth*

*of the Clinic*. It consists in seeing, questioning and drawing conclusions: ‘observation’ and ‘deduction’ (Doyle, *Study* 17). In *The Sign of Four* Holmes further explains his methods of work and detection. He states that three qualities are needed for the ideal detective: the powers of observation, deduction, and knowledge (65). This is to be compared with Hilda’s extraordinary memory and ‘solid fact’, from which she draws her conclusions. With her ‘analytical accuracy’ Hilda sees the fine grains, details, and can ‘divide and distinguish between case and case’ (96). The clinical medical gaze proves to be the gaze of both doctor and detective; the gaze of scientificity and of legitimating by science.<sup>157</sup>

Hubert stands as a Watson-like character who admires the Holmes-like Hilda and follows her wherever she goes, documenting her travels and doings. Like Watson, Hubert does not understand his friend’s reasoning until explained to him. Hubert in fact reacts to her just as Watson usually does to Holmes: ““You are right,” I admitted, after a minute’s consideration. “I see it now – though I should never have thought of it”” (99).

Hilda employs the same methods as Holmes (observation and deduction), but to the male doctors in the novel her ‘gift’ cannot be referred to as science – only as feminine intuition. Notions of gender decide what counts as knowledge and what does not, both in a doctor’s and a detective’s diagnosis. Although Hilda and Sebastian form their knowledge of things in very much the same manner, he as a (male) doctor and she as a (female) nurse inhabit separate positions in the hospital hierarchy; they do not share the same privileges to produce ‘truth’. A further instance of this is Sebastian’s evidence at the inquest of a murdered wife: ““self-inflicted – a recoil – accidental – I am *sure* of it.” His specialist knowledge – his assertive certainty, combined with that arrogant, masterful manner of his, and his keen, eagle eye, overbore the jury’ (127). The authority of Sebastian’s position legitimates his statement as true. Hilda’s words on the other hand, in her position as a nurse, cannot be given the same authority: ““But I will never marry anyone till I have succeeded in clearing my father’s memory. I *know* he did not do it; I *know* Sebastian did. But that

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<sup>157</sup> The ‘detection’ of disease and perpetrators of crime is carried out in a similar way, resting upon the act of *seeing*. See Pasquale J. Accardo’s *Diagnosis and Detection: the Medical Iconography of Sherlock Holmes* (1987) for a further examination of the similarities between methods of establishing knowledge in *fin de siècle* medical discourse and in works of detective fiction.



is not enough. I must prove it, I must prove it!” (189) Hilda’s knowledge is not recognised as the same kind of knowledge as Holmes’s or Sebastian’s. While her position in the hospital provides Hilda with an opportunity to expose Sebastian, that very position also presupposes certain (gendered) behaviour. Similarly to the way in which Nightingale’s radical ideas for reorganising hospitals needed to be ‘masked’ in domestic rhetoric, Nurse Hilda can only claim a specifically feminine knowledge. While the clinical hospital setting enables the self-making agency of the new style and New Woman nurse, this agency is restricted; the institutional technology simultaneously produces hierarchies of knowledge that limit what the modern nurse can say.

### **‘a dangerous edged-tool’: the Nurse as Tool**

As we have seen, the clinical hospital can work as a way of gendering and valuing knowledge along with its hierarchies. It is also important to examine the hands-on relation of nurses with medical equipment. Earlier discussed articles in nursing publications debated whether the nurse was to be considered as a tool for the doctor, or if the nurse herself was in control of the modern tools and technologies. These two views, the nurse *as* technology or tool, and the nurse *in control of* technologies, co-exist in the nursing texts above, and in *Hilda Wade*.

Professor Sebastian on several occasions refers to Hilda as an instrument or tool. When Hilda has been at work for some weeks at St. Nathaniel’s, Sebastian remarks to Hubert regarding Hilda: “‘A most intelligent girl ... A nurse with brains is such a valuable accessory – unless, of course, she takes to *thinking*. But Nurse Wade never *thinks*: she is a useful instrument – does what she’s told, and carries out one’s orders implicitly” (84). There is here a double significance to the notion of the nurse as tool; if kept obedient and docile she is good, but she can also turn into a dangerous instrument.

In the chapter ‘The Episode of the Needle that Did Not Match’ the idea of the nurse-as-tool is problematised. After Sebastian has been made aware of Hilda’s real name and purpose – she is the daughter (Maisie) of Dr. Yorke-Bannerman, who Sebastian made the world to believe a poisoner – he is set on getting rid of her. Hubert realises that ‘a life-long duel was in progress between these two – a duel of

some strange and mysterious import' (133-134). During an operation Sebastian mentions, with a meaning glance at Hilda, the 'notorious poisoner' Dr. Yorke-Bannerman (135). Hubert notices that 'some strange passage of arms' has taken place between Sebastian and Hilda, but for the time of the operation they 'called a truce over the patient's body' (138). The operation scene is depicted by Browne: Hilda is in the centre of the illustration, being scared off by the haughty Sebastian. Circled round the two, watching, are six somber-looking medical men.



'With a little scream she let the basin fall.'  
Grant Allen. *Hilda Wade*. London: Grant Richards, 1900. Ill. by Gordon Browne. p. 136.

WITH A LITTLE SCREAM SHE LET THE BASIN FALL.

Although the hospital as an institution has certain hierarchical patterns, the struggle here is carried out between *people*. Hilda acknowledges that her presence at the hospital is itself a threat to Sebastian, Hubert overhearing them: "No; I do not threaten. Not in words, I mean. My presence here is in itself a threat, but I make no other. You know now, unfortunately, *why* I have come. That makes my task harder. But I will *not* give it up. I will wait and conquer" (139). The presence of the nurse within the hospital institution, in itself, is a threat to the male doctor's authority. As we see later, Sebastian's knowledge is considered as truth in that it is acknowledged as such by the public and the medical authorities. The life-long duel that is being fought is not merely one between two individuals, but it is also a struggle of gendered power relations within the hospital. After this conversation, Sebastian tells Hubert that Hilda has misbehaved on a "mere point of discipline. She spoke to me just now, and I thought her tone unbecoming in a subordinate. ... We must get rid of her, Cumberlandge: we must get rid of her. She is a dangerous woman! ... Intelligent, je vous l'accorde; but dangerous – dangerous!" (140-141) Hilda is challenging the

hospital's hierarchical organisation by questioning the famous doctor. Now Hubert too mistrusts the doctor.

During a post-mortem in the laboratory, where both Hubert and Hilda are present, Sebastian puts his plan into action. Wanting to compare the blood of the deceased with the blood of a healthy person, he asks to take a sample from Hilda, using a hypodermic syringe. So the professor takes her offered forefinger, nipping the last joint between his finger for a moment; then

he turned to the saucer at his side, which Hilda herself had placed there, and chose from it, cat-like, with great deliberation and selective care, a particular needle. Hilda's eyes followed his every movement as closely and as fearlessly as ever. Sebastian's hand was raised, and he was just about to pierce the delicate white skin, when, with a sudden, quick scream of terror, she snatched her hand away hastily. (143)

Sebastian is angered at Hilda's decline of offering a blood sample, calls her hysterical and instead asks a medical student. He repeats to Hubert his determination to get rid of Hilda: "I see it more plainly each day that goes. We must get rid of that woman" (145). Sebastian then, once again, refers to Hilda as a tool: "She is a dangerous edged-tool; that's the truth of it ... When she's clothed and in her right mind, she is a valuable accessory – sharp and trenchant like a clean, bright lancet: but when she allows one of these causeless hysterical fits to override her tone, she plays one false at once – like a lancet that slips, or grows dull and rusty" (146). As Sebastian says this, he is polishing one of the needles that he is handling on a bit of leather, 'as if to give point and illustration to his simile' (146). He compares her to a lancet; a scalpel with a double-edged blade. While Sebastian earlier referred to Hilda as 'a useful instrument', now the 'accessory' nurse has turned into 'a dangerous edged-tool'.

Hilda, who managed to catch the needle unobserved, presents it to Hubert for him to examine. One of the most common jobs for the modern nurse, or most associated with her, is giving injections. As attested by nursing publications such as *The Nursing Record* and *Norris's Nursing Notes*, being able to hand such syringes

are part of a nurse's training.<sup>158</sup> Hubert asks Hilda what made her distrust the needle. As a reply to this, Hilda opens a drawer, and takes out several other needles:

‘See here,’ she said, handing me one: ‘*these* are the needles I keep in antiseptic wool – the needles with which I always supply the Professor. You observe their shape – the common surgical patterns. Now look at *this* needle, with which the Professor was just going to prick my finger! You can see for yourself at once it is of bluer steel and of a different manufacture.’ (146-147)

Hilda detected this both from the look on Sebastian's face, but also from the needle itself: “‘I had my suspicions, and I was watching him closely. Just as he raised the thing in his hand, half concealing it, so, and showing only the point, I caught the blue gleam of steel as the light glanced off it. It was not the kind I knew. Then I withdrew my hand at once, feeling sure he meant mischief’” (147-148). By her acute observational skills as a nurse, and her knowledge of modern medical tools, Hilda thwarts the Professor's plans. She shows Hubert further oddities in the needle: a tiny groove in the needle, which Hilda is certain that Sebastian made himself. The rough, jagged edge, she explains, would hold the material that he wished to inject, while its saw-like points would tear the flesh imperceptibly (149). When Hubert comments on the quickness of Hilda's detection, she compares herself to the medical tool which they are handling: “‘Yes; but you tell me my eyes are as sharp as the needle’” (149).

Sebastian's purpose is, of course, to ‘get rid of’ Hilda for good: Hubert tests the needle which turns out to contain the bacillus of pyaemia; blood-poisoning. Hubert realises that Sebastian's character is at stake, ‘the character of the man who led the profession’ (150). An illustration by Browne depicts Hilda and Hubert at this moment: she by the microscope, studying the pyaemia bacillus, he standing behind grasping his heart and confessing his love for her – a notable complication of the contested roles both between doctor and nurse, and of notions of masculinity and

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<sup>158</sup> The hypodermic needle, which made the hypodermic syringe such a common feature in modern medicine, was invented in 1853 simultaneously in Britain and in France. Both *The Nursing Record* and *Norris's Nursing Notes* give advice on how to handle syringes. However, a note in *The Lancet* in June 1886 questions the authority of a nurse to administer hypodermic injections. Criticising modern nurses for not being ‘content to limit their ministrations to the simpler duties of preparing and administering food, giving medicine, &c., as specifically directed, dressing wounds, and generally tending the sick with gentleness and intelligence’, the unsigned note states: ‘We [medical men?] have again and again protested against the folly and, as we believe, danger of permitting nurses to carry and use hypodermic injectors. The use of the hypodermic syringe by non-medical hands ought, we are convinced, to be peremptorily and formally interdicted’ (‘High Nursing and Hypodermic Injections’ 1180).

femininity. While Hubert cannot suppress his emotions, Hilda coolly and scientifically prefers the microscope to his amorous declarations.

The novel in this way demonstrates ways in which technologies do not just inscribe people, but people also act in relation to them and even shape them. By her extraordinary intelligence, observational skills and knowledge of medical technologies, the nurse Hilda challenges the leading man in the medical world. Despite her place in the hierarchical machinery of the hospital, she still has an agency of her own. Hilda herself underlines the importance of individual agency: “Fatalists believe that your life is arranged for you beforehand from without: willy nilly, you *must* act so. I only believe that in this jostling world your life is mostly determined by your own character, in its interaction with the characters of those who surround you. ... It is your own acts and deeds that make up Fate for you” (83). Nurse Hilda has control over medical technology both as knowledge and as material object – she is not merely made into a tool herself. Indeed she questions the doctor’s authority, and in the end overpowers him, by her specific medical knowledge and technical skills.

However, despite her hold on the professor, Hilda admits that she cannot expose Sebastian – no one would believe her. Both she and Hubert know the truth, but: “who else would credit it? I have only my word against his – an unknown nurse’s against the great Professor’s. Everybody would say I was malicious or hysterical. Hysteria is always an easy stone to fling at an injured woman who asks for justice” (152). Her knowledge as a nurse (and woman) is not recognised. Hilda decides to leave the hospital, in order to flee further attempts on her life, and also to find out a new way to expose Sebastian. Hubert too repudiates his former hero and mentor Sebastian, and leaves the hospital.

### **Negotiating Positions**

We have seen the institutional technology of the hospital as gendering and valuing knowledge. The hierarchical organisation of this knowledge-producing machine creates a notion of the nurse as a doctor’s tool. However, as we also have seen, individual agency or technologies of self-formation are crucial in this equation. To study institutions is also to study power relations; that is, people. Power, within a

Foucauldian framework, is not something that can be ‘held’ by a person or institution – or ‘withheld’ from another: ‘one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with “dominators” on one side and “dominated” on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies’ (Foucault, ‘Powers’ 142). Furthermore, power relations are mobile, and therefore changeable. The relationship between Hilda and Sebastian can best be understood in this context: not as fixed structures, but instead as constant struggles. A power relationship, writes Foucault, is ‘at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent struggle’ (‘Subject’ 342) – very much like the ‘life-long duel’ that is going on between Hilda and Sebastian. There is always a reciprocal appeal. From the moment that Sebastian recognises Hilda as her father’s daughter, he is determined to get rid of her. Hubert is made instinctively aware ‘that a duel was being waged between Sebastian and Hilda. A duel between the two ablest and most singular personalities I had ever met; a duel of life and death’ (16-17). The moment of recognition is illustrated by Browne: the austere Sebastian and a defiant Hilda quietly meeting each other’s glances.



THEIR GLANCES MET.

‘Their glances met.’ Grant Allen.  
*Hilda Wade*. London: Grant  
Richards, 1900. Ill. by Gordon  
Browne. p. 24.

Hilda, by her interrelation with modern technologies such as the clinical hospital and the tools in it, is able to negotiate the power relations in the hospital, the rigid hierarchical positions that doctors and nurses inhabit. As the novel progresses, we see that notions of what counts as knowledge can also be changed.

While the clinical hospital setting is essential for recognising nursing as a legitimate vocation, a nurse's knowledge is not seen as equal to a doctor's. The emergence of modern nursing involves a gendering of the profession; the nurse must be coded in a certain femininity to be able to speak. The specific gendering, feminisation, of the occupation may be seen as a way of negotiating the new space and authority opened up for women. As mentioned above, Hilda is described as standing intermediate mentally between the sexes. However, she is at the same time repeatedly commented upon for her 'womanliness'. Hubert gazes at her and ponders: 'What a beautiful, tender, sympathetic face! And yet, how able!' (132) Nursing is clearly a gendered profession. Hubert cannot think what can have induced a girl like Hilda, with "means and friends, with brains and ... beauty" to take up the nursing profession (132). Hilda remonstrates: "And yet," she murmured, looking down, "what life can be better than the service of one's kind? You think it a great life for Sebastian!" (132) Hubert replies: "Sebastian! He is a man. That is different, quite different. But a woman!" (132) Hilda also excuses herself by referring to her being a woman: "I came to Nathaniel's for a purpose. ... I want to be near him [Sebastian]... for an object I have at heart. Do not ask me to reveal it; do not ask me to forgo it. I am a woman, therefore weak" (133). Later on, Hubert explains that Hilda's incapability of turning him away despite her plans means that she, after all, is "still a woman!" And Hilda consents: "A woman: oh yes: very much a woman!" (182)

Despite this claim to 'weak' 'womanliness', Hilda lives and acts independently, while Hubert cannot do without her. When Hilda leaves St. Nathaniel's, Hubert also leaves in order 'to find and follow Hilda' (160). Even though Hilda in a letter implores Hubert not to seek her out, he cannot keep away ('If Hilda did not want *me*, I wanted Hilda: and being a man, I meant to find her' (160)), but follows her through applying 'Hilda's own methods' (163). His first idea is to consult Hilda – who is not there:

In all circumstances of difficulty, I had grown accustomed to submitting my doubts and surmises to her acute intelligence; and her instinct almost always supplied the right solution. ... 'How would Hilda herself have approached this problem?' ... I became at once aware how great a gulf separated the clumsy male intelligence from the immediate and almost unerring intuitions of a clever woman. (160-161)

Comparing his reasoning to Hilda's 'infallible instinct', Hubert realises how 'feeble and fallacious' is his 'own groping in the dark'. Hilda's knowledge of temperament, he ponders, would have revealed the answers at once (172). Contrary to Hubert's former views, it is now female knowledge that is unerring and methodical.

By applying Hilda's methods of deduction, Hubert makes out and follows her trail to Rhodesia in South Africa. The people there have noted her coming because of the 'strange peculiarity' of her being the only woman of means who has ever gone up there of her own free will: 'Other women had gone there to accompany their husbands, or to earn their livings: but that a lady should freely select that half-baked land as a place of residence ... puzzled the Rhodesians' (179). Hubert finds Hilda cycling the countryside: 'In the midst of all this crude, unfinished land the mere sight of a bicycle, bumping over the rubbly road, was a sufficient surprise: but my astonishment reached a climax when I saw as it drew near that it was ridden by a woman!' (181) The bicycle is of course the emblematic New Woman mode of transport, emphasising Hilda's independence.<sup>159</sup> As an occupation in Rhodesia Hilda regularly cycles to two or three isolated houses, where she gives lessons to children.

On this same bicycle Hilda, simultaneously carrying a baby in her arms, later flees an army of Matabele soldiers who on Sebastian's orders attack the farm where Hubert and she are staying. Everyone at the farm is killed except Hilda, Hubert and the baby. Hilda is determined to hold the baby, despite Hubert's insisting on him carrying it on his horse: 'She vaulted lightly on to the seat, white and tired as she was, with the baby in her left arm, and her right hand on the handle-bar. ... Hilda

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<sup>159</sup> Africa is set as a backdrop to Hilda's modern air as a New Woman. When Hubert (himself riding on an African pony) first sees her in Rhodesia, he is amazed when seeing a bicycle coming towards him: 'I could hardly believe my eyes. Civilisation indeed! A bicycle in these remotest wilds of Africa!' (180) When Hilda and Hubert are chased by the Matabele, Allen poses the modern bicycle (and the female cyclist) as opposite to Africa: 'Looking behind me with a hasty glance, I could see that the savages, taken aback, had reined in to deliberate at our unwonted evolution. I feel sure that the novelty of the iron horse, with a woman riding it, played not a little on the superstitious fears; they suspected, no doubt, this was some ingenious new engine of war devised against them by the unaccountable white man: it might go off unexpectedly in their faces at any moment' (212).



pedalled bravely by my side' (208). This grand moment is captured in Browne's illustration, where we see Hilda, with the baby in hand and a grave look on her face, spurring her bicycle – Hubert watching her from the saddle of his horse.



'Hilda pedalled bravely by my side.'  
Grant Allen. *Hilda Wade*. London:  
Grant Richards, 1900. Ill. by Gordon  
Browne. p. 209.

HILDA PEDALLED BRAVELY BY MY SIDE.

This image of the modern, emancipated, but still essentially maternal and 'womanly' woman, seems emblematic of that 'dual consciousness' of Allen's New Woman characters; their uneasy position between emancipatory struggle and biological urges. Like any cycling New Woman, Hilda wears rational dress (although this is not accentuated in Browne's illustration): 'Hilda rode like a man, astride – her short bicycling skirt, unobtrusively divided in front and at the back, made this easily possible' (211-212). Hilda and Hubert manage to escape to the nearest town, where the men battle against the Matabele.

With Hubert following Hilda, the doctor-nurse power relationship is reworked: it is now a question of Hubert obeying or disobeying Hilda. Hubert has followed Hilda despite her orders: "Yet you *have* come against my orders: and –" she paused, and drew a deep sigh – "oh, Hubert, I thank you for daring to disobey me" (182). Hubert, after consulting Hilda on what to do, buys a farm and learns to be a farmer in order to be near her: "Since *you* say the word, I am a farmer already. I feel an interest in oats that is simply absorbing" (194). After the battle in Rhodesia, Hilda decides to travel to India, to prepare a new plan – and Hubert follows her: "I want to know where I am going myself. Wherever you go, I have reason to believe, I

shall find that I happen to be going also”” (249). On the way there they meet the hypochondriac lady Meadowcroft and her husband, with whom they agree to travel through India. As Hubert is a doctor, and Hilda a trained nurse, the lady is delighted for their company. When in India, Hubert, Hilda and lady Meadowcroft go on an expedition into the hills to see the Buddhist monasteries. Once again they are tricked by Sebastian, who hires a rogue guide to take them into the Tibet where hostile monks reside who take them for Christian missionaries willing to infiltrate their land.<sup>160</sup> After managing to escape, they are called by some locals to help nurse a white man, dangerously ill with a malignant fever – and the man turns out to be Sebastian.

The tables are now turned: nurse Hilda, who the famous professor Sebastian has repeatedly tried to kill, is now nursing him. Sebastian’s position as the leading medical man in Europe and the star of a London hospital is replaced by the role of a helpless patient in the Himalayan mountains: ‘On a native bed, in a corner of the one room, a man lay desperately ill: a European, with white hair and with a skin well bronzed by exposure to the tropics. Ominous dark spots beneath the epidermis showed the nature of the disease. He tossed restlessly as he lay, but did not raise his fevered head or look at my conductor’ (313). Sebastian is indeed too ill to hear Hubert, even ‘too ill to reason’ (315). Already Hubert has surrendered to Hilda’s wants, now Sebastian too is under her control.

Sebastian at first refuses to be nursed by Hilda, but she still prepares the professor’s food and chooses his servants. As Hubert says, Hilda will not poison Sebastian (as he tried to poison her), neither will she order her servants to murder him (as he ordered the Matabele to kill her). Hubert points out this contradiction to Sebastian: “‘Consider that you sought to take her life – and she seeks to save yours! She is as anxious to keep you alive as you are anxious to kill her”” (319). The scientific coolness of the great doctor is posed against the nurse’s care. However, as Sebastian points out, he and Hilda pursue their own objects: Hilda wants to keep him

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<sup>160</sup> Just as Hilda’s modern bicycle serves to confound the Matabele, so also her photography interest helps to convince the monks. Since coming to India, Hilda has developed an interest for amateur photography: ‘She had bought herself a first-rate camera of the latest scientific pattern at Bombay, and ever since had spent all her time and spoiled her pretty hands in “developing”’ (283). By displaying her knowledge of Buddhist ceremony and in the end presenting her photographs of Buddhist temples and tombs, Hilda appeases the violent monks and makes possible their escape.

alive so that he can confess to killing her father. Their life-long duel is a struggle of what counts as truth and knowledge. As we have seen throughout the novel, the words of a nurse are not considered as truth when put against the words of a respected medical doctor. Hubert urges Sebastian to tell the truth, but Sebastian replies: “‘To tell the truth! ... I have lived for science: Shall I wreck all now? There are truths which it is better to hide than to proclaim. Uncomfortable truths – truths that never should have been – truths which help to make greater truths incredible’” (320-321).

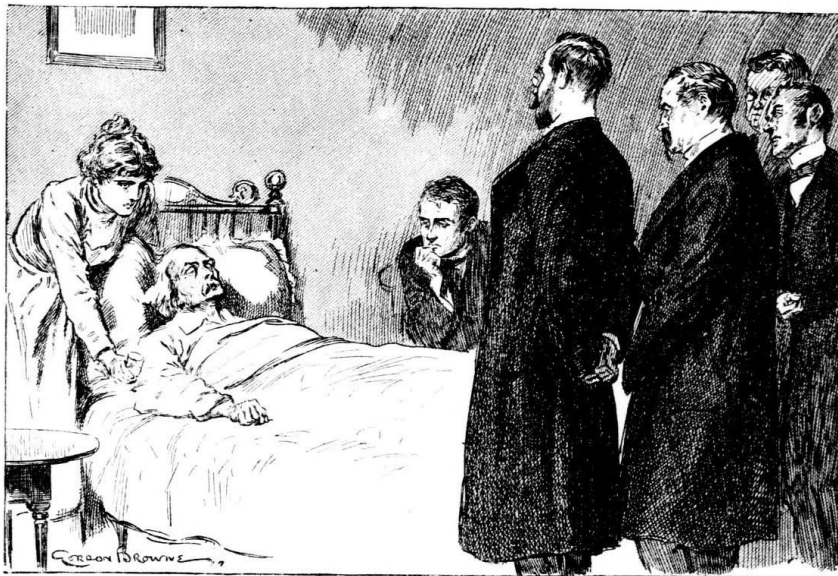
Since Hilda left the hospital, Sebastian has followed her. Now, after she and Hubert have saved his life, they are instead following him. They take the same steamer as the recovered professor back to England. Sebastian is now afraid of Hilda: ‘He never even looked at her. I knew why: he dared not. Every day now, remorse for the evil part he had played in her life, respect for the woman who had unmasked and outwitted him, made it more and more impossible for Sebastian to face her’ (330). Hubert states that, try as he might, Sebastian cannot avoid himself and Hilda: “‘We will dog you now through life ... It is *you* who need to slink and cower, not we. The prosecutor need not descend to the sordid shifts of the criminal’” (329). The steamer is shipwrecked, and Hilda – bold as always – catches a life-raft, onto which she drags herself and the unconscious Sebastian. Hubert also comes onboard it, and they all survive. After three days they are rescued by another steamer, on which Sebastian is nursed and fed by Hilda: ‘Sebastian lay back, with his white eyelashes closed over the lids, and the livid hue of death upon his emaciated cheeks; but he drank a teaspoonful or two of brandy, and swallowed the beef essence with which Hilda fed him’ (346). This time he even begs Hilda to stay with him.

Hilda’s saving his life a second time finally makes Sebastian confess. He succumbs to Hilda’s specific demands: a public, attested confession, given before witnesses, signed and sworn to. Since, as Hilda says, somebody might throw doubt upon her word and Hubert’s. The doctor-nurse power relationship is now turned, as Hilda is the one making demands. She cries to Sebastian: “‘Do it for me! I ask it of you not as a favour, but as a right. I *demand* it!’” (350) The witnesses that she demands are such “‘as will carry absolute conviction to the mind of all the world: irreproachable, disinterested witnesses: official witnesses’” (350). These are a

commissioner of oaths, a medical doctor, the man who defended Hilda's father at the trial, and the journalist who watched the case on Sebastian's behalf. These same medical and juridical men, all part of large knowledge-producing institutions, would before have thought Hilda 'malicious or hysterical' – but now, with the famous doctor Sebastian's words legitimating her story, she is seen as trustworthy. Sebastian confesses, to the official witnesses, to having murdered Dr. Yorke-Bannerman all those years ago. He acknowledges the role that Hilda plays in making the truth public:

'A remarkable woman, gentlemen, ... a very noteworthy woman. I had prided myself that my willpower was the most powerful in the country – I had never met any to match it – but I do not mind admitting that, for firmness and tenacity, this lady is my equal. She was anxious that I should adopt one course of action. I was determined to adopt another. Your presence here is a proof that she has prevailed. ... The police ... were incompetent and the legal advisers of Dr. Bannerman hardly less so, and a woman only has had the wit to see that a gross injustice has been done.' (353-355)

This negotiating of positions, this turning of tables, is emphasised by Browne's illustration.



'A remarkable woman, gentlemen, said he.' Grant Allen. *Hilda Wade*. London: Grant Richards, 1900. Ill. by Gordon Browne. p. 354.

A REMARKABLE WOMAN, GENTLEMEN, SAID HE.

We see the great professor lying forceless on his death-bed, with a stern-looking Hilda standing by the side nursing him, for the moment holding a glass of drink for him. Hubert sits by the other side of the bed. At the foot of the bed, facing the trio, stand the four medical and juridical men as witnesses to the situation. At last, Hilda's

truth as a nurse is acknowledged as the correct one, and she is able to prove her father's innocence.

At the end, the caring nurse Hilda is placed against the scientifically callous doctor Sebastian. When Hilda cures patients by her loving care, Sebastian discards such knowledge and instead cares for nothing but science. When, earlier on in the novel, a patient dies and thus provides him with a medical case to investigate, Sebastian exclaims: ““Now, fortune has favoured me. Lucky for us he died! We shall find out everything”” (141). This is just one instance where his scientific coldness is made apparent. Hilda is finally able to challenge the well-known professor and men of large institutions, but still through the specific gendering of her knowledge into ‘feminine intuition’ and the gendering of the nursing profession itself. Hilda and Sebastian are posited as opposites; he embodying the authoritative male medical scientificity, and she the ‘womanliness’ of nursing. Highlighting the gender specifics of knowledge production in the late nineteenth-century hospital, the novel presents a nurse and modern medical technologies interrelating to rework power relations from inside the machinery.

## **Conclusion**

While a large institutional technology such as the hospital may encourage hierarchical organisations in which persons come to be seen as tools, technologies can also be taken up by people in order *not* to see themselves or to be seen as tools. In the case of new style nursing, technologies are employed by nurses in order to be recognised as acting individuals. The new style nurse might at times be seen as a doctor's tool, but it is also her interrelation with new technologies that forms her profession and legitimates her knowledge: the clinical hospital takes part in making nursing ‘scientific’. Simultaneously, nursing is presented to be – as stated by Nightingale – the ‘most womanly work’. The institutional technology of the hospital not only produces but also genders knowledge. Modern nursing makes possible a certain kind of feminine authority, but this authority is limited. The modern nurse must negotiate her position as professional nurse and at the same time remain ‘womanly’. Medical modernity in this way simultaneously limits the nurse as it provides her with legitimacy, a position from which to speak.

Late nineteenth-century debates regarding modern nursing and the hierarchies within the hospital were conducted not only in medical journals and in public discourse, but in literary works of the time. Institutional and textual changes feed into each other. In Allen's *Hilda Wade* the new style nurse and the New Woman come together, forming an image of the New Woman nurse as an agent within the institutional technology of the hospital. The novel negotiates the hospital's hierarchical positions, problematises established definitions of knowledge, by presenting a New Woman nurse possessing what are considered both 'masculine' or 'scientific' knowledge and technical skill. While medical and public discourses of the time attempt to distinguish between the gendered types of knowledge that the nurse and doctor might possess, *Hilda Wade* problematises this. By presenting different kinds of knowledges as constantly threatening to collapse into, or at least become a version of, the other, the novel posits knowledge as something produced in specific power relations.

## Coda

As I have argued in this thesis, there is much at stake in determinist readings of New Woman figurations in connection with technology. In the case of the New Woman and early feminism, technological determinism inscribes bodies as passive objects – a notion which endangers a feminist project of political change, and in extension any viable feminist literary criticism. Reading the gender-technology relation as a one-way influence, as do Heidegger, Kittler, and their followers, does not hold. Instead of trying to place the agency in either the machine itself or in the human subject, we need to consider the two forces together. Foucault's notion of technologies as part of power relations, in conjunction with technologies of self-formation, provides a better way; acknowledging a subject within discourse, an *interrelation* of society and technology, body and machine – and a possibility for change. Focusing on material technologies of the late nineteenth century allows us to examine the New Woman in a historiospecific context.

While this thesis has focused on figurations of the New Woman, mainly in commercial literature, the interrelations between gender and technology at the Victorian *fin de siècle* are manifold. As part of a growing interest in material culture, within literary scholarship, the last few years have seen an upsurge of critical works on technology and literature (a tendency which was gestured towards in the first chapter of this thesis). Just in the previous year were published the collection *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch* (ed. Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley), and Tamara Ketabgian's *The Lives of Machines: The Industrial Imaginary in Victorian Literature and Culture*, the latter focusing on the slightly earlier period 1830s-1870s. Both these books focus on the 'close mingling and identification', rather than antagonism or determinist influence, between people and machines (Ketabgian 1). The British Society for Literature and Science, set up in 2006, regularly hosts panels and papers on literature and technology at their annual conference. Clearly, the New Woman is not the only figuration of an involvement with technology in and through literature.

Furthermore, the specific technologies examined throughout this thesis as connected to the New Woman – the typewriter, the bicycle, medical technologies –

could be accompanied by various other technologies of the time. Along with the typewriter could be included other office and communication technologies such as the telegraph, the telephone, systems of phonography, and even the postal system. Along with the bicycle could be included other transports such as the omnibus and later motor vehicles. Literary and cultural figurations of the New Woman involve additional technologies such as the phonograph, photography, and film-making. The New Woman doctor could be yet another field of investigation. Examining these manifold interactions with gender and technologies would however extend far beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>161</sup>

A further project might lie in examining technologies of detection in late nineteenth-century modernity, especially in New Woman detective fiction. Along with new technologies of modernity the late-Victorian era saw an upswing of detective fiction, following the success of A. C. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes character. As we have seen, many of the New Woman characters in the novels discussed in this thesis also act as detectives: Bella in *The Girl Behind the Keys*, Lois in *Miss Cayley's Adventures*, and Hilda in *Hilda Wade* all solve mysteries. New Woman detectives also star in, for example, Catherine Louisa Pirkis's *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective* (1894); George R. Sim's *Dorcas Dene, Detective* (1897); Fergus Hume's *Hagar of the Pawn-Shop* (1899); L. T. Meade's *The Detections of*

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<sup>161</sup> Gesturing towards a few examples might be useful, to prove my case.

In Henry James's novella about a telegraph office, *In the Cage* (1898), a young working class telegraphist is able to enter the life of an upper class customer, through her insight into the intimate messages that he sends. These 'erotics of the technological storehouse', Thurschwell argues, depend on a 'melding of commercial and sexual transactions which coalesce around the new forms of access to knowledge of others provided by new communication technologies and the workers who run them' (*Literature* 10).

Conan Doyle's first short story in *The Strand Magazine*, 'The Voice of Science' (1891), with the help of a phonograph intervenes in the late nineteenth-century marriage debates which were so intertwined with the New Woman debates. Perhaps the most famous literary phonograph is the one used by Dr. Seward in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the recordings then typed up by New Woman secretary Mina Harker. George Bernard Shaw also employs the phonograph to create a lady-like diction in his play *Pygmalion* (1912).

New freedoms can be found, as by the main character in Morse Symonds's [pseud. George Paston] *A Writer of Books* (1899), via the London omnibuses. Similarly, Alison in Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) describes the pleasures of riding on top of Parisian omnibuses, and the trams. The main character of Grand's *The Beth Book* (1897) enjoys riding the London omnibuses, and as a final example, Amy Levy's poem 'Ballade of an Omnibus' (1888) further records such rides. See Ana Parejo Vadillo's *Women Poets and Urban Aestheticism: Passengers of Modernity* (2005) for a mapping of London-based women writers and their engagements with omnibuses and other urban transports, and Deborah L. Parsons's *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (2000) for a study of the *fin de siècle* woman artist and writer as *flâneuse*.



*Miss Cusack* (1899-1900); and M. McDonnell Bodkin's *Dora Myrl, Lady Detective* (1900).<sup>162</sup> McDonnell Bodkin's stories prove a particular case in point, with its almost hyperbolic use of New Woman machinery. Dora Myrl is not only a Girton graduate, but furthermore a bicycling female doctor, who earlier has worked also as a telegraph girl, a telephone girl, and a lady journalist. She finally settles as a lady detective, solving crimes with the help of modern technologies. The upswing of female detectives in fiction can definitely be read in the relation to the new social and gender configurations of the late nineteenth century, to the concept of the New Woman, and in relation to the new technologies of detection of the time.

The main aspiration of this thesis has been to highlight, examine, and problematise the interrelation between gender and technology in *fin de siècle* New Woman and popular literature, locating the New Woman figure as a sociohistorical as well as a textual phenomenon. In addition to analysing specific late nineteenth-century technologies, the thesis has aimed to draw attention to the technology of language itself; literary texts as social and cultural agents. Material objects and institutional technologies, and technologies of self-formation, come together in these fictions through yet another technology; that of the text itself. Texts are 'little bombs' that 'do things' (Grosz 57-58), language is a 'machine' that generates, interrelates with and thus constitutes, the social world (Jørgensen and Phillips 9). In this way, New Woman texts engaging with technology, written by both women and men, partake in and shape late nineteenth-century debates regarding both social and literary issues. Hopefully, the examinations have carried with them two further strands of engagement that extend beyond the field of late-Victorian literature: recommending a non-essentialist way of reading feminist literature such as New Woman fiction, and furthermore demonstrating the fundamental conflict between technological determinism and feminist criticism.

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<sup>162</sup> Links between the concept of the New Woman and the proliferation of women detectives in the 1890s have been made before, for example by Laura Marcus in her introduction to *Twelve Women Detective Stories* (1997) and by Chris Willis in several articles on women detectives. Joseph A. Kestner in *Sherlock's Sisters* (2003) presents an overview of the female detective in British fiction from 1864 to 1913, but merely provides an introduction to the stories. Despite the prevalence of technologies in detective fiction, there seem to be no entire works investigating the question of technologies of modernity in late-Victorian (and especially New Woman) fiction, with the exception of Ronald R. Thomas's *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (1999) which analyses the link between forensic science and 1840s-1930s British and American detective fiction.

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