ROMANCING THE VOTE:

FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN AMERICAN FICTION, 1870-1920

by

LESLIE ELLEN PETTY

(Under the Direction of Kristin Boudreau and Tricia Lootens)

ABSTRACT

While women's cultural and political roles in nineteenth and early twentieth-century America have long been interesting to scholars, this interest has not often included attention to literary representations of women's public political participation. Accordingly, the central concern of my dissertation is how American fiction written about the woman suffrage and other related movements contributed to the creation and continued viability of these movements. Specifically, I am interested in the ways these novels can be viewed as models of feminist activism and of reform communities and how they, wittingly or not, emulate for readers ways to create similar communities in the real world. The primary texts I discuss are Elizabeth Boynton Harbert's *Out of Her Sphere* (1871), Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life* (1874), Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886), Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892), Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office* (1892), Marjorie Shuler's *One Pedestal – for Rent* (1917), *The Sturdy Oak (*1917), a composite novel edited by Elizabeth Jordan, and Oreola Williams Haskell's *Banner Bearers* (1920). I begin with an analysis of two novels written by suffragists in the 1870's that explore the movement's key issues and rhetoric in an effort to convince their audiences to support woman's rights. I then turn to two texts from the 1890's, *Iola Leroy* and *A Spoil of Office*, which expand the literary vision of feminist activism by demonstrating the fluidity among and shared concerns of diverse reform organizations, including the Black Uplift and Populist movements. In the third chapter, I argue that activist authors use formal innovations to account for the complexity of the large, thriving suffrage movement in the 1910's. In the final chapter, I read *The Bostonians* as part of a larger body of feminist activist fiction and speculate about the lessons it can teach its reform-minded readership. Throughout, I interweave the three threads of discourse that drive the project: the ways authors appropriate narrative conventions to fictionalize feminist activist heroines, the relationship between this fictional depiction and actual reform activity, and the tradition of feminist activist fiction in American literature of which these individual texts are representative.

INDEX WORDS: feminist theory, suffrage, American literature, feminist activism, heterosexual romance plot

# ROMANCING THE VOTE:

# FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN AMERICAN FICTION, 1870-1920

by

LESLIE ELLEN PETTY

B.A., Emory University, 1992

M.A., Louisiana State University, 1995

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2003

# ROMANCING THE VOTE:

# FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN AMERICAN FICTION, 1870-1920

by

LESLIE ELLEN PETTY

| | |
|---|---|
| Major Professors: | Kristin Boudreau<br>Tricia Lootens |
| Committee: | Roxanne Eberle<br>Anne Mallory<br>Barbara McCaskill |

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2003

# DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my sisters, Lisa Garcia-Arrese and Lizette Smith, and to my parents, Monk and Ellen Petty.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Anyone who has written a dissertation understands what a collaborative effort it truly is. It has taken the assistance of many, many people and institutions to write this one, and while it would be impossible for me to thank them all adequately, I am glad I have the opportunity to try. First, I should acknowledge the University of Georgia's graduate school, for awarding me the Dissertation Completion Assistantship and the Friedman Research Award, both of which made it financially possible not only to finish the dissertation, but to enrich it with archival research. Further funding for my research came from the Carrie Chapman Catt Center at Iowa State University, which awarded me an honorable mention in its 2001 Catt Prize competition for promising research on women and politics. I owe thanks to Robert Bleil, who graciously shared with me the letters he found in the E. G. Jordan Collection at the New York Public Library, and to the library itself, for giving me permission to quote from those letters. I also want to mention the staff and fellow readers at the Huntington, especially Mona Noureldin and Roberto Alvarez, who helped make my visit there productive and enjoyable.

As an academic-in-training, I have been blessed with professors who have been both exemplary professional role models and kind, generous mentors. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw at Louisiana State University taught me early in my career how graceful and fulfilling an intellectual life can be. Once I began working on the dissertation, I assembled what I like to call the "coolest committee ever," which is shorthand for saying that its members -- co-directors Kristin Boudreau and Tricia Lootens, along with

Roxanne Eberle, Anne Mallory and Barbara McCaskill -- seem to me the smartest, kindest, most engaging group of scholars (and women) I can imagine. Although she had to resign from the committee, I include Bonnie Dow in this group, and thank her for the invaluable historical and political context about American feminist activism that she taught me. I am especially grateful to my directors, Kris and Tricia, for their patience and their insightful, careful, instructive readings of the many drafts of this dissertation. It is an infinitely better work because of them. I am even more thankful, however, for their encouragement and their friendship. I could not have asked for better major professors.

It would be much harder for me to quantify and articulate the ways in which my friends and family have contributed to this dissertation, but the fact remains that without them, it never would have been written. I do not have the space to thank everyone who has listened to me prattle on about the differences between AWSA and NWSA or bought me a drink or a meal to subsidize my graduate student salary. However, I would like to mention particularly those friends who have been my consistent supporters over the years, as well as those who have "closed ranks" and helped me survive these final months of writing: Meg Amstutz, Olivia Edenfield, Elizabeth Edwards, Bob Fernandez, Ellen Lachney, Stephen Miss, Angela Mitchell, Rachel Norwood, Caren Mayer Orum, Steven Price, Robert Reardon, Beth Ann Way, Lance Wilder, Shannon Wilder, Ben Underwood, and Aarti Verma. Most of all, I want to thank my family, especially my sisters, Lisa and Lizette, and my parents, Monk and Ellen. This dissertation is dedicated to them, because they always believed I could finish it, even when I didn't. (Of course, it is also dedicated to my little Pie, who kept me company while I wrote it.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

# INTRODUCTION

The first American journal devoted to issues of woman's rights,[1] *The Una,* was founded by Paulina Wright Davis in February of 1853, just 5 years after the Seneca Falls Convention. In this first issue, an essay entitled "The Truth of Fiction, and Its Charms" suggests some ways in which literature can be of value to the nascent movement:

> Making no pretensions to, and limited by none of the laws of narrative, truth and historic fact, [fiction] brings the truth of nature – the probable, the possible and the ideal – in their broadest range and utmost capabilities into the service of a favorite principle, and demonstrates its force and beauty, and practicability, in circumstantial details, which like a panorama, presents an image so like an experience that we realize it for all the purposes of knowledge, hope and resolution. (5)

According to the author, the imaginative nature of fiction, bound by "none of the laws of narrative, truth and historic fact" makes it the perfect vehicle through which authors can envision a different world that not only reflects the "ideal" of a "favorite principle" but demonstrates the "practicability" of that world; for those concerned with feminist reform, the pages of stories and novels become a space to demonstrate vividly the problems with the current state of society and lets them envision a "possible" world in which those conditions are challenged and transformed.

The second part of the essay shows another benefit of this kind of imaginative discourse:

> In its progress, while the favorite interest and the admired characters are in peril, the reader, in brave and generous sympathy, adds his strength to the heroic effort, and his enthusiasm to the noble impulse, and grows capable, while he flatters himself that in like circumstances he would behave as magnanimously. (5)

Again, there are important implications for reform-minded writers and readers. A reader who identifies and sympathizes with the action of the characters and the situations in the story "grows capable" of emulating those actions and believes that he "would behave as magnanimously" as the protagonist in the story when faced with the same situations. In the case of *The Una*, this type of empowerment would be especially important for its readers, predominantly white middle-class women who were acculturated in the "Cult of True Womanhood"[2] which made acting publicly in support of reform ideas anathema for "proper ladies."

There are other clues in the inaugural issue of this woman's rights journal as to how literature was viewed as central to the movement by its founders and proponents. A rather critical review of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House,* entitled "Mrs. Jellaby [sic]," appears, in which the well-known author is chastised for "turning his satirical talent so determinedly against many of the needful and important reforms of his time" and for "satirizing all methods of female activity" (4). The reviewer, however, does not stop with a condemnation of the authorial perspective; she also makes an observation that seems like a prototypical response of Judith Fetterley's "resisting reader," one who reads against

the grain of the dominant discourse of a text and looks for ways to recuperate suppressed possibilities for the characters: “Mrs. Jellaby [sic], the principal personage in this satire, although caricatured to an extent which greatly injures the force of the delineation, yet shows more ability than any other character in the book” (4). By pointing out an alternate way to view a character ostensibly maligned in the text, the essay suggests that models for empowerment and female independence can also be gleaned from texts that do not seem expressly intended to foster reform impulses, or that even seem to discourage them. In addition to commenting upon and evaluating existing fiction, this issue of *The Una* (as well as subsequent ones) contains several original short stories and poems that seem conventional in style, but radical in content. As Mari Boor Tonn observes, "[Paulina Wright Davis, the editor] often included short stories and poems that imitated the style of popular journals but were ‘feminist’ in nature” (51). Tonn argues that this inclusion is a pragmatic one because “a paper comprised entirely of argumentative essays might not pique the interest and garner the support of those women not already sympathetic to the movement” (50-1); consequently, the journal itself contributes to the dissemination of fiction that would perhaps “pique the [reader’s] interest” and make her sympathize with its goals. Finally, the title of the journal, an allusion to the virginal character in Spencer’s *The Fairie Queen*, underscores the ties between feminist reform and literature in the nineteenth century, and seems an attempt at reconciling the seemingly vexed relationship between “feminine virtue” and feminist reform.

The varied ways in which *The Una* both includes and creates fiction in its project to cull reformers out of its readership speaks to several key issues in this study. My central concern is how American fiction, primarily novels, written about the woman’s

rights and other related movements contributed to the creation and continued viability of these movements. Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which these novels can be viewed as models of feminist activism and of reform communities and how the texts, whether wittingly or not, model for readers ways to create and become members of those communities. *The Una* provides insight into some ways fiction helped bring about this transformation, by fostering in the reader sympathetic identification with many of the concerns of feminist activists, thus encouraging her to join their struggles. Often this fiction relies on conventions of popular narrative employed in the service of unconventional content; furthermore, one can also see the potential importance of literature written about the movement, but not specifically to promote it.

There is ample evidence to suggest the importance placed on literature by nineteenth-century feminist reformers. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in her short-lived radical feminist journal, *The Revolution*, included a poetry column, and she began to serialize a story by Alice Cary entitled "The Born Thrall, or Woman's Life and Experience" which Stanton claimed would serve a function for the woman's rights movement analogous *to Uncle Tom's Cabin's* role in the abolitionist movement (Dow 75). Unfortunately, Cary died before the story was complete. Stanton reiterated her belief in the transformative potential of fiction, however, in the preface to the suffrage novel, *Pray You Sir, Whose Daughter?,* written in 1892 by Helen Gardener:

> As the wrongs of society can be more deeply impressed on a large class of readers in the form of fiction than by essays, sermons or the facts of science, I hail with pleasure all such attempts [to write novels exposing the

> "false philosophy on which woman's character is based"] by the young writers of our day. (1)

While it is difficult to say conclusively and specifically what impact fictional portrayals of feminist activists had on the proliferation of the woman's rights agenda, one cannot dispute that suffragists and other reformers believed in its capacity to enrich and expand their movements.

This project situates many of these fictional texts within their original social and political milieu by analyzing them alongside other contemporary documents. I am equally concerned, however, with the narrative components of these texts. Specifically, I investigate how they employ literary conventions to accommodate depictions of the politically active woman, a character that enters the literary and cultural landscapes during the mid-nineteenth century. There is a large body of criticism devoted to the importance of the novel to the middle class in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and specifically, to the dominant narrative pattern in these novels – the heterosexual romance, or marriage plot. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in *Writing Beyond the Ending*, sees the nineteenth-century heterosexual romance plot as driven by the tension between "love and quest" for the heroine, in which quest is always subordinated to love. While DuPlessis acknowledges that twentieth-century authors are sometimes able to transcend the limitations of this plot, her overarching contention is that this narrative structure is inherently conservative. In the nineteenth-century at least, the status quo of gendered roles is maintained at all costs, even the heroine's death.

However, Karen Tracey takes a more mediated stance in her recent book, *Plots and Proposals: American Women's Fiction, 1850-90*. Tracey argues that "novelists used

their heroines' power of choice among suitors to give those characters some agency within the restrictive ideology of marriage" (29). In many nineteenth and twentieth century feminist activist works, the choice of whom to marry is crucial and hinges on political as well as personal considerations; therefore, these works re-envision the relationship between husband and wife as more intellectually and socially equal. This preoccupation with the heterosexual marriage plot reflects a corresponding concern in the "real life" of some feminist activists. For example, in a private letter to Susan B. Anthony, Stanton confides, "I feel this whole question of woman's rights turns on the point of the marriage relation" (qtd. in DuBois, *Stanton/Anthony Reader* 56). Given the social expectation and the economic imperative of marriage for most middle-class women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is perhaps not surprising that stories about feminist activists would often be told as heterosexual romances. Nevertheless, it is also the case that the formation of a community of like-minded reformers -- both male and female -- is a primary focus of these works. Therefore, my textual investigation focuses on three interrelated elements that suggest the ways literary conventions are appropriated and transformed by those who would portray politically active women: the feminist activist heroines who serve as the central protagonists in these works, the "oppositional communities" in which they interact, and the "revolutionary love" which bonds feminist activists and other members of these communities to each other. Two of these terms I take from the work of the feminist philosopher, Ann Ferguson; all three need further explanation.

A simple definition of the feminist activist is a woman who is publicly involved in an organized reform movement that in some way challenges gender norms. However,

political activism for nineteenth and early twentieth-century women, whether fictional or real, was far from a "simple" activity. The middle class doctrine of separate spheres, in which the public world was the masculine domain while the private, domestic one was the feminine realm, made it highly unusual and socially unacceptable for nineteenth-century women to be involved in politics. The related expectations of "true womanhood" also insisted that any moral influence that a woman might have on national politics should be indirect and channeled through her husband or other male protector. Of course, recent critical books like *Separate Spheres No More*, edited by Monika M. Elbert, have demonstrated that the actual boundaries between the public and private spheres were quite fluid and that, in reality, men and women inhabited both sides. Nevertheless, the proscriptive nature of the discourse about gender roles in magazines, novels and pulpits was a powerful deterrent to women who did not want to be seen as unnatural or out of their element. This discourse was so powerful in shaping public opinion that when women initially entered reform communities because of their moral investment in the abolition and temperance movements, they were met with virulent resistance. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell states the dilemma facing nineteenth-century women who would be activists in this way:

> As defined, woman's role contained a contradiction that became apparent as women responded to what they saw as great moral wrongs. [ . . . ] Women who formed moral reform and abolitionist societies, and who made speeches, held conventions, and published newspapers, entered the public sphere and thereby lost their claims to purity and piety. What

> became the woman's rights/woman suffrage movement arose out of this contradiction. (10)

Without question, activism was an unconventional, problematic endeavor for women, especially in the nineteenth century. Consequently, the feminist activist character is a unique, contradictory manifestation when she appears in American literature. As the century passes, however, women's roles in society are increasingly liberated because of greater access to education and employment, and the relative independence of the "New Woman" replaces the submissiveness of the "True Woman." Furthermore, the importance of laboring-class females of both the native-born and immigrant populations increased as the movement evolved. Thus, one sees a corresponding development in the fictional feminist activist. Her narrative status as an anomaly wanes considerably, and an increasingly complex, confident character emerges in books about feminist activist communities in the twentieth-century.

Calling the politically active heroines I am studying "feminist" is also a choice that needs explaining. In some ways, I am using the historically anachronistic term[3] in the rather generic way that Campbell employs the word, as "inclusive and catholic, referring to all those who worked for the legal, economic, and political advancement of women" (3). However, I am also using it because the term "woman's rights activist" or "woman suffrage activist" is too reductive, although it is true that almost all the activist heroines I discuss either explicitly or implicitly support women's political enfranchisement and their social equality. Female reform activity in nineteenth and early twentieth-century America and its literary counterpart are comprised of a vast network of organizational affiliations and coalitions. The regular column, "Concerning Women" in the *Woman's*

*Journal,* the widely circulated periodical affiliated with the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), demonstrates this point. In the April 24, 1886 issue, the column includes notices about the activities of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frances Willard, and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, among other professional and political women. What is striking about this juxtaposition is that each of these women is primarily associated with a different political organization or reform movement. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was president of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), and Frances Willard was the nationally popular leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). While Frances E. W. Harper was another prominent leader in the WCTU and a worker for AWSA, she was also a well-known abolitionist and race-reform lecturer, and was later the Vice-President of the National Council of Negro Women. Nonetheless, all three activists frequently lectured in support of women's political enfranchisement. This interdependent web of feminist reform continues in the first decades of the twentieth century. America's "Progressive Era" was a time of chaotic change in the country that brought with it an invigorated reform sensibility. In addition to lobbying for woman suffrage, many women responded to America's rapid urbanization and industrialization by establishing settlement houses, organizing labor strikes, and generally working to improve conditions for the laboring classes and immigrant populations.

Of course, the focus of this study is how this unprecedented cultural role for American women is depicted in literature, or, in other words, how feminist activists are translated into fictional heroines, and in turn, how these heroines encourage more real world reform. In *Becoming a Heroine*, Rachel Brownstein acknowledges the artistic element in this type of translation: "Every good reader recognizes a heroine as a

representative of an actual woman and, at the same time, as an element in a work of art" (xxiii). As literary constructs, these heroines often reveal more about the aspirations and anxieties associated with women entering into politics than about the actual historical lives of those women involved in the woman suffrage and other reform movements. Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of the name "feminist activist heroine" is itself revealing. If the character is behaving radically, as an activist, she almost always portrayed conventionally, as a "heroine," with the formulaic feminine traits of goodness and purity and with the expected immersion in a heterosexual romance plot.

Most of these works tell the story of a central heroine, but she is always situated in an "oppositional community" of reformers or sympathizers; in fact, it is often the heroines' actions that help call these communities into being. The communal element in the texts about feminist activists is a crucial one, because as I argue, the works serve as representative reform activity, not only on the individual level, but also on the organizational. In her essay, "Feminist Communities and Moral Revolution," Ferguson defines an oppositional community as a "network of actual and imagined others to whom one voluntarily commits oneself in order to empower oneself and those bonded with others by challenging a social order perceived to be unjust, usually by working on a shared project for social change" (372). Ferguson elaborates on this definition in another essay by stressing not only the personal empowerment of the members of this community, but their political activism as well: "These are networks of people who share a critique of the existing order and who choose to identify with and engage in some material or political practices to express this critique" (121). Because members join voluntarily after conscious deliberation, oppositional communities are examples of

"existential communitarianism," which means members make the active choice to belong to the community, as opposed to more traditional organizing factors, such as residence or birth ("Can I Choose?" 121).

In terms of reform activity, oppositional communities are both personally and politically imperative if one is to challenge the status quo. According to this model, the first step toward social transformation is an individual's desire to effect change when she realizes the injustice in which she is implicated or oppressed; this realization is the "development of self-consciousness" or the "existential moment." However, because the self is relational, one cannot maintain this process of "reconstitutive interests" alone ("Moral Revolution" 128). In isolation, one is almost sure to succumb to the pull of "status-quo social interests" (Feminist Communities" 380) that "allow for easy bonding with others in one's cultural milieu" (371). Therefore, if one is to maintain one's commitment to altering the moral landscape of her world, one must find (or convince or imagine) others who share the same goal for a specific change. On a political level, Ferguson claims that for the reconstitutive desires of individuals to have an effect, "they must be collective and ethico-political, since [. . . ] [they] connect to status quo interests and are reinforced by material and economic structures that institutionalize power and inequality. To alter or eliminate them is thus a collective task" ("Can I Choose?" 117). In other words, an oppositional community is "an interrelationship in which the whole group creates more energy to change the world in its joint support of each individual than any one individual would have on her own" ("Feminist Communities" 375).

The lesson from Ferguson's ideal model of an oppositional community is that one cannot maintain an oppositional stance in isolation; one must find other like-minded

reformers with whom one is bound by sympathy and with whom there is no irreconcilable conflict between personal affection and political desires. Only in such a reciprocal environment can a community with strength enough to defy convention thrive. Reading fictional depictions of feminist activism against Ferguson's ideal allows one to understand how they negotiate the important dialectics between individual and community, and personal and political and to extrapolate how these negotiations can be applied by readers to create and sustain their own reform communities. A crucial component of these negotiations is what Ferguson calls "revolutionary love:"

> [R]evolutionary love [is] the effect of a social relation only possible with a group of friends constituted to fight for social justice. In such a community the distinction between egoism and altruism does not really apply, since each individual gains something important, namely, a reconstitution of his or her sense of self – for example, as a feminist activist or as antiracist or anti-imperialist. For members of a dominant group, revolutionary love develops by developing friendships with particular others in subordinate groups as well with others in one's social groups of origin who are interested in challenging their role as dominants. ("Feminist Communities" 382)

The confluence of "altruism" and "egoism" is important because it suggests that this sympathetic, affectionate bond, while self-fulfilling, is also outwardly motivated; those bonded together by revolutionary love are joined by both personal and political affinity.

The other important aspect of this type of love is that it not only links members of "subordinate groups" to each other, but it bridges the gap between those who are cultural

subordinates and those who are "dominants." Therefore, revolutionary love, which is both personal and political, which bonds people who are alike and who are different, provides a useful paradigm through which the female-to-female relationships in the texts, as well as the male-female relationships, can be considered. This paradigm certainly expands the notion of "romance" that is traditionally associated with the novel heroine. When one thinks about revolutionary love in relation to fictional feminist activists, it provides a different way to interpret her interaction with the women in her world, as well as the heterosexual romance plot in which she is usually enmeshed. For example, the ties of "revolutionary love" among women who reach across lines of class and race (or fail to do so) provide important commentary on the vision of reform and the potential for radical transformation in the texts. Along those same lines, the importance placed on female community in many of the texts de-emphasizes, but does not de-center, the heterosexual romance narrative at the heart of most of these works.

While in many ways this is a conservative, limiting maneuver on the part of the authors, I would argue that it is not pure capitulation to the status quo. Rather, the romance narratives in these texts frequently become conversion narratives as well, with the male protagonists almost always being converted to a sympathetic position on woman's rights and other tenets of reform politics. In this way, the romance hinges, not only on the conventional womanly virtues of the feminist heroine, but also on the unconventional behavior of her male counterpart, and many of these heterosexual relationships can be deemed "revolutionary romances" because of the personal and political sympathies between the male and females. Clearly, what drives these novels is tension between the conventional and unconventional aspects of the narratives about

feminist activists. While these texts significantly expand the realm of "acceptable" behavior and narrative possibility for some characters, in many ways the conventional treatment of what should be a radical political movement hinders the creation of truly revolutionary alternatives to the dominant social narratives of the time.

My investigation of narrative conventions within the texts allows me to draw some conclusions about the ways in which these texts contribute to the formation of an oppositional community or communities in the "real world" of middle-class readership. I would argue that, because fiction is imaginative, it has a unique role in this formation. These fictional texts can demonstrate not only the ways an oppositional community might come into being and function, but also the positive effects that community could have on the status quo. In this way, most of the texts help build a viable movement both figuratively, by offering models of and justifications for oppositional communities, and literally, by convincing the reader of the need to join these communities in order to effect social change. In her work, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*, Sara Hunter Graham discusses the need for this type of sympathetic identification:

> Most suffragists believed that the greatest obstacle to woman suffrage was not antisuffrage opposition or male recalcitrance, but rather the indifference of American women. Doubtless many agreed with one antisuffragist's diagnosis of the problem her opponents faced. "What [the suffrage movement] has to overcome, " she explained, "is not an argument but a feeling." (36)

While I am not prepared to make the generic argument that all the texts I study are works of sentimental fiction, or that only females read these texts, I do believe that engaging the

emotions of the reader is an important goal of many of these texts. In so doing, they serve as a necessary supplement to the suffrage and other reform journals and tracts that, while capable of refuting antisuffrage arguments, are perhaps not as effective as fiction at overcoming the "feeling" against the reform movements. This desire to convert the reader, however, creates restrictions and limitations on the politically active woman and the oppositional communities imagined in these texts. Elizabeth Barnes contends in *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* that "sentimental literature teaches a particular way of reading both texts and people that relies on likeness and reinforces homogeneity" (4). Clearly, I do not believe that these novels can be reduced to merely recapitulation to the status quo; nevertheless I would argue that, to the extent to which these texts seek to create coalitions of varied people to join their oppositional communities, their emphasis on sympathetic identification, like their reliance on conventional narrative tropes, creates barriers for the growth of a more radical oppositional community even as it increases the possibility that those members of a more mainstream audience who do read the novels will be persuaded to join them.

Ultimately, these narratives provide great insight into the ways by which fiction has been used to voice the hopes and anxieties surrounding one of the most important political movements in American history and attest to the heretofore unacknowledged presence of a recurring, although critically neglected, character on the American literary scene – the feminist activist. Therefore, underscoring my concern with these individual narratives is a desire to recover a tradition of her portrayal. It is surprising that this tradition has remained submerged, given the increased scholarly attention that has been paid over the past decade to the ways in which women's unprecedented public political

participation in nineteenth and early twentieth-century America manifested in the nation's literature. However, this interest has not often included attention to literary representations of that political participation. Therefore, this study fills in some of the gaps left by literary historians and critics who have explored the issues of women's political power in American literature. One of the most obvious of these gaps is the failure to explore the myriad of texts that explicitly depict feminist activism, because these critics often fail to treat seriously fiction written by woman's rights proponents and other reformers in an effort to promote their views. Because of these omissions, Henry James's *The Bostonians* is often read as a unique text about feminist reform activity in the United States, instead of part of a larger tradition of fiction depicting this subject matter. Furthermore, while many literary scholars are interested in how women's political activities affect the national culture at large, few if any have considered literature's importance to creating and sustaining the movements from which these political activities stem.

One of the first and most comprehensive of the critical studies about feminist activism's relationship to American literature is Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett's *Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Early in the introduction, Bardes and Gossett declare that "the novels we examine in this book both index the cultural debate about women and political power and take an activist role within that debate" (4). In an effort to show the dialogic relationship between the novels in question and the political climate from which they emerge, the authors engage in a sweeping survey of texts not unlike Nina Baym's encyclopedic *Woman's Fiction*. Instead of focusing on a recurring plot formula, however,

*Declarations* is organized thematically, and also loosely chronologically, because it operates on the premise that "the battle for woman's rights in the nineteenth-century United States can be viewed as a series of separate but interrelated demands for specific forms of empowerment" (7). The chapters are focused around these "separate but interrelated demands," and the organization is dictated by the idea that these demands have their own historical "moment," so that the early chapters are concerned with issues that first emerged in American culture at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, such as women's public voice, education and property rights and how they are explored in literature, and the later are concerned with more pressing issues for the late nineteenth century "New Woman," such as professionalism and, as the title of the last chapter suggests, "Political Power, Direct and Indirect."

Given the breadth and scope of this work, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the textual readings are perfunctory and that many pertinent novels are omitted. What *is* surprising, however, are some of the underlying assumptions that seem to influence these omissions, as well as the overt reasons stated for them. For example, the three books explored "in-depth" that are primarily concerned with women's "direct political power" and the organized woman's rights movement, are Henry James's *The Bostonians*, Bayard Taylor's *Hannah Thurston,* and Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office.* Like Bardes and Gossett, I analyze two of these novels; however, it is worth noting that the only texts to which the authors devote serious attention are written by males, and only Garland's seems clearly sympathetic to feminist activism. On the other hand, Bardes and Gossett dismiss what they call "Pro-woman's rights novels" as "little more than fictionalized didactic tracts" (180) and reduce them summarily to a single thesis: "All agree that the

vote, and only the vote, can ensure protection for women" (180). Furthermore, *Declarations* pays little attention to novels written by women of color, nor does it often address class differences when discussing the varied issues related to women's political involvement, and in this way, the text uncritically emulates the narrowness of vision of some of the nineteenth-century woman's rights advocates themselves.

While *Declarations* is a synoptic study of the central tenets of woman's rights and how they influence and are influenced by the national literature, Clare Kahane specifically explores the nineteenth-century phenomena of women entering the public arena as speaking subjects. In her book, *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative, and the Figure of the Speaking Woman, 1850-1915*,[4] Kahane argues that the challenge to Victorian notions of gender, separate spheres of influence and natural sexual difference made by this figure caused such widespread anxiety in the culture that men and (more unexpected to Kahane) women were diagnosed with hysteria in epidemic proportions during the later half of the nineteenth-century.[5] Kahane then goes on to explore an analogous hysteria in several texts written from 1850-1915, pointing out the inconsistencies in the various narrative voices to suggest that the overwhelming anxiety brought on by the speaking woman causes ruptures and outbursts in these voices that threaten the integrity of the texts themselves. She also observes how, more generally, narrative tropes and patterns were threatened with dissolution by this emerging public woman: "Through the later half of the nineteenth-century, that fictional resolution [marriage [ . . . ] [and] submission to the patriarchal ordering of desire] was increasingly problematized by the newly emergent figure of the speaking woman as an articulate, desiring subject; her appearance cast doubt not only on the inevitability of this plot but

also on the very laws of sexual difference that constituted it" (ix-x). Thus, the figure of the speaking woman works to deconstruct not only gendered but literary norms and "threaten[s] the narrator's ability to tell a coherent story" (x).

While Kahane's study is not primarily concerned with texts that portray feminist activism, her study is an important commentary on this movement in literature because she traces the historical counterpart of the figurative speaking woman to it: "I focus on the particular figuration of the New Woman: the woman as speaking subject, a figure actualized in the wave of feminist orators who, from mid-century on, took the platform in the cause of women's suffrage" (ix). The one text specifically about the movement to which Kahane (like Bardes and Gossett) devotes considerable attention is *The Bostonians*. She presents it as an exemplar of the textual "male hysteria" brought on by the speaking woman, and calls the final lines "perhaps the most subversive ending to a heterosexual romance plot" in American literature (78). Because Kahane includes James's novel as the lone example of novels representing feminist activists, she also presents an incomplete picture of the fictional incarnation of the speaking woman by omitting novels less ambivalent about the value of reform and the positive potential of women's political intervention. This omission can perhaps be attributed to the organizing trope of hysteria, which limits the author to reading books that display its attendant anxiety and indeterminacy. Nevertheless, as the following analysis demonstrates, it is useful to read some of these overtly sympathetic texts with one of Kahane's central assumptions in mind. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the figure of the speaking woman in general, and the feminist activist in particular, is primarily a deconstructive force in society, challenging norms and breaking down boundaries based

on gender and sexual difference, and by extension, causing disruptions in texts that are anxious about these norms.

Like Kahane's book, Caroline Levander's *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* is a study about women's voice and public speech in the nineteenth-century. Unlike the earlier text's psychoanalytic reading, however, Levander looks at the social work of novels that pay attention to women's voices and how they helped construct and solidify the emerging middle-class culture in the nineteenth century: "I argue that closer inspection of this persistent imagining of women's 'natural' linguistic difference, in nonliterary as well as in literary texts, reveals, not its inevitability, but rather its constructed, strategic, and crucial role in the dramatic social transformation that the nation underwent in the nineteenth-century" (2). In the first chapter, Levander presents another reading of *The Bostonians,* comparing it to Sarah Josepha Hale's *The Lecturess* (1836) and arguing that both books provide a model for how women's public speech is stifled and relegated to the private sphere by the "maneuvers [. . .] by which heterosexist manhood came to be equated with and consolidated within the public arena so thoroughly that the language spoken there continues to be considered inherently male" (23). By grounding her argument in nineteenth-century linguistic theory, the author shows that an extension of the sexual difference delineated in the nineteenth-century pertained to voice; women's speech was prized for its form, its melodious, hypnotic sound, while men's was judged on its content. According to Levander, the linguists and other commentators, including Henry James and William Dean Howells, go so far as to argue that attention to content, especially political content, ruins the sound of a woman's voice, and thus its value.

Levander then turns to the two fictional texts to show how the heroines are ultimately silenced in a heterosexual relationship because of the hero's insistence on valuing the sound of the woman's voice while ignoring its content. I would suggest this reading is too simplistic in its rigid delineation between form and content. As this project demonstrates, the relationship between form and content in novels depicting women's power as public speakers is certainly more complicated in not only *The Bostonians,* but in other texts that portray feminist activism as well.

Although she explores the conservative function of culture and literature regarding women's voice in her initial chapters, Levander turns to the more radical political potential for women's voices and public speech in the latter part of the text. Her chapter on Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life* is particularly pertinent to the following study. Once again Levander contextualizes her reading with contemporary cultural documents, this time citing both the writings and speeches of woman's rights activists and the studies of "sexologists" who studied female "sexual inversion" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author argues that, because Blake's book was written before the sexologists had solidified the prevailing notion that "women's transvestitism indicated their sexual inversion or impurity," her cross-dressing hero/heroine Frank Heywood is able to use his/her voice, liberated by its cultural designation as "male" (Frank "passes" as a male and is a journalist) to "not only speak for silenced women but to speak for himself" (139). Admittedly, Levander's reading is a bit reductive in that she focuses almost exclusively on the role that clothing plays in the text as a trope for a stifling femininity. Nevertheless, her observation that the public-speaking

female, regardless of what she is wearing, speaks not only for herself but also for a community of women is an interesting one upon which I attempt to expand.

What is missing from this body of work on nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature is focused attention to the reciprocity between literature and specific communities of reformers and activists. To find models of this type of scholarship, one must turn to two studies about literature's relationship to the "second wave" of feminism in the United States, Rita Felski's *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* and Lisa Marie Hogeland's *Feminism and its Fictions*. While these texts are clearly addressing a different cultural and social milieu, they provide useful models for thinking about the relationship between reform and literature. In Felski's book, for example, her subject matter is historically focused on "the emergence of a large and distinctive body of feminist literature in the last two decades [from the late 1960's to the book's publication]" (1). However, her assertion that "to develop a more adequate theorization of the relationship between feminist politics and literature it is necessary to move beyond the bounds of textual analysis to consider the status and effects of the women's movement as a force for change in the public realm" (163) echoes my own project's interest in how the depiction of feminist activism in texts influences and reflects the corresponding project of reform in nineteenth-century politics. Even more useful, perhaps, is Felski's emphasis on the ways in which literature contributes to the formation of feminist reform movements:

> Two particularly significant insights have emerged from the investigation of feminist literature. First, I have suggested that the construction of symbolic fictions constitutes an important moment in the self-definition of

> an oppositional feminist community. [ . . . ] Second, it has become apparent that the process of identity formation in feminist literature is crucially indebted to a concept of community. The individual subject is viewed in relation to and as a representative of a gendered collective which self-consciously defines itself against society as a whole. (154-5)

It is exactly this function of literature, the symbolic and material contributions it makes to the construction of reform communities, that is the central concern in my project.

Lisa Hogeland's work, *Feminism and its Fictions*, builds on Felski's observations about literature's importance to female community formation by focusing her attention on the many consciousness-raising novels written primarily in America in the 1970's. While much of Hogeland's work is compelling, her definition of this type of novel is especially relevant to this study. Hogeland observes that the primary goal of consciousness-raising activities is to "[analyze] personal narratives in order to shift the terrain of their interpretation from the personal to the political" (23). This revelation, that private, individual experience has larger, more pervasive political implications, is also explored in nineteenth and early twentieth-century fictional representations of reform. In fact, I would argue that the connection between the private and public realms of experience is perhaps even more crucial in these earlier texts, because of the rigidly proscribed, gendered demarcation between the public and private spheres pervasive in the middle-class cultural ideology. According to Hogeland, literature is instrumental in making these "big picture" connections for its readers, and the consciousness-raising novel is particularly useful because it emulates for its readers the process by which one's consciousness is raised: "The 'overplot' of the CR novel traces a similar trajectory, as the

protagonist moves from feeling somehow at odds with others' expectations of her, into confrontations with others and with institutions, and into a new and newly politicized understanding of herself and her society" (23). While the books I study do not necessarily adhere to the particulars of this conventional narrative pattern, what is important about this "overplot" is that it serves as a model for a particular type of feminist activism, and it provides an example for how the reader can, through identification and sympathy, become a feminist activist herself.

In the following chapters, I explore how narrative patterns in novels and stories about first wave feminists change over time as the fiction engages in an ongoing dialogue with the development of real-world feminist oppositional communities. The primary texts I study are Elizabeth Boynton Harbert's *Out of Her Sphere* (1871), Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life* (1874), Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886), Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* (1892), Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office* (1892), Marjorie Shuler's *One Pedestal – for Rent* (1917), *The Sturdy Oak (*1917), a composite novel edited by Elizabeth Jordan, and Oreola Williams Haskell's *Banner Bearers: Tales of the Suffrage Campaigns* (1920). I have chosen the early 1870's for the beginning of my study, because as the suffrage historian Ellen DuBois notes, the years immediately preceding this period mark the beginning of "an independent, woman-based movement" distinct from the abolitionist and temperance movements and not affiliated with the Republican party.[6] While this movement is distinct, it is never completely detached from other reform movements, and my focus on feminist activism, rather than "woman suffrage activism" is intentionally broad to accommodate for the coalitions among female reformers. Like DuBois, I see this date as important because of its organizational

significance; for the first time, women founded reform institutions of which they were the organizers and leaders, as well as the members. Thus, my first chapter studies two novels written by suffrage activists at this pivotal organizational moment that explore its key issues and rhetoric in an effort to convert their audiences to the cause of woman's rights, *Out of Her Sphere* and *Fettered for Life*.

I then turn to two texts from the 1890's, *Iola Leroy* and *A Spoil of Office.* These texts expand the literary vision of feminist activism by demonstrating the fluidity among and shared concerns of different organized reform movements. *Iola Leroy*, written by political activist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, is a novel influenced by the tenets of the "Black Uplift" movement, as well as the temperance and suffrage movements, and the title character is a strong feminist whose activism helps unite a community and creates radical change. Hamlin Garland's novel is a book primarily devoted to the Populist movement, which sought to improve conditions for midwestern farmers. However, the heroine, Ida Wilbur, is a public speaker who lectures for woman's rights as well as those of the farmers. It is her presence that converts the protagonist, Bradley Talcott, to a more progressive view of politics, and her voice that speaks the most persuasive arguments for reform. In the third chapter, I return to books written by members of the organized suffrage movement right before and right after the ratification of the nineteenth amendment, *For Rent – One Pedestal*, *The Sturdy Oak*, and *Banner Bearers*. The first is an epistolary novel, the second is a composite novel, and the final is a short story cycle. These formal innovations allow the authors to account fictionally for the growing reality of the woman suffrage movement, representing with greater complexity the lives of fictional feminist activists.

The shared link among the texts in these first three chapters is that they are written, at least in part, to advance the cause of a particular political movement or movements with a feminist impulse. However, the concluding chapter of my dissertation breaks the chronological order of the discussion, as well as the focus on books overtly sympathetic to reform. In it, I read *The Bostonians* as part of a larger tradition of feminist activism in literature that I have developed previously, discussing how it presents its own version of an oppositional community and speculating about its impact on its reform-minded readership. As in the other chapters, I interweave the three threads of discourse that drive this project: the employment of the heterosexual romance plot to depict feminist activism, the relationship between real-world feminist oppositional communities and their literary counterparts, and the tradition of feminist activism in American literature of which these individual texts are representative.

Notes

[1] Although the singular noun "woman" in "woman's rights" and "woman suffrage" seems awkward to modern readers, I employ these terms because of their historical accuracy, and because the choice of the singular noun was a strategic one by nineteenth-century feminists to unify women across boundaries of class and race and region by stressing their commonality. Of course, as later historians have noted, the conception of this "commonality" was narrowed considerably by the white, middle-class perspective of the leaders of reform, and I think this limitation is also important to keep in mind. Nevertheless, while middle-class values were dominant in the movement, I am aware that they were internally contested, because it drew feminist activists from all classes. See Nancy Cott*, The Grounding of Modern Feminism* for further discussion of this issue.

[2] Barbara Welter in her influential text defines this cultural ideal as having four characteristics: purity, piety, submissiveness and domesticity. See *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth-Century.*

[3] In *The Grounding of Modern Feminism,* Cott notes that the word "feminism" was not widely used until 1910, and was not listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* until 1933.

[4] Kahane discusses the impact of the speaking woman on both American and British literature and culture.

[5] While Kahane discusses at length hysteria's historical association with femininity, she explains that both males and females were often diagnosed with this

malady; however, male hysteria was often attributed to stereotypically feminine qualities in the man, such as timidity or brittleness of nerve (10).

[6] In 1868, the conflict over the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which gave African-American men the right to vote and inserted the word "male" into the Constitution for the first time, caused a well-known rift among those in favor of woman suffrage, leading to the collapse of the American Equal Rights Association and its call for universal suffrage and the subsequent formation of two rival organizations established to promote specifically female suffrage, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA).

# CHAPTER 1

# "TRUE CHRISTIAN PHILANTHROPY" OR A RELEASE FROM THE "PRISON-HOUSE" OF MARRIAGE: FICTIONAL REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN THE 1870'S

One of the early volumes of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony's journal, *The Revolution*, includes a passage from a book by Professor D'Arcy W. Thompson:

> There is an extremely beautiful fairy tale, exquisitely handled by our Poet Laureate, of a sleeping princess awakened by a true lover's kiss. The story is thus far true in its suggestions, that warm and reciprocated love throws a superlative charm into the life of man or woman; but it is false if it suggests that woman has no duties or responsibilities of weight anterior to wedlock, and no subsequent duties and responsibilities disconnected with her new condition. ("Education of Girls")

The journalist contributes this quotation because she sees it as "a hopeful sign that the attention of so many of the best men and women throughout the civilized world is turned to the subject of woman's education." Clearly, Professor Thompson and others criticize this education for its relentless reiteration that matrimony and its attendant domestic duties are not just a woman's highest calling, but her only one. Also clear is the persuasive and primary role that fictional narratives, such as the fairy tale of the sleeping

princess, play in this education by modeling for females such a single-minded pursuit from the time they are old enough to hear bedtime stories. Furthermore, the inclusion of the professor's observations in a leading woman's rights journal suggests its pertinence to suffragists and other feminist activists trying to convince women to join their ranks. William Leach argues that mid-nineteenth century feminists like Stanton wanted to replace the pernicious influence of romantic fiction about heterosexual love, the genre many women read once they were too old for fairytales, with a more honest, revisionary vision of marriage:

> Feminists reproached [ . . . ] novelists for offering women false ideas of love as well as for broadcasting unrealistic conceptions of the outside world. Stanton, for example, searched for realistic fictional depictions of woman's condition and thought she found one in Fanny Fern's *Ruth Hall*, which went far "to prove" she said, that the "common notion" dispensed in novels "that God made woman to depend on man" is a "romance and not a fact of everyday life." She exhorted other women to imitate Fern and "divest themselves of all false notions of justice and delicacy and give the world full revelations of their suffering and miseries." (114)

According to Leach, Stanton acknowledges the powerful influence of literature on women and wants to harness that power for the sake of feminist reform, revealing the injustice, instead of the romance, of many married women's lives. What is implicit in both Professor Thompson's critique of fairy tales and Stanton's of romantic fiction is the idea that if these traditional stories contribute to the perpetuation of gender norms, then a different kind of story-telling could have the opposite effect. Revisionist stories about

marriage that make room for Thompson's "disconnected duties" and Stanton's "revelations of [ . . .] suffering" could be powerful tools for re-educating American women. In the 1870's, two feminist activists, Elizabeth Boynton Harbert and Lillie Devereux Blake, attempted just such a re-education by writing novels, *Out of Her Sphere* (1871) and *Fettered for Life* (1874) respectively, that appropriate the marriage plot to show their readers that it need not be the only story that can be told about a heroine.

These novels were written at a crucial time in America's woman's rights movement, its first decade as an autonomous, organized reform community. Although the movement's conception in America is marked by the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, most women involved in political reform before the 1870's were more active as abolitionists, and their work for woman's rights took place in a rather loose, organic fashion, springing from conventions throughout the country. However, after the Civil War and the passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, the focus for many of these feminist activists shifted, and they founded organizations such as the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) that were specifically devoted to gender reform. In the 1870's then, the woman's rights movement was in the early stages of becoming what Ann Ferguson has identified as an oppositional community: "a network of actual and imagined others to whom one voluntarily commits oneself in order to empower oneself and those bonded with others by challenging a social order perceived to be unjust, usually by working on a shared project for social change" ("Feminist Communities" 372). However, Ferguson also identifies one of the main barrier for the woman's rights community's proliferation: "Connecting to an oppositional community is at some level an act of rebellion or

resistance" (372). The population to whom the woman's rights movement most appealed for supporters – white, middle-class women – had often internalized an abhorrence for rebelling or resisting their social roles as "true women,"[1] and in order to build an oppositional community, feminist activists had to find a way to overcome this resistance to rebellion.

Ferguson argues that for one to be empowered enough to attempt such a rebellion, she must be fortified by "imagined communities with unseen others [ . . . ] that allow us to reconstitute ourselves as promoters of care and justice for these others as an ethical responsibility" ("Feminist Communities" 380-81). A potential activist must feel strengthened by a supportive group of like-minded reformers, and equally importantly, she must feel that her political work is not only an isolated attempt to improve her own situation, but an "ethical responsibility" to help others improve as well. In using the phrase, "imagined communities," Ferguson invokes Benedict Anderson's influential work by the same name, showing how such a community can come into being, starting in one's mind. While Anderson's book traces the rise of the nation-state and its members' sense of connection, his lessons are valuable for a smaller group seeking a communal identity: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (15). Anderson attributes this "image of their communion" in part to the increased circulation of printed texts, specifically newspapers and novels, which "provide the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation" (25). Specifically, Anderson says a novel creates a sense of community in two ways. First, the characters are "embedded in 'societies,'" thus

representing fictionally what a community looks like (25). Second, the characters are "embedded in the minds of the omniscient readers," making those readers feel personally connected to that fictional community (26). For those writers hoping to create a sense of feminist oppositional community, however, there is an added challenge. Not only must they write novels that initiate the reader into a community, but they must also convince the reader that she wants or needs to be part of this community.

For writers like Harbert and Blake, the need to be persuasive presents peculiar problems. In order to convince their readers of the necessity for gender reform, and furthermore, to compel them to work towards that reform, each author must confront the greatest cultural barrier to support for woman's rights, the sacrosanct doctrine of separate spheres and its concomitant vision of marriage, both of which are reiterated over and over in countless popular novels of the time.[2] Therefore, their novels must offer a compelling alternative to this conventional narrative. Both Harbert and Blake approach this challenge by self-consciously invoking well-known literary traditions, such as sympathetic reform novels, sensation novels, and the narrative of heterosexual romance. The authors use these traditions to gain sympathy from their audience while simultaneously criticizing the ways those traditions have been employed in the past. In so doing, each novel confronts its literary and historical milieu and positions itself both within it and in opposition to it. Nevertheless, while the novels have a similar goal, their ways of achieving it are markedly different, and this difference testifies to the contradictory nature of woman's rights ideology during this transitional time in the movement. Harbert's *Out of Her Sphere* models for her readers an imagined oppositional community founded on the rhetoric of expediency, showing that women's political participation is needed because of

the unique moral superiority of the "true woman." On the other hand, *Fettered for Life* constructs a vision of opposition informed primarily by arguments of justice that are derived from political notions of individual rights.[3] The juxtaposition of these two models, then, provides insight into the divergent use of fiction by suffragists as a tool to bring about change in the political sphere, and by extension, the diverse ideologies that underlying this effort.

According to contemporary accounts, the woman's rights advocate Elizabeth Boynton Harbert was "versatile to a rare degree" (*Women of the Century 1877*).[4] Her wedding announcement, published in the *Cincinnati Journal* in 1869, describes her as "the well-known and talented lecturess" who nevertheless found time to "[make] her beautiful wedding dress of white satin and tulle as well as much of the delicious wedding cake" herself. The juxtaposition of these two details reveals the core of Harbert's feminism. She, unlike many of her contemporaries, did not see any conflict between her political activism and her domestic and familial duties. In a speech given a few years later, she tells the Illinois State Legislature:

> What we desire does not contravene [a woman's] duties as a daughter, with holiest, tenderest memories clinging around the sacred name of "Father," as a wife receiving constant encouragement and cooperation from one who has revealed to me the genuine nobility of true manhood, as a mother whose heart still thrills at the memory of the first "Mother" greeting from our little son, as a sister watching with intense interest the entrance of a brother into the great world of work. I could not be half so

> loyal to "woman's cause" was it not a synchymous [?] for the equal rights of humanity a diviner justice to all. [ . . . ]
>
> And now, yielding to none in intense love of womanliness; standing here 'neath the very dome of the old capitol, [ . . .] as a native born, taxpaying citizen, I ask equality before the law.

Between her wedding and this later speech, Harbert wrote *Out of Her Sphere*, a fictional story about a "well-known and talented lecturess" who embodies traditional feminine characteristics and whose story seems loosely autobiographical. Like her heroine's, Harbert's feminist activism began at an early age when she was denied admittance to Wabash College in her hometown, Evanston, Illinois. However, unlike her heroine's, Harbert's response was less lady-like and more controversial. She organized a performance in which she and 23 other young women in her town acted in a comedy burlesquing their rejection entitled "The Coming Woman." They did so in order to purchase the nucleus of a town library, but their performance was so popular that they exceeded this modest goal. In addition to the library, Harbert and her friends bought a town flag, a church organ and Evanston's first fire truck. Convinced, then, at an early age that positive intervention was possible in society, Harbert embarked on a career to improve opportunities for women even as she maintained a belief in their unique attributes and responsibilities.

One of the places in which Harbert saw a need for intervention was the current state of America's popular fiction. In the final chapter of *Out of her Sphere*, which the author disingenuously claims "has no connection" with the rest of the book, Harbert reflects on some of the causes for the current interest in gender reform. One of these

causes, she claims, is women's realization of the false portrait that has been painted of them in literature over the centuries:

> Women, who really believed that men admired weakness and silliness, peeped into the papers [ . . . ] and discovered such pleasant paragraphs as, "Frailty, thy name is woman;" "Weak as a woman;" or some writer excusing the waywardness of some man of genius, because his wife was too ignorant to be the congenial friend of so gifted a man. In fact, they discovered that they were invariably designated as an extravagant, silly, vain portion of the race; that in endeavoring to please everybody they had failed to please anybody, and so decided that the safest, surest, and best way was to endeavor to please God and themselves, and to trust to the result. (173)

Far from being unrelated, this mythical account of the beginning of the woman's rights movement is crucial to understanding Harbert's project in the rest of her novel. In the creation of Marjory Warner, the author is responding to what she sees as a false, damaging portrayal of women in literature by creating an alternative heroine. She is a new kind of true woman, one who defies false social conventions and whose morality leads her naturally to the woman's rights movement, which is identified by one character as "a true christian philanthropy."

In creating this strong heroine who defies the literary tradition of weakness, Harbert nevertheless invokes, albeit somewhat critically, another literary tradition, that of the sympathetic reform novel, a tradition which is most fully realized textually and culturally in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Books like Stowe's appeal to

the emotions of their readers to bring about political change. Particularly, in the case of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the author writes to convert her readers into abolitionists by creating a sympathetic bond between them and the fictional slaves through the things they have in common, like familial (and especially maternal) love and devotion to Christ. Ample textual evidence suggests that Harbert had *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in mind while writing *Out of Her Sphere*. For example, when young Marjory does something inadvertently mischievous, her father call her "Topsy," an allusion to the slave child who misbehaves frequently in the former novel, until Christian influence and a mother's love reform her. An even more overt reference can be found in the final chapter, when the narrator cites Stowe as one of the most accomplished American women authors and reminds the reader of her cultural impact: "Harriet Beecher Stowe has written 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' God willed, she wrote, Lincoln signed, and the slaves are free" (173).

Perhaps some of the formal qualities of *Out of Her Sphere* make an even stronger case for Stowe's influence on Harbert. Both novels have an intrusive, didactic narrator; while this type of character is not uncommon in nineteenth-century literature, both Stowe and Harbert employ her to make direct appeals to the reader's sympathy, and especially her assumed maternal compassion, in order to bring about political change. Stowe's narrator challenges the reader to consider what her actions would be "if it were your Harry" being sold into slavery; similarly, in Harbert's novel, the narrator wonders "how many mothers seated by girl children watching with tenderest love the first, faint indications of genius, taste, or individuality do not [ . . . ] hesitate ere they attempt to crowd the little soul into the straight-jacket woven by the old tyrant custom" (30). In both

instances, the novel reminds the reader of the maternal imperative to protect her children, even if that protection means defying the law and social custom.

The concluding chapter of *Out of Her Sphere* is also reminiscent of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe ends her text with a section entitled "Concluding Remarks" that breaks from the fictional tale in order to answer questions about the veracity of its depiction of slavery and to make a final, direct appeal to the sympathies and reform impulses of the "men and women of America" (441). Harbert attempts to convert her readers in a comparable way in her final chapter, "A Chapter Which has No Connection with Our Story." Ostensibly, this title is to remind the reader that it is not part of the fictional narrative of Marjory's life. It is clearly ironic, however, because the persuasive rhetoric here is an extension of the novel's attempt to make readers into woman's rights activists. Like Stowe, Harbert begins this final chapter by assuring her reader that, although imaginative, her story is grounded in fact:

> You, that have kindly followed Marjory through her varied life, until she was the mistress of a beautiful home, may deem the picture purely imaginary, hence I ask permission to state some facts, and invite you to one more hour with other American women, who have been guided "out of their spheres." (170)

Just as Stowe provides proof with factual accounts of slave life, Harbert discusses the lives of current feminist activists such as Lucretia Mott, Julia Ward Howe and Stanton; in this way, the book draws a connection between its fictional heroine and the lives of her real-world counterparts, hoping the reader's sympathy for Marjory will in some way be

transferred to those leading the woman's rights movement by showing that they are likewise loving, devoted, pious wives and mothers as well as activists.

Novels like Stowe's -- and Harbert's -- depend on an emotional reaction from readers created by an appeal to their Christian ideals and rely upon the assumption of woman's moral superiority as well as her domesticity. Amy Schrager Lang articulates some of the limitations of this sentimental appeal, which "identifies the home as the repository of Christian virtue and places in it women admirable for their self-denial and submission. To this extent, at least, sentimentalism rationalizes the status quo" (33). Lang claims that reform novels like Stowe's ostensibly re-interpret the implications of sentimental conventions by creating a specifically political purpose for awakening one's emotions; however, the limitation of achieving reform through sentiment in this way comes from the rigidly defined "gender distinction inherent in sentimentalism" that is maintained only by the woman staying in the domestic realm of the home in order to protect her moral superiority. This confinement ultimately creates an inescapable paradox for sentimental reform novels that would translate personal feeling into public action:

> For one thing, the values of the home – self-denial, generosity, disinterested virtue – are dysfunctional in the larger world. For another, since the identity of the woman at home is subsumed in the identity of her husband and since her moral qualities are contingent upon her dependent state, the system of values she embodies, however admirable, cannot readily be translated into public form. (Lang 35)

Given the rigid spatial and gendered demarcation upon which sentimental reform rhetoric is founded, it is clearly problematic to use this type of appeal to pursue women's public,

political rights. However, as Frances Willard argues in her 1890 speech, "A White Life for Two," the way to circumvent the correlation between a woman's assumed moral superiority and her confinement to the domestic realm is by "restructuring the ideal of womanhood" to accommodate a broader range of influence (qtd. in Campbell, Vol. II 324). The traditional "ideal of womanhood" prescribed by mid-nineteenth century American culture has been classified by Barbara Welter as the "Cult of True Womanhood." Welter argues persuasively that the four characteristics to which "true women" aspire are purity, piety, domesticity and submissiveness. Willard's restructuring, therefore, seeks not to do away with these traits, but rather to expand them so that the nurturing influence they imply translates to the public world of politics, business, and in the case of this novel, the pulpit.

Harbert achieves this transformation by revising an important trait of the traditional sentimental heroine, who, Lang argues, "is characterized by her commendable, if utterly disabling, submission to God and husband" (36). In the story of Marjory Warner, Harbert takes "husband" out of the equation, creating a heroine who believes that her socially unconventional beliefs and actions are God's will, and who refuses to compromise her Christian duty for marriage and a home. In effect, Marjory grows up to be the woman Harbert envisions in her final chapter who "endeavors to please God and [herself]" before other people, thereby doing away with the male's mediating presence and creating a direct line between women's private submission and their ability to affect change in the political, public sphere. Of course, in one way their agency is still circumscribed by self-denial and submissiveness within this paradigm. Nevertheless, in

another way, their submission to God's Will requires them to rebel against societal standards, compelling them to support woman's rights.

Frances's Willard's commitment to the "restructuring the ideal of womanhood" and Harbert's fictional attempt to fulfill it are both examples of one type of woman's rights ideology, what Aileen Kraditor calls "arguments of expediency."[5] Rather than challenge the notion that women are inherently different from men, feminists like Willard and Harbert embrace this difference and use it as justification for their entrance into the public sphere, arguing their political activity is merely an extension of their natural domestic and familial roles. Arguments of expediency were powerful in convincing women who believed in their more conventional roles to nevertheless behave in unconventional ways. This paradox is embodied in Willard's life. She was a woman who ultimately became the nationally popular president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Although Willard promoted the sanctity of the home and the marriage tie, she remained single her entire life, traveling across the country to convince women to work politically for temperance and the elimination of other social ills, in part by demanding the vote. One sees clearly this blend of orthodox and unorthodox ideology in a speech Willard delivered in 1876 advocating "home protection," a euphemism for female enfranchisement, arguing that voting was not a woman's right, but her duty. As Willard tells her audience: "[. . . ] God has indicated woman, who is the born conservator of the home, to be the Nemesis of home's arch enemy, King Alcohol. [ . . .] [I]n a republic, this power of hers may be most effectively exercised by giving her a voice in the decision by which the rum-shop door shall be opened or closed beside her home" ("Temperance and Home Protection" 223). By

making political involvement contingent upon the higher moral nature and domesticity of women, Willard does not challenge the conventional doctrine of separate spheres, but bases her activism upon it. Like Harbert, Willard was from Evanston, Illinois, and the two carried on a lifelong correspondence which seems to have been influential in forming Harbert's ideas about gender, and particularly her fictional portrayal of feminist activism.[6]

To gain her reader's sympathy for the "restructuring of womanhood," Harbert creates a heroine who embodies flawlessly the virtues to which all "true women" aspire (and in which a middle-class audience would be invested) but whose exercise of those virtues is inhibited by a restrictive society. However, in order to escape the limitations that Lang identifies in Stowe's model of sentimental reform, the heroine must be able to engage actively with the ailing world she hopes to help. To this end, Harbert depicts Marjory as both reminiscent of and a critical response to Stowe's angelic character, Little Eva. As a child, Marjory is likened to the speaker of the poem, "Earth Angel," who also has dark hair and who laments that she may be "too brown" to "dwell with angel's [sic] fair," but who wants to be "one on earth" and "serve [the Lord] everywhere" (24). Later in the novel, Marjory's best friend in the book, Daisy Warner, says of the future feminist activist:

> I like her better than the girls in the Sunday-school books, I think; but I don't think she will die very young, 'cause she likes to play hide-and-seek, and she does get a little spunky sometimes; but she says her prayers a good deal. But *she* don't want to be a boy. She says she intends to do

> whatever God wants her to, and *be a girl*; thinks may-be she will preach. (34)

Marjory, like Little Eva, "says her prayers a good deal" and is kind and generous to those around her, but unlike Eva, Marjory is too full of life and energy to follow Eva's well-known footsteps towards an early, self-sacrificing grave. In *Sensational Designs*, Jane Tompkins argues that Eva's dying is a well-known trope in nineteenth-century fiction, that of "the pure and powerless [dying] to save the powerful and corrupt" (128). Harbert's novel, however, rejects this passivity and opts instead for an active model of redemption. Marjory will not "die very young" like the other heroines in Sunday school books; rather, "she thinks she will preach," thereby taking charge of her own destiny while she simultaneously gives her life to help others.

Marjory's experiences demonstrate how women's current legal, social and political situation hinders them in not only maintaining the domestic sphere's integrity, but also in exercising fully their moral suasion and "feminine" talents. For example, when Marjory's father dies early in the story, she is taken away from her mother and sent to live on a farm by her legal guardian, Uncle Thomas, who does so, according to Marjory, "because board was cheap" (16). Therefore, Marjory is forced to endure a painful separation from her remaining family until her mother "can settle things," because the law does not automatically grant women custody of their children, even after the father has died. This temporary domestic rupture foreshadows Marjory's major disappointment, being denied access to a formal education that will suit her for her "calling" to preach. Marjory speaks the novel's central claim about the need for gender reform as she laments her rejection from college:

> Yes, mother, I know I'm wicked [for praying bitterly to God to let her die because society disapproves of her unconventional choices], but *being a girl*, it does not matter. Men like a touch of wickedness, they say, and all I have to do in life is to *catch a husband*, since that is a girl's peculiar work. Why did God send me into the world with this intense desire to preach His beautiful Gospel? Why has he given me this intense desire for education, and then bound me hand and foot? Ah! He has not done it. My heart tells me that my Heavenly Father has not made a mistake. The fault is the world's. But, mother, with God on my side, I will succeed yet; but, oh! this world is a hard place for girls. (40)

Here, conventional gender expectations are set at odds with "true" Christianity. It is not God who desires silence and passivity from women, but the world. Furthermore, Marjory's words re-cast the importance of marriage as being potentially detrimental to fulfilling one's greater moral duty; if one only aspires to find a husband, then she is concerned with pleasing a man, not God. This sentiment is echoed in the book by characters who seem to represent the authorial viewpoint, like Marjory's mother, who muses, "I really wonder if God gives little girls such desires without designing that they should be heeded?" (31). The underlying message for the reader is that inhibiting women from exerting their influence and pursuing the roles outside of marriage to which they feel "called," is not only wrong, but sinful from a Christian perspective.

This construction of feminist sentiment is at once a radical re-thinking of female roles and abilities as individually empowering and at the same time is founded on the very conservative expectations of women as self-sacrificing and dutiful. This paradox is

clear in Marjory Warner's subsequent development. It is important to note that Marjory's desire to be a preacher, while firmly grounded in conventional expectations of woman's piety, is, to say the least, controversial. One of the strongest Biblical arguments used against feminist activism comes from Paul's injunction that women be silent in the churches; female preachers are all but unheard of in most nineteenth-century Christian sects that rigorously preserved the patriarchal hierarchy of the Church.[7] The narrator challenges this objection by insisting that if the church will adhere to Paul's command then it should "banish at once every woman from your Sabbath-schools since they not only speak but teach. Do not intrust [sic] your children to the care of teachers who are deprived of the benefit of spiritual consultation" (32). By exposing the hypocritical inconsistency of the Christian church, the narrator attempts to quell the objections to Marjory's calling, a calling that gives the heroine an independent, public role that would be startling to many readers.

At the same time, the novel makes it easy to accept the unconventional choices that Marjory makes by linking them with her sense of responsibility towards others, and specifically, her family. Using the example of Marjory's brother, the book shows how the imposition of gendered expectations can adversely affect both males and females; he "wept as bitterly as [Marjory] because he could not be an artist" (41). Instead, "with a widowed mother and a sister dependent upon him, he must adopt some profession which would insure him a competency, and so he gives up his cherished idea, and adopts an irksome profession" (41). When Marjory learns how her forced dependence is also keeping her brother from his "calling," she finds the courage to educate herself and defy society's expectations. Marjory tells her mother, "It seemed to me that I could not tread

the thorny path for my own sake, but *I can for my brother's*. Ah, God has given me something to do – save my brother for art, and once out of my sphere, I will find my pulpit" (41). This other-centered rationale for activism is a common refrain in nineteenth-century rhetoric; in fact, in a contemporary speech, Willard uses almost the same words when explaining how she entered the public world of reform: "For my own sake, I had not the courage, but I have for thy sake, dear native land" ("Temperance and Home Protection" 226). Marjory's resolve, then, is the same as Willard's, but it is fictionalized literally as "home protection;" her independence will "save" her brother as well as herself.

It is an organizing irony of the novel that Marjory's most conventionally feminine impulses lead her to her most unorthodox actions. One of the most unusual ways it manifests itself is in Marjory's desire "to buy a little girl" (22). As a young child, Marjory decides that her mother will need someone to stay at home with her when Marjory leaves home to preach. To this end, Marjory tries to make money to buy the baby by sewing rags together to sell. While this plan is treated as childish fancy, when Marjory is a bit older, she does adopt an orphan child, Christine, who fortuitously escapes from the theater and shows up amidst a group of Marjory's friends on Christmas Day. Clearly, adopting this "Kissmus child" (as Christine calls herself) and becoming a mother without physical conception aligns Marjory with the Virgin Mary.[8] Her motivations for doing so certainly seem as self-sacrificing and pure: "I want to take this poor, little, homeless child, and give her home, happiness and love" (71). Other characters remind Marjory that taking on the responsibilities of parenthood might harm her chances of marrying, but she becomes indignant because she is tired of the suggestion that marrying

well should be her only goal in life. Thus, Harbert creates a heroine who chooses to be mother out of love and concern for the child but who has the freedom to be independent outside the marriage bond. This pattern again repeats itself when Marjory decides to let an invalid man who cares about her live with her and her mother, despite the gossip surrounding her, because it is the moral, nurturing thing to do. More centrally, Marjory decides to become a lecturer for woman's rights because she feels compelled to speak the "truth" and challenge the social dictates stifling her and other women. Marjory considers her reform work, like her preaching, not only consistent with, but also inspired by, her Christian faith; the night before her first lecture she prays, "Oh! Father, for the sake of these little ones of thine; for the sake of the toiling and suffering, help me, give me strength and courage to speak the truth. My prayer tonight, is simply this, 'Father, guide, for Jesus' sake'" (95).

Given the emphasis on domesticity in the novel, it is perhaps not surprising that the oppositional community that coalesces from Marjory's unorthodox stance begins with her family. After Marjory finds out that her brother must give up his desire to be an artist if he is to support his family, she determines to take the unconventional path of working towards independence. However, she does not make this choice alone; the entire family commits to defying society's restrictions. Marjory enthusiastically appeals to her mother, "We will support ourselves. Ah, there are three of us, and with each other's love we can defy the prejudices of the world" (41). Marjory's mother and brother, and later her little girl, never waiver in their support of her feminism, and the entire family is happier and more harmonious because of their unprecedented relationship. At one point, Marjory says that everyone she knows tries to quell her unusual activities, "excepting [her] own

dear mother" (71). Later, Marjory's brother, now a promising artist, claims that his sister is his "idol" because she "actually earned enough money while [he] was in college, to support mother and herself, so that [he] could devote [himself] to painting" (99). While Ferguson stresses choice over birth as the crucial way of entering an oppositional community, in Harbert's novel, the two are inextricably linked; given the emphasis on familial relations for the true woman, it is important in Harbert's model of a reform community that personal affections and political beliefs do not cause conflict in the domestic realm.

Marjory's activist work as a lecturer and writer makes converts of several other characters along the way, many of whom are prejudiced at first against "strong-minded women." For example, during her public lectures, Marjory's persuasiveness as well as her propriety brings many of her listeners into the folds of the feminist oppositional community. When Marjory lectures in "fashionable Saratoga," the narrator describes her appearance on the stage from the perspective of an audience member:

> The audience glanced at the soulful face; then at the delicate lavender silk, covered with a filmy, delicate, black shawl; at the small hands and little feet; and ere she had spoken one word, she evoked the applause of the large audience *by the power of womanhood alone.* (126)

The narrator lingers over Marjory's delicate appearance, as she often does in the book, to stress the compatibility between femininity and gender reform. Many surprised, converted audience members greet Marjory after she delivers her "earnest, womanly" speech. Her cousin, previously mortified by Marjory's public appearances, says that she is "delighted" because the speech "did not seem a particle bold" (127). Marjory is also

congratulated by a "good, motherly, but ignorant woman" and a "grey-haired old clergyman," two well-wishers who once again remind the reader of the relationship between gender reform and Christian service. Both the venerable leader of the church and the poor person would theoretically benefit from women's political involvement, which would ostensibly lead to a more charitably-minded government. Perhaps most telling are the young, wealthy girls who claim they are now supporters of woman's rights after seeing Marjory's reception because, as one of them tells her friends, "Girls, its [sic] all a humbug about the boys not liking strong-minded women. I tell you, they treat her as though she was an empress. If a girl is pretty and lady-like, everybody will respect her, and the fact is, I'm converted" (129). Although by Marjory's example, Harbert stresses that a woman should not be solely concerned with attracting a husband, these affluent young converts are important members of Marjory's extended oppositional community. Their presence appeals to Harbert's white middle-class female readership who would presumably fear that men would shun them for behaving unconventionally. This passage demonstrates to these hesitant readers that if they maintain their "womanly" respectability, their political activism will only increase their attractiveness, and more importantly, their activism will help them be more fully-realized "true women" by confronting society's hindrance of their moral work.

Despite these myriad examples of conversion, for the most part, the other characters in Marjory's "inner circle" (with the noted exception of her family and Warren Huntington) spend the majority of the novel opposed to woman's rights ideology. For example, the females closest to Marjory serve as contrasting models of young womanhood and are not initially an integral part of her reform community. While Daisy

claims she would never want to vote, she seems not to have given the matter much thought and her opposition seems a matter of indifference. On the other hand, Marjory encounters a more complex form of resistance in Maude Johnstone, a young girl whom she meets at the home of Warren Huntington, a wealthy bachelor supportive of woman's rights. The narrator ironically labels Maude "heroine number two" in the novel, highlighting her existence as a "type" of fictional character. As such, she embodies all the flaws the novel attributes to women acclimated to the current society through reading popular fiction, and her vocal disapproval of woman's rights reform is presented as proof of her selfishness and "unwomanliness."

Harbert uses Maude to expose the type of weak, vain literary heroine whom she criticizes explicitly in the final chapter and to whom Marjory is clearly written as a feminist response. Harbert begins the chapter in which Maude is introduced, "A Girl of the Period," with a quote from William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* that represents the misguided perspective on women found in literature heretofore:

> [ . . . ] though very likely the heroic female character which women admire is a more glorious and beautiful object than the kind, fresh, smiling, artless, little tender, domestic goddess whom men are inclined to worship; yet the latter and inferior sort of women must have this consolation, that men do admire them after all, and in fact I am inclined to think that to be despised by her own sex is a very great compliment to woman. (45)[9]

The narrator counters with the claim that Maude "has always been admired and loved by men and disliked by women" but posits a very different explanation: "Not solely because

men admire her, but because she is not lovable or lovely to women" (45). Harbert's novel undermines Thackeray's depiction of a "little tender, domestic goddess" by presenting this type of personality as a façade. Maude is "artfully artless;" she is bored and unfriendly in the company of other women, but "in the presence of young men, she is everything that is modest, brilliant and fascinating" (45). The narrator is quick to point out, however, that it is not Maude's fault that she is deceptive and self-centered. She is the "legitimate outgrowth of the teachings of society," which tells her she must find a rich husband, and her anti-feminist sentiments (She claims to have "all the rights she wanted") are part of this single-minded pursuit which has rendered her selfish and useless. The narrator even goes so far as to say that Maude has modeled her behavior on the work of "the novelists who were admitted to be the most faithful portrayers of human nature" (46), and she laments that if Maude succeeds in her plan to marry a rich husband "the world will applaud" (46), underscoring society's false priorities. For the reader, the juxtaposition of Maude's shallowness and single-minded pursuit of matrimony with Marjory's earnest attempt at usefulness through feminist activism is an uncomfortable one, especially when the reader considers that Marjory's actions might prevent "heroine number one" from finding a happy marriage of her own.

According to the novel, one way that Marjory's life choices could potentially render her lonely is the threat that "if [she] adopt[s] this independent course, [she] will sacrafice [sic] to it love and a home" (41). The book acknowledges that it is more difficult for a feminist activist like Marjory to reconcile her public work with a loving marriage, but this difficulty is presented as the unfortunate result of a narrow-minded society prejudiced against an ultimately liberating transformation. Therefore, the reader

sees the necessity for a change not only in women who would be useful activists, but also for a corresponding change in the males who would love them. Warren Huntington describe these ideal new husbands as "true men":

> [ . . . ] true men have faith in manhood; because he [sic] knows that he would protect his mother or sister at the polls just as effectually as he does at the post-offices, in rail-road cars, or on the streets. A true man would not thus thrust aside a *grand idea*, nor desire to have a right yield to expediency. (38)

In Harbert's imagined world, this transformation of "true men" is a process very similar to the way by which true womanhood is restructured. Men who support female political participation and gender reform are presented as the more fully realized embodiment of traditional masculine attributes: chivalry, nobility, and integrity. Underscoring this definition of the "true man" is the supposition that men who do not support reform are cowardly because they are not willing to take care of women at all times and are small-minded and selfish because they would deny women their right to vote in order to maintain the status quo. Therefore, for America to reach its ideal state, men and women must both open their minds to new possibilities. As the narrator advises her reader, "Educate girls for womanhood – not wifehood. Educate them as responsible beings before the law, human and divine; and, at the same time, educate American men to admire such womanhood" (75).

Through the course of the novel, Winthrop Wright, Marjory's childhood friend and adult love interest, undergoes just such an education. As a very young man, he instinctively admires Marjory's originality and ambition, but he cannot reconcile it with

his stereotypical ideas about woman's rights activists. When Warren Huntington suggests that Marjory will probably grow up to be a "strong-minded woman," Winthrop disagrees: "'Oh, no sir, indeed she won't. [. . . ] You mistake, I said she did not want to be a man, and you know all these strong-minded women do'" (35). "Strong-minded" is a derogatory term used to describe feminist activists and other unconventional women, but as Harbert does with other well-known phrases such as "out of her sphere" and even "true woman," she seeks to appropriate the term in the service of reform. Huntington observes that Winthrop has gotten his ideas "from the newspapers" and he advises the younger man to help himself by revising his opinion: "If you want to be a complete success, try to win a strong-minded woman" (38). However, Winthrop replies, "I'll never do it," revealing that his education has barely begun.

Marjory and Winthrop seem hopelessly at odds because of their divergent views on feminist activism. His equivocation because of her "strong-mindedness" extends into his adult life, when he waivers in his desire to propose after finding out she has embarked on a career as a woman's rights lecturer. This revelation changes his mind, even though he says she "has been the best friend of [his] life" (97). On the other hand, Marjory never waivers in making her work as a lecturer a priority, because she believes it is her Christian duty; therefore, her marrying is contingent upon her being able to pursue this calling. As Marjory writes in her journal: "'At times my woman's heart shrinks from entering this new work, lest it should lead me away from home and love; but then I know my soul would never recognize her king in any one who would love me less, for duty performed" (100). Marjory concludes her journal entry with a quote from Margaret Fuller: "The woman in me kneels and weeps in tender rapture; the man in me rushes

forth, but only to be baffled. Yet the time will come, when, from the union of this tragic king and queen, shall be born a radiant sovereign self" (100). This passage is a rare moment in the text that acknowledges a more balanced expectation of "womanly" and "manly" traits in the reformed notions of womanhood. While Fuller believed in an essential femininity and masculinity, she maintained that every human had characteristics of both sexes. This quote's placement right after Marjory's observation about her ideal companion suggests that the marriage she envisions would, by extension, also be a more balanced, equal relationship. Nevertheless, the word "king" contradicts Marjory's desire for a "sovereign self" somewhat, highlighting the problems of reconciling the conventional gender definitions that underlie expediency arguments with a substantial revision of marriage and society.

Winthrop's inability to accept Marjory's vision of a marriage that does not conflict with her duty creates a seemingly irreconcilable conflict in the center of the text. In their first interview after Winthrop learns of Marjory's lecturing, he asks her what she intends to do about her work after she marries. Marjory replies that she does not plan to travel constantly and be separate from her husband. In fact, she claims, "I want to share his labors, be interested in his business, and know his friends. I want to preach, and I hope to marry – well, say an editor – then in our cosy [sic] sanctum we could sit together and he write his editorials, and I could write my sermons" (118). After hearing Marjory's wishes, Winthrop believes they are incompatible with his own, and he tells her: "'Confident that after knowing you I can never love another woman, I yet feel that I could not satisfy you, and that you could not yield to me the intense love my nature demands, and so, darling, good-bye'" (118). Although it is Winthrop, not Marjory, who

verbally rejects the possibility of their marriage, there is much textual evidence that Marjory would never have consented to the marriage that Winthrop would have wanted at this point, which would apparently have her sacrifice her work in order to yield to Winthrop all her affection.

This aborted proposal situates Harbert's novel within the genre Karen Tracey has labeled the "double proposal plot," which "can be identified by the heroine's rejection and acceptance of proposals from the same suitor" and can be investigated for the ways the narratives "deploy two specific opportunities created by the double-proposal device: the opened space between rejected and accepted proposals and the inherent contrast between rejected and accepted marriage conditions" (4):

> Typically, the first proposal does not result in marriage at least in part because something is wrong with the hero-to-be. If the heroine were to marry him the first time, she would sacrifice herself to a marriage that would inhibit her individual growth and subject her to a dominating husband. It is not enough that the suitor "loves" the heroine passionately; he needs to be reformed, humbled, or otherwise transformed so that when the heroine does accept him the marriage will be egalitarian. (23)

Marjory realizes the necessity for this change after Winthrop leaves the room "blind to his own mistake" (118), although she holds little hope at this point in the novel that the change will come about: "Marjory sat still as a statue, quietly, calmly, icily accepting her fate. Recognizing that her work, if performed, must be wrought alone, since not yet did even the best of men fully understand how intense love and intense womanliness, could be united with self-reliance and consecration to the public good" (118). Unlike heroines

who do not survive heartbreak, Marjory still sees some hope, realizing that "she had much to live for" in her work and therefore has a storehouse of resiliency "and so her heart did not break" (119). Her ability to master her grief and to sing the next day to cheer others around her is misinterpreted by Winthrop, who wonders if it is "possible that her intellect has dwarfed her soul" (119). Winthrop's misinterpretation calls to mind Professor's Thompson's observation; most people cannot imagine a "normal" woman who accepts responsibilities outside the primary heterosexual bond.

Far from dwarfing her soul, however, this break in their romantic attachment allows Marjory to realize more fully her feminist potential. Tracey argues that the postponement of marriage in the double-proposal plot opens a narrative space for the heroine's independent development as well as the hero's: [T]he novel shifts [the heroine's story] to a post-courtship bildungsroman or sometimes *Künstlerroman*" (23). The trajectory of *Out of Her Sphere*'s plot is consistent with this pattern; only after Winthrop and Marjory "drift apart" do they achieve significant success in their chosen fields. Winthrop becomes a successful editor while Marjory travels both domestically and abroad as a lecturer and author for woman's rights, gaining widespread recognition and converting many people to her feminist cause. However, the narrator alerts the reader that "both of them are fully conscious that something is needed to render their lives complete" (130), which is, of course, their reconciliation and marriage. In order for this reunion to come about, Winthrop must be converted to accept Marjory's vision of an egalitarian marriage that would allow her to fulfill her duties as a woman's rights lecturer and eventually, as a preacher. This change finally happens as Winthrop reviews Marjory's recently published book on feminist reform for his magazine: "Again and again, he read

some of the best passages, and then putting the little volume aside, [ . . . ] he now determines to ignore all prejudice, to bid her write, lecture or preach, - to perform her entire duty – and yet to accept his love; to be his wife" (131).

From this point on, the story moves rapidly toward a resolution of all lingering conflicts. Marjory reaps the benefits of her unwavering devotion to her duty, and the narrative builds to the author's utopian vision of a happier community founded on "the restructuring of womanhood." In the final chapters, Marjory receives letters from both Maude and Daisy and while very different in content, each letter attests to its author's conversion to feminist reform and affirms the bonds of imagined community among reformer necessary to bring about change. Maude writes to Marjory for help, because she has learned from hard experience that marrying for money is a dangerous prospect for a woman; her husband has died and has left her child in the custody of its grandparents, and Maude asks Majory's assistance in helping her escape to Europe. Once again, we find parallels to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Marjory says that she will violate the law and help Maude, "just as [she] would have assisted a fugitive slave-mother, flying from those who would sell her" (152). Maude's husband was Warren Huntington, and his callous disregard for his wife's feelings also resonates with the lessons of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: even a seemingly kind character will take advantage of those subordinated to him. In this scenario, Marjory is aligned most closely with Stowe's character, Mrs. Byrd, the Senator's wife, who says that "obeying God never brings on public evils" (77). Unlike Mrs. Byrd, however, Marjory is in a position to help Maude escape herself, instead of depending on her husband, as Mrs. Byrd must do to help Eliza, reiterating once again the necessity of a woman's active, rather than passive, role in bringing about Christian-

minded reform. For her part, Maude is chastened by her experience and, once it is safe for her to return to the United States, enters "the list of woman suffrage advocates" and "by telling the story of her own wrongs, [makes] more converts than she could have done by eloquent appeals, and unanswerable logic" (152). Maude, like Harbert, utilizes the strength of sentimental appeal.

Daisy, on the other hand, is liberated by "frontier suffrage."[10] She writes to Marjory from her new home in Laramie, Wyoming, to tell her childhood friend of her newfound happiness. She has started her own business and hired a woman who could not get work otherwise to take over her housekeeping duties (Daisy is depicted as an inept domestic worker throughout the novel). This relationship fictionally supports another common woman's rights argument; improving the condition of middle-class women will also improve that of laboring class women by giving them access to more appealing, better paying, jobs. Daisy also tells Marjory how voting gives her the enjoyable opportunity to ride to town with her husband, an outing that only takes her away from her children for a few hours. Daisy's experience is an important one for readers who might believe the threat from anti-suffragists that voting would create chaos in the home, and both Daisy's and Maude's stories testify once again to the compatibility between "feminine" virtues such as maternity and domesticity and woman suffrage. Furthermore, these letters imagine a network of feminists across the country and across the world who benefit from reform and who are committed to it and to each other, a feat especially important for women who would support feminist activism but feel isolated from actual reform communities and activities because of either geographical distance or domestic responsibilities.

For Marjory, the ending of her story is the happy one the reader might expect. Winthrop proposes and their marriage becomes a partnership; they work together in Winthrop's office at his newspaper, just as Marjory envisioned. Soon, she finds a congregation, "poor weary women, who never attended church" but who ask Marjory to "preach for them a little" because they feel she "was interested in them" (168). At this point, Marjory turns to her husband and says, "Will you assist me, Winthrop?" (168). Ultimately, the story ends with the same paradoxical mixture of convention and radicalness one finds throughout. Marjory's charity to the poor is a conventional "womanly" activity, but her being in charge is unprecedented. Marjory is finally in her sphere, the church, but the roles are reversed; the wife is the preacher in her pulpit, while her husband is the willing helpmeet. As the feminist activist heroine, she has accepted the challenge which Harbert's narrator issues to all women:

> American women, while such things exist [as intemperance and poverty], will you not with influence, voice, pen and the ballot, assist the true fathers of the republic in their endeavors to save its sons? [ . . . ] Mothers of the republic, when your sons ask for bread, will you give them a stone? When the good and the true ask for co-operation, sympathy and assistance, can you bestow upon them only indifference, prejudice, and that selfish assertion, *you* have all the rights *you* want? (68)

Like Stowe, Harbert implores women to use their influence as mothers to help America live up to its promise of happiness and freedom for everyone. However, instead of using their indirect influence in the home, Harbert appeals to her readers' patriotism and

familial love to use more direct means of influence, the "voice, pen and the ballot," extending their womanly morality into the public world of politics.

If *Out of Her Sphere* likens its feminist activist heroine to the morally superior mothers turned abolitionists who people *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Lillie Devereux Blake's heroines in *Fettered for Life* (which Blake wrote just three years later) remind the reader more of slaves who are bound and need liberating, an analogy made explicit in the title, which equates the marriage bond with the shackles of slavery. This type of analogy was commonplace among woman's rights advocates, and while clearly a problematic appropriation of the slave's experience, given white women's relative freedom, it was often effective.[11] This perspective on women's subjugation, likewise, has its roots in abolitionist sentiment, which argued that slavery was not only unchristian, but un-American because it denied the slaves their inherent right to freedom and self-determination. In 1848, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton presented the Declaration of Sentiments to the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, she relied heavily on arguments based on the natural rights of American citizens, arguing they should be extended to white women. Although Lillie Devereux Blake was not at Seneca Falls, when she joined the woman's rights movement in the early 1870's she aligned herself with Stanton and others who argued from the radical position that, just as citizens should be considered "colorless" for legal and political purposes, they should also be thought of as sexless. This analogy denies the relevance of gender when determining a person's legal position, and represents the other strain of what Kraditor identifies as conflicting woman's rights ideologies, "arguments of justice" founded on Enlightenment ideals of a human's inherent natural rights.

As a result, the differences between Blake's book and Harbert's are pervasive and stem directly from the authors' varying perspectives on the importance of femininity and domestic relations for women. In *Out of Her Sphere*, the heroine is a re-articulation of the attributes of the "true woman" employed in the service of Christian-minded feminist activism, and the oppositional community that forms is an organic outgrowth of her domestic relationships, and the utopian vision at the end is firmly grounded in Christian ideals and middle class expectations of charity to the poor and a diffusion of moral influence throughout society; a woman's sphere becomes limitless, but it is still a peculiarly feminine space. Thus, the appeal to the audience is ultimately based on a shared understanding between reader and text of the merits of femininity and Christianity. In stark contrast, the heroines in *Fettered for Life* pursue feminist activism not primarily to aid others, but to bring about their own fulfillment, development, and equally importantly, protection. The resulting model of an oppositional community, far from being grounded in familial relations, is one based on a shared experience of gender oppression that often sets families against each other because of the current power differential in society that makes women's situations unhappy or abusive. Thus, the community consists of women banding together across class lines to resist the oppression of this power. While the fate of the central heroine is ostensibly a harmonious marriage, there is textual evidence to make one doubt this prediction; in fact, the one character who seems destined for significant success is the one who chooses a life of activism over marriage. Ultimately, this book seeks to recruit feminist reformers by making its readers aware of women's subordinate (and perilous) role in society while they lack legal and

financial recourse to protect themselves, an unjust position that directly results from the denial of women's natural rights.

Although Blake was well known as a lecturer, she was also an accomplished writer. In creating her fictional reform community, she seems to draw heavily on the issues and concerns raised by Stanton and Anthony in *The Revolution* that stem from women's oppression; Blake creates characters and scenarios that embody some of the abstract ideas and problems raised in the journal. Stanton's editorials on the problems of spousal abuse and the need for changes in the divorce laws influence the graphic depiction of domestic violence in the novel, and other topics such as dress reform, drunkenness, prostitution, divorce and political corruption are "brought to life" on the pages of *Fettered for Life.* Along the same lines, the irreverent, disdainful tone about domestic relationships found in *The Revolution* is also an undercurrent in Blake's novel. For example, in an editorial entitled "Marriages and Mistresses," Stanton writes, "I frankly admit that to be a 'mistress' is less dishonorable than to be a 'wife;' for while the 'mistress' may leave her degradation if she will, public sentiment and the law hold the 'wife' in hers" (234). In fact, the depiction of the central heroine, Laura Stanley, seems directly inspired by an article from the journal, "Women in Art," which discusses the "recent exhibitions of the National Academy of Design" (the school Laura attends) that "have contained evidence of that American women can attain high positions in many of the departments of art" (236). However, the crucial difference between the journal's rhetorical, argumentative writing and Blake's imaginative rendering of these issues and examples is that Blake is able to personalize the characters to the degree that the reader feels an intimate connection with those who suffer from these social, political and

domestic evils, and just as importantly, Blake is free to imagine possible solutions to them.

Blake's fictionalization of physical violence and criminal corruption suggests that her book is influenced in some ways by a popular mid-nineteenth century genre, the sensation novel. This genre developed in both England and America in part as a backlash to what was perceived as the excessive propriety of much sentimental domestic fiction. In his essay, "What is 'Sensational' about the 'Sensation Novel'?", Patrick Brantlinger defines the genre's "special structural qualities" as "a unique mixture of contemporary domestic realism with elements of the Gothic romance, the Newgate novel of criminal 'love life', and the 'silver fork' novel of scandalous and sometimes criminal 'high life'" (30). Also relevant to a study of Blake's novel is Brantlinger's contention that the best sensation novels are those "with a secret" (30). These qualities result in sordid tales of murder or attempted murder, physical violence, blackmail, and deception that span both the upper and lower classes. Furthermore, according to Anne French Dalke, sensation novels were known for their portrayals of sexual lasciviousness and seduction, and in particular, the figure of "the female seducer [who] is both sexually and economically powerful" ("Hawthorne and Melville" 196).

Like *Out of Her Sphere*'s relationship to the sentimental reform novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, intertextual evidence in *Fettered for Life* suggests Blake knew this genre well and is consciously but critically introducing some of its components into her novel. In her essay, "The Shameless Woman is the Worst of Men: Sexual Aggression in Nineteenth-Century Sensational Novels," Dalke discusses several American sensation novels, including George Lippard's *The Monks of Monk Hall* and *New York: Its Upper*

*Ten and Lower Million*. According to Dalke, "the passionate woman *par excellence* of *Monks*" who "traffics her body for money and power" is named Dora Livingstone (298). It seems hardly a coincidence that the body of one of Blake's characters, Flora Livingston, is also "traffic[ked] for money and power"; however, in the later case, it is the girl's parents who benefit, not herself. Also striking is the similarity between another of Blake's characters and one of Lippard's in *New York*, Frank van Huyden. Lippard's Frank is a female "who has a masculine name" and who "appears in male costume" (297). She uses this disguise to seduce previously chaste men, and her fate is to "die finally on a raft in the ocean, where two of her victims stab her bosom [ . . . ] and drink her blood to save their lives" (297). Blake's Frank Heywood is also a female character wearing a man's disguise, but this character uses it to help women who are powerless in society. Furthermore, this Frank also finds herself on a raft in the ocean, but rather than having her life taken, one of the women whom she has helped gives up her life to save Frank. The differences are crucial, to say the least, and attest to Blake's revisionist intention. Blake is not interested in titillating her audience with misogynist stories of the immense power of sexually deviant women. Rather, she wants to show how powerless most women are because of their sex. In this way, *Fettered* seems part of a growing trend of what Lyn Pykett calls women's sensation novels "that depict marriage and the family as problematic institutions for women and men" (45). While I would argue that *Fettered* is more complex than a pure sensation novel, Blake's judicious use of the genre's sordidness makes it possible to harness its shock value to bring about political conversion.

Blake clearly believes that contemporary fiction, both sensational and sentimental, perpetuates these "problematic institutions" through its unrealistic portraits of women's roles in marriage and their social (and sexual) freedom. Part of her revisionist impulse, then, is to undercut this literature's power. For example, Mrs. Bludgett, an abused wife who is the victim of horrifically graphic violence, finds her escape in popular fiction that glorifies just such violence. Her favorite works, "Headless Lover, or Beauty's Last Temptation, a Tale of Love and Despair" and "Berenice the Beautiful," are clearly reminiscent of sensation novels such as Joseph Halt Ingraham's works, *Frank Rivers: or The Dangers of the Town. A Story of Temptation, Trial and Crime* and *Eleanor Sherwood, the Beautiful Temptress* (qtd. in Dalke "Shameless Woman" 296). Ironically, Mrs. Bludgett says that these tales are her "only pleasure" (16), the sole way she can escape from her abusive, fearful married life. Likewise, Flora, the upper-class character who suffers mental abuse from her husband that is ultimately as lethal as Mrs. Bludgett's treatment, writes poetry about love that sharply differs from her miserable situation: "Silvery sweet the joyous swaying / Of wedding bells, that far out fling / Their melodious rapture [ . . . ]" (307). These literary works, contrasted with the lives of the women most invested in them, mock the misleading nature of popular romance narratives and maudlin poetry that belie the unhappy reality of most marriages and women's subordinated role in them.

A more explicit critique comes from Dr. D'Arcy, a woman doctor and feminist activist who observes, "Just so long as our literature is pervaded with the thought that women are inferior, so long will our sex be held in low estimate" (254). The doctor then lists several contradictory stereotypes about women found in literature and ends with the

exasperated exclamation, "The amount of such trash that one finds is really aggravating!" (255). This observation is very similar to Harbert's narrator in the final chapter of *Out of Her Sphere*, and one can argue that, like the earlier novel, one of the most important ways *Fettered for Life* converts its readership to feminism is to provide an alternate fictional landscape, one that models a politically active heroine who is independent and talented and who develops egalitarian relationships with men and other women.

Blake, like Harbert, criticizes literary forms and notions even as she appropriates them in order to bring about real-world change, rendering her own version of the feminist activist heroine in the process. Like Marjory, Laura Stanley has the traditional attributes of heroines in sentimental novels, such as beauty, purity, and goodness. However, unlike Marjory, Laura's piety and morality are not explicitly discussed at length, thus diminishing the importance of the "Cult of True Womanhood." At the same time, Laura does not in any way resemble the "female seducer" found in so much sensation fiction. Instead, her distinctive features include her intelligence, her plain-spokenness, her good health and desire for exercise (she says about herself at one point that she is always "unromantically well"[108]). Perhaps her most important attributes, though, are her artistic talent and her desire for financial and social independence, a desire that launches the movement of the story. As Grace Farrell observes in her afterword to the novel, "Lillie Blake reversed the protagonist's sex in an archetypal fairy tale of a youth who goes out into the world to seek his fortune and – like [Virginia] Woolf long after her – imagined the consequences" (382).[12]

Laura moves to New York to "seek her fortune" as a recent college graduate determined to become a self-sufficient artist. Laura announces early in the book, "I

always had 'ideas,' I cannot see why a daughter should hang on her father for support any more than a son. I have been educated so that I can earn my own living, and I intend to do it" (40-1). Laura has considerable artistic talent, and she gains great pleasure from painting. Laura's independence -- and by extension, her feminist actions -- is motivated primarily by her need for self-fulfillment and is based on her right to develop fully as a human, in contrast to Marjory's other-centered, Christian motivation. Laura is not saving a brother for art; she is the artist. In fact, the only time her art is discussed as benefiting others is in a specifically political context. Dr. D'Arcy says that Laura can help bring about "the civil and political equality of women" by devoting herself to her art: "This country has not yet produced a really great woman-painter, why should you not achieve a triumph for yourself and your sex in that art?" (64).

Laura is also similar to Marjory in that she refuses to let marriage interfere with her feminist ambitions, although for Laura, this refusal stems from a belief in her natural right to self-fulfillment. When Laura proclaims that she hopes she will not always be an art teacher, a friend misunderstands her, thinking she means that she hopes to marry and give up working. Laura replies indignantly, "No, I do not! [ . . . ] Of course I may marry some day – why shouldn't I? But I do not intend to allow that to interfere with my profession, I hope I shall not always be obliged to give lessons, but when I can sell my pictures for good prices, it will not be necessary" (71). Laura's priorities are telling; she talks about marriage casually, clearly considering it tangential to her career, which she insists on pursuing. Also, her desire for personal recognition and success, as well as for money, clearly reflects a self-interestedness that contradicts the tenets of "true

womanhood" and suggests the heroine's (and the author's) unequivocal belief that the right to the "pursuit of happiness" extends to females.

In order to impress upon her readers the obstacles facing women in this pursuit (and to shock her readers into doing something about them), Blake depicts New York City, where Laura moves to seek her fortune, as a hostile, patriarchal world. This concentrated, dangerous urban landscape also attests to the sensation novel's influence on Blake; these novels are almost always set in crowded, busy cities. In this world, the unchecked political power of men has corrupted every facet of contemporary life, creating a city teeming with sexual predators, dissipated saloon-goers, abusive husbands and fathers, not to mention facile, condescending men whose pride is undeserved and whose pomposity is unbearable. On her first night in town, Laura appeals to a policeman to let her sleep in jail because she is insulted and propositioned when she tries to find a hotel in which to stay. On her second night, Judge Swinton (a character who pursues Laura lasciviously and ruthlessly throughout the text) conspires with Mr. Bludgett (a political crony who is often drunk and beats his wife mercilessly throughout the story) to compromise the young heroine by trapping her in Bludgett's house. This threatening environment is the backdrop for all the action of the novel: "The surging throng around [Laura] seemed so many enemies, any one of whom would wound her or hunt her. Among all these strong, pushing, busy men, there seemed no place, and no hope for a woman to expect justice or mercy" (183).

In addition to sexual and physical power, this fictionalized masculine world is infested with political corruption. Swinton, Bludgett and others conspire to maintain control of the political machine in New York in order to protect their financial interests,

which include saloons and alcohol sales. Their corrupt dealings eventually result in Bludgett's murdering a political opponent and Swinton's arranging the murderer's acquittal. This devastating scene is immediately followed by a satiric description of a political meeting in which Judge Swinton accepts his party's nomination to Congress, proclaiming his devotion to the "duties of the hour" and "the responsibilities of the high position to which he aspired" (339). Again, Blake's novel reveals the harsh, often violent reality of public institutions. However, it is not only the underworld of politics that is corrupt; one of the most heartless, domineering and dangerous men in the novel is Ferdinand Le Roy, one of the wealthiest men in New York. Here, Blake employs the sensation novel's ability to roam among various classes to show how corrupting unchecked power can be, suggesting that this pervasive problem can only be solved by allowing the other half of society enough power to counterbalance the excess.

Within this dangerous setting, *Fettered for Life* carves out an oppositional community of women who literally must work together to protect themselves and each other and whose intimate relationships are formed across bonds of class and "respectability." The women whom Laura befriends during her adventures form a diverse group that nevertheless is bound together by both choice and necessity. It includes Dr. D'Arcy, an older woman who is a successful doctor and feminist activist, and Frank Heywood, a journalist who is a woman "passing" as a man. Neither the reader nor Laura realizes Frank's true identity until the end of the story; however, he/she is part of the sympathetic web of women from the beginning. The community is made more complex by the differing financial and social backgrounds of its members. Mrs. Moulder is a middle-class wife who befriends Laura after taking her in as a border and who is a

critical embodiment of the passivity and submission expected of a model wife. Many characters are in even more dire financial and personal circumstances. In addition to Mrs. Bludgett, Rhoda and Maggie are both laboring class women who have fallen victim to male sexual predators; although they are seamstresses by trade, currently, Rhoda works in a saloon and supports Maggie, who is dying of consumption. On the other end of the social spectrum, there is Flora Livingston, Laura's college friend who is just as confined and unhappy in her affluence as Maggie, Rhoda, and others are in their deprivation. What links these characters together is the book's contention that all women, regardless of class or position, are vulnerable as long as they are denied equal legal and social recourse. The marriages of Flora and Mrs. Bludgett are both intolerably abusive, although the women live in very different social circumstances, and both die as a direct result of their husbands' cruelty. Also, Laura and Flora, both members of "respectable" society, are sexually harassed or physically threatened by the same men, Judge Swinton and Ferdinand Le Roy, whose sexual dominance ruins the reputations and lives of Rhoda and Maggie.

Storytelling is one way these women bridge their personal differences and learn to depend on one another. At the beginning of the novel, Laura tells Mrs. Bludgett, "I should like to hear all your story. [ . . . ] We women ought to stand by each other, and care for each other" (18). This request is repeated throughout the book. For example, Dr. D'Arcy entreats Laura, "[N]ow my dear, tell me all about yourself" (33). Through this method, the reader learns of Laura's aunt sending her to college despite her disapproving father and of her mother's helping her to run away from her rural home to the city. Later, Laura breaks through Rhoda's reticence and her hesitance to tell a respectable girl about

life in the saloons with the earnest appeal, "I can understand [ . . .] do tell me about it; I should like so much to hear your story" (57). Here, the reader and the characters not only learn of the horrible conditions of this lifestyle, but see a model of sympathy that defies the debilitating silence imposed on middle-class women by expectations of propriety. Almost all the information the reader learns about the various plights of the women in the book follows a request to tell their story. In this context, Frank Heywood's journalistic efforts to protect women by reporting sexist injustice have implications for organized, public political activity. In one episode, he helps imprisoned women get better treatment by threatening to write a story about their lack of blankets and food; in another, he warns Judge Swinton that he will expose the politician's illicit activities to if he continues to pursue Laura.

Sharing stories is only one way these female characters forge a communal bond, learning to depend on each other for support, comfort, and ultimately, survival. The examples of this mutual assistance are ubiquitous. Frank and Dr. D'Arcy take Laura in when she moves to New York, and Dr. D'Arcy helps her find a job and a place to stay. Laura boards with Mrs. Moulder and helps her with her overwhelming family tasks and keeps her company. The most striking examples, however, are the several moments when the characters actually save, or attempt to save, each others' lives. Frank saves Laura twice from the physically threatening plans of the Judge; one rescue is particularly daring because Laura has been kidnapped and chloroformed. Rhoda is also instrumental in saving Laura from the Judge; at one point, she refuses a large sum of money he has offered her to conceal his past from Laura. In turn, Laura tries to assist Flora in a desperate escape before her wedding and is thwarted only when Flora faints and is found

by her fiancé. Later in the novel, another minor character summons Dr. D'Arcy to Maggie's sickbed, and Dr. D'Arcy helps both Rhoda and Maggie improve their situation; furthermore, she treats the two laboring class women as family, not as recipients of her charity: "The manner in which the good lady treated her during her daily visits was balm to Rhoda's poor sore heart. Mrs. D'Arcy was as kind to her as if she had been the cherished daughter of a friend" (165). Frank accompanies the sick girl and her friend on a trip to Maggie's home in the South so she can see her mother before she dies. On the return trip, Rhoda literally gives her life for Frank's when their ship capsizes, allowing herself to drown so Frank can float on the only piece of driftwood.

While the multitude of hair-breadth escapes and life-endangering situations in *Fettered for Life* reveals a narrative excess typical of sensation novels, Blake uses these episodes for an important political purpose. Through this web of concern, action and sacrifice, the novel models an oppositional community with an air of urgency and immediacy in the face of real dangers. These women do not bond together to bring about change based on abstract reform ideology; rather, they literally battle together the results of an unfair world in need of gender reform. Furthermore, this version of oppositional community formation is different from those based on expediency arguments that defines feminist activism in part as "true christian philanthropy," which suggests a hierarchy of assistance; the more privileged women are responsible for taking care of poor women, but the reverse is not necessarily true. Instead, these are reciprocal acts of rescue and assistance that flow freely across socioeconomic boundaries. Thus, the model of oppositional community in this book is one of coalition-building among different classes to a certain degree. Ultimately, it is their shared vulnerability as politically powerless

women that coalesces this community. Unfortunately, their attempts to save each other are futile more often than not. By the end of the novel, Mrs. Bludgett, Rhoda, Maggie, and Flora are all dead, and Mrs. Moulder is gravely ill after a miscarriage. The message to the reader is clear; women must have legal and political rights in order to save themselves or others. In fact, only those members actively engaged in political activism survive: Dr. D'Arcy, a well-known suffragist and physician, Frank, an activist journalist, and Laura, a promising painter and outspoken supporter of woman's rights. Although almost everyone (including the reader) believes Frank is male until the end, his tireless work for woman's rights stems from a remembrance of his own vulnerability as a woman, which has previously driven him to "pass" in order to survive. In this way, the book intimates that the female reader's very life might depend on her entering the ranks of feminist activists, reminding that she has an elemental right to "life," in addition to "liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

*Fettered* draws a rigid boundary between the oppositional female community and the oppressive society of male dominance, a boundary that extends to almost every household in the story, in which domineering fathers and husbands are pitted against their female dependents and that demonstrates the perverse effect that gendered conventions and women's legal status have on familial relationships. However, Frank is an important liminal figure who crosses this boundary at will because of his "passing" as male, and as he does so, he serves as a persuasive example of a female's inherent "personhood." Bound by none of society's conventional expectations of femininity, he/she performs ably many "masculine" activities. His talent as a journalist earns him a job as a travel writer who sends back "spicy" stories, literary manifestations of the freedom of

movement and expression he would never have as a woman. The reader first encounters Frank when he saves Laura from Mr. Bludgett and Judge Swinton; in this scene, he is brave and cool-headed, the knight in shining armor rather than the damsel in distress: "[T]he young reporter who had stood by, with his face very pale and his lips pressed tightly together, now drew back and with wonderful vigor and scientific dexterity, planted a quick blow directly under the big man's right ear" (24). Frank's actions here undermine any arguments those opposed to gender reform might make about women's ostensible inability to interact effectively in the public sphere. As Farrell observes, "Blake's use of the gender switch infers [sic] that gender itself is a surface detail" (394). At the same time, Frank is a model of the ideal "man" who believes in gender reform and who uses his masculine privilege to help the oppressed in acts of "revolutionary love," instead of abusing that privilege for his own gain.[13] Early in the novel, Frank tells Laura:

> Very few men do realize the scope of woman's needs [ . . . ] they think that the agitation of woman suffrage is only the work of a few discontented souls. They do not understand that the demand for political equality is but one of the public utterances of a great dumb cry, that goes up from millions of hearts. (54)

The fact that the male character who is most sympathetic and enthusiastic about feminist reform is, in the end, a woman, suggests a skepticism on the part of the author about men's ability to fully empathize with the woman's rights movement unless they have experienced first-hand the unfairness of women's legal oppression.

The heterosexual romance plot involving Laura and Guy Bradford is also problematized by Frank; the three appear to be embroiled in a love triangle for most of

the novel. A glance at the names of Laura's two ostensible suitors is revealing; Guy is, in fact, an average "guy" who, if not violent and dangerous like most men in the story, seems rather unremarkable. He is most often described as "earnest" and "honest" and "eager," and his relationship with Laura does not have any of the intimacy that she shares with the other characters she befriends. Rather, she and Guy seem to do little more than blush and stammer in each other's presence. Guy does profess support for woman's rights, having been raised by a progressive couple; however, his beliefs do not extend to an activist position, and his notions about gender are more conventional than Laura's. He tells Laura on their first meeting, "Indeed, you will find me as warm an advocate of the equality of the sexes as you could wish. I am no reformer, it is true; I am only a hard working business man, but I have been brought up in the right way on these points by my parents" (68). He continues that "It seems to me a very one sided government, which refuses to my mother and sister all voice, while it professes to honor goodness and purity" (68).

Guy is a proponent of suffrage as long as it does not muddy the "two sides" of gender roles, and later, we learn that he would not necessarily encourage Laura to be an activist either. When she jokingly suggests that she would be an "electioneer" for his mother if she ever ran for office, Guy responds, "I am not quite clear that I should like to have you" (208). In the same conversation, Laura says she would "like to go veiled" around town to deflect the rude stares of men, to which Guy replies, "I only wish you could wear a veil; that is, provided you took it off for me" (206). While the obvious implication is that he should like for her to be his bride, the image of the veiled woman,

as well as Guy's opinion about Laura's political involvement, both reveal his acceptance of the confined, acquiescing role that women should play, even if they do have the vote.

Laura's relationship with Guy is further called into question by the juxtaposition of scenes that depict his and Laura's sexually charged, romantic interludes with some of the most depressing or frightening scenes of domestic life. In one such scene, Laura is overwhelmed by passion and romance after a walk in the park with Guy: "She scarcely ventured to define her thoughts; but the blood in her veins was dancing to some happy tune, and the future rose before her fair with the enchanted 'light that never seems to end'" (209). It is telling that it is Laura's blood -- her body -- that is aroused, and consequently, her mind wanders into the "enchanted" romantic realm that the book criticizes elsewhere. It does so here, as well, when Laura enters the Moulders' house after this reverie: "It was to Laura like a harsh discord after some strain of sweet, soft music, to go down to the dull dining-room at Mr. Moulder's and descend from the fairy realms in which she had been dreaming to the prosaic realities of common life" (209). What follows is a quarrelsome scene in which the Moulders' son is especially mean to his sisters because of his assumed superiority, and a disagreement ensues between Laura and Mr. Moulder. The reader, like Laura, is not allowed to engage in romantic fantasy for long without being reminded of the discordant reality of unequal married life.

Laura's relationship with Frank, by contrast, is most often described using his moniker and is much more substantial, based on shared experiences and communication. This description of Laura's early encounter with Frank is a harbinger of their intimacy to come:

> [A]mong so many strangers [Laura] felt quite alone, and was heartily glad, when after awhile, Frank Heywood came in. She greeted him with well-pleased cordiality and the two were soon chatting in a corner, like old friends.
>
> The young man had a fund of information on topics in which Laura was interested, and there was about him so absolute an air of purity, that she found herself confiding in him in a way that surprised her when she thought of it afterwards. His handsome melancholy face was very attractive to her, and the tones of his low musical voice fascinated her strangely. (48)

Laura's reaction to Frank *is* fascinating, given his concealed identity. Laura's description of him is both feminine ("an air of purity") and masculine ("His handsome, melancholy face"), and although it is a "strange" feeling, she is very attracted to him. Furthermore, the reticence and awkwardness that defines her relationship with Guy is completely missing here; at the start, this relationship seems the more promising of the two. Both Frank and Guy visit Laura in her home with the Moulders, and again, the difference in the relationships is telling. With Guy, Laura insists that the Moulders' oldest daughter chaperone them, but Laura always sees Frank alone, because "he was so like a brother" (134). This description does not have any erotic charge to it, intimating perhaps that Laura intuits Frank's real identity. Nevertheless, it does underscore that Laura feels safe with Frank in a way that she does not with Guy, aligning the later with the threatening male world of the rest of the book.[14]

If Laura and Frank seem to understand each other perfectly, Laura's relationship with Guy is fraught with misunderstanding. When Guy becomes unjustifiably jealous, the narrator tells the reader: "Laura was amused and annoyed. She could read this big honest fellow like an open book; while to him she was a wonderful being, whose smile was happiness, but whose favor he knew not how to win, he was to her a transparent soul" (196). Guy's feelings for Laura are not founded on a thorough understanding of her character, and this problem recurs throughout the story, resulting in *Fettered for Life*'s variation of the "double proposal plot." On the day Guy plans to propose, Judge Swinton anonymously sends him a letter about the dubious circumstances of Laura's first night in New York (which the reader knows she spent in the police station for protection). Guy wants Laura to account for this evening, claiming that "between us two, who have so nearly looked on each other's hearts, there is no need of ceremony" (292). The reader, of course, is reminded of Guy's frequent miscomprehension of Laura's heart, and is not surprised when she rebukes his question: "I declare that you have no right to ask it! Would you give me equal right to question *your* life?" (292). Guy insists that her asking him is "a very different thing" (293). She again refuses to answer him because she is angered by his "distrust and [his] cross-examination" (293), and he leaves. Although, as in *Out of Her Sphere*, Laura has not explicitly rejected the proposal of her suitor, it is clear that Guy's marriage offer is contingent upon Laura's answering his inquiry, and her refusal to do so is likewise a refusal to marry Guy on his terms.

This plot line, thus, enters the "post-courtship" stage, which Tracey says becomes a "bildungsroman or sometimes *Künstlerroman*" (23). After Laura refuses Guy, she continues to work on her art, and like Marjory Warner, finds some peace because she has

an occupation other than marriage: "If the only man she had ever cared for should be lost to her, she had still her art, and life should not be ruined to her" (361). However, one does not see a development in Laura's feminism, but rather a continued commitment to it.[15] In *Fettered for Life*, it is Guy who must undergo the more profound change. Although he has all along expressed support for woman's rights, he must acknowledge Laura's autonomy and individual determination before the two of them can understand each other and be in acceptable agreement about what gender reform really means. Clearly, the question that Guy asks Laura has sexual implications. Her refusal to answer it shows that she believes this autonomy must extend to her right to control her own sexuality and to be held to the same sexual standards as Guy, both of which are much more controversial rights in nineteenth-century American society than the right to vote. Thus, Guy must be converted to Laura's radical position on these issues, accepting her essential "personhood" and revising what he means by the word "equality."

The resolution of *Fettered* demonstrates that such a conversion is possible, even if it does so guardedly. Guy returns after several months in Europe and admits that he was foolish, acknowledging his question to Laura was unfair unless he is willing to answer it as well. The novel ends with a second proposal, to which Laura answers, "Yes, Guy [ . . . ] for I believe you will not ask me to surrender my liberty entirely and will permit me to follow out my own career in life" (379). Although Guy agrees, saying "your obligations to me shall be no greater than mine to you" (379), his previously narrow view of woman's rights might make the reader skeptical of his altered position. However, the novel opens up the possibility at least that Guy has been converted to a more liberal view of gender reform by his love for Laura, a personal experience (like reading) which can

break down prejudices that abstract ideology cannot. If so, then their revolutionary romance provides hope, at least, that a cross-gender oppositional community could be a reality, even while men still have such a mammoth advantage in the power differential based on political inequality.

Of course, one could argue that *Fettered for Life*'s heterosexual union and "happy ending" are inconsistent in a book so virulently critical of the marriage institution. Farrell claims that this happy ending is "part of a cover plot [ . . . ] to reassert the status quo in order to make [the novel] more palatable to the literary marketplace" (399). If Farrell is right, Blake's partial capitulation to the expectations of the heterosexual romance narrative quells the truly unorthodox potential within the narrative. The most obvious example of this potential is a same-sex union between Laura and Frank, which the novel even indulges at the beginning, before Frank's true identity is revealed; when Mrs. Bludgett and Rhoda see Frank and Laura together for the first time, the older woman tells her friend: "That's as nice a couple as I ever see. [ . . . ] It would be just like a story, if he should marry her"(59). Of course, the irony is that a marriage between Laura and Frank would be unlike any conventional romance story read by Mrs. Bludgett or anyone else in the nineteenth-century, and although the book clearly presents this option, it is careful to quell it effectively enough to maintain the novel's heterosexual insistence. Other examples of this capitulation are the deaths of Rhoda and Maggie. Although they are not the only women who die in the text, the pattern of their deaths is consistent with the fate of other "fallen women" in nineteenth-century fiction. Maggie dies a painful, sentimentally described death that is a direct result of her sexual transgression, and Rhoda

has an equally conventional fate; her "heroic" death, sacrificing herself for Frank, redeems her for her sins.

In the end, perhaps the feminist activist most worthy of emulation is ultimately not Laura, but Frank, who has embarked on an independent lifestyle that is fulfilling, even without romantic love. Like other sensation novels, *Fettered* has a secret at its heart; however, in keeping with Blake's feminist revision, Frank's disguise has not allowed him to wreak havoc, but to do important work for woman's rights. This secret, which is hinted at throughout the text, is finally revealed to Laura (and the reader) at the very end, when Frank takes Laura into his confidence during a train ride after he almost drowns. Once he confesses his true identity, Frank elaborates on the productive work his disguise will allow him to do in the future:

> I shall not marry; my work must be father and mother, wife and children to me. I believe that a great newspaper may be conducted only in the interest of truth, of justice and of right. The experiment has never yet been tried as I hope to try it; but I trust that the day will come when I may shape, with my own hands, a paper which shall be a teacher of the people, a guide in the path of virtue, and reform, and this aim must take me from all family ties. I feel myself more than ever consecrated and set apart for this work, since Rhoda's death. (302)

In this plan, too, may be an indirect homage to Stanton and her *Revolution*, which had gone out of print a few years earlier because of financial trouble. Frank's activism will be the culmination of his success in the male world, and as Laura observes, "if there were some trials in the young journalist's life, there must surely be some compensations also"

(368). Certainly, Frank is the one who has found an effective way to pursue his political goals. As Caroline Levander notes, "By shedding women's clothing and its vocal and sexual constraints, Frank Heywood is able to use his voice to defend women publicly against male oppression" (132).

In addition to providing readers models of individual activists such as Laura and Frank, *Fettered* teaches valuable lessons about communal resistance in the real world to those readers who would join a feminist oppositional community. Although as I have argued, Blake's writing seems clearly motivated by arguments from justice, the novel also models for readers how oppositional communities can be formed in spite of philosophical differences and specifically, how arguments of justice and of expediency can co-exist. In addition to Guy's expediency arguments, Farrell observes that Dr. D'Arcy also expounds the rhetoric of expediency: "While she appears to be the novel's spokesperson for Blake's own ideology, instead, she speaks the language of mainstream suffrage thought [that argues for woman's unique feminine contribution to politics]" (393). However, Dr. D'Arcy does not seem like the single authorial spokesperson in the book; instead, she is one of several characters who espouse varying arguments for woman's rights. It seems that through these contradictory arguments, the author does not have to sacrifice the efficacy of expediency arguments while promoting natural rights ideology. Furthermore, by presenting without reconciling them, she also demonstrates the ways that activists can work together for change despite ideological differences. In "The Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," bell hooks says that setting aside some political differences is a useful tactic for reform communities. This model is yet another way to convince readers to join an oppositional community for gender reform by showing them

how to set aside their differences and work for common goals, a strategy increasingly employed by later suffragists.[16]

The critical reception of Blake's book has historically been mixed. On one hand, some of the reviews were decidedly favorable. For example, a writer for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* says that "the style is spirited and the plot so interesting to the average novel-reader that the story will be popular." However, the writer seems to have missed the radical arguments in the book, seeing it as a testament to "the necessity of independence to the development of true womanhood," thereby failing to distinguish it from the more pervasive expediency arguments ("Fiction"). More recently, in *Beneath the American Renaissance*, David S. Reynolds calls *Fettered for Life* "the most comprehensive women's rights novel of the nineteenth-century" (357). On the other hand, some critics thought her book inappropriate or inaccurate. One contemporary reviewer for *The Literary World* warns Blake about using such a critical, "unwomanly" tone when trying to bring about political change: "It is not politic to make a man angry before you try to convince him" ("Fettered for Life") It is perhaps not surprising that many readers either misunderstood Blake's position or were offended by it; however, the critical attention that Blake's novel received, especially in mainstream publications, suggests that it was being read and debated by a relatively large readership. The author's biography also suggests that the novel was widely circulated; it reports that it sold "1300 copies" on "the day of publication" (K. Blake 97). In contrast, very little national or mainstream attention was paid to Harbert's book, and it has received almost no critical attention from later generations. In the end, although Blake's more controversial position may have been less popular with readers and more shocking than Harbert's work, perhaps

*Fettered for Life* had the greater influence in creating a real-world oppositional community dedicated to gender reform.

As my analysis of *Out of Her Sphere* and *Fettered for Life* suggests, the roots of the nascent oppositional community of feminist activists in the 1870's can be found in the race activism and abolitionist sentiment of pre-Civil War America. Harbert's reliance on the model of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Blake's titular comparison between enslaved African-Americans and white women both attest to this legacy of race reform. However, events immediately after the Civil War initiated a systematic disassociation from this legacy in the woman's rights movement. For a short time, abolitionists and woman's rights advocates were united in the American Equal Rights Association (AERA), but this alliance quickly became fractious over debates about the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which would give African-American males the rights of citizenship, including enfranchisement, but which would also insert the word "male" into the Constitution for the first time as a qualifier for those who could vote.[17] Ultimately, as a backlash against the controversy that dissolved the AERA, both the AWSA and the NWSA very consciously and narrowly defined the concerns of their movement as being solely about gender reform. Louise Michelle Newman quotes Anthony as saying, "I have but one question, that of the equality between the sexes – that of the races has no place on our platform" (4). Of course, by arbitrarily drawing lines between the "woman" question and the "race" question, the concerns of African-American women are erased; consequently, the rhetoric and the community of woman's rights advocates was inhibited considerably by its implicit and explicit focus on whiteness.

This erasure is evident in both the novels discussed in this chapter. Although *Fettered for Life* especially pays attention to questions of class, the characters in both it and *Out of Her Sphere* are disturbingly monochromatic. Less than a decade after the country was literally severed because of racial oppression, the only mention of this controversy in either book is an occasional allusion to the "recent war" or the observation by one character that "they used to sell black babies, but thank goodness that practice has stopped" (Harbert 23). Thus, it is the case that although ostensibly "woman's rights" includes all women, the reality is that the reform concerns expressed in these novels were heavily weighted toward improving the conditions of white, middle-class women. This narrow-mindedness becomes a central concern of two novels from the 1890's, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office*. Both novels offer an alternative model of feminist activism and oppositional communities that acknowledge the connections between racism, sexism and classism in America in a comprehensive vision missing from these woman's rights novels of the 1870's.

Notes

[1] See Barbara Welter's book, *Dimity Convictions* for an explanation of the "Cult of True Womanhood" in nineteenth-century America.

[2] As I note earlier, there is a great deal of recent scholarly skepticism about this division of gendered roles, demonstrating that the boundary between these ostensibly separate spheres is blurred in the actual lives of men and women in the nineteenth-century. My interest is more in the rhetorical discourse of separate spheres that proscribed narrow gender roles and influenced the attitudes of all classes in America. See *Separate Spheres No More*, edited by Monika M. Elbert, for further discussion.

[3] In her book, *Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*, Aileen Kraditor is the first to identify these two strains of discourse and to label them arguments of justice and of expediency. Kraditor clarifies the rationale underscoring justice arguments: "In asserting the natural right applied also to women, the suffragists stressed the ways in which men and women were identical. Their common humanity was at the core of the suffragist movement" (44). On the other hand, Kraditor explains, expediency arguments stressed "the ways in which [women] differed from men and therefore had the *duty* to contribute their special skills and experience to government" (66).

[4] All biographical information about Harbert has been taken from the Elizabeth Boynton Harbert Collection housed at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

[5] Kraditor's terms, "arguments of expediency" and "arguments of justice" suggest a value judgement on her part about which ideology is more ethically sound. "Justice" arguments from natural rights seem preferable to those from expediency, which suggest a

short-term, short-sighted agenda. I use Kraditor's terms without qualification, first, because they are standard in the discipline of speech communications, but just as importantly, because from my personal perspective, I agree with her assessment.

[6] These letters can be found in the Elizabeth Boynton Harbert Collection.

[7] The Quakers are something of an exception because they have always allowed women to speak as freely as men during meetings. It is no coincidence that many early feminist activists, like Lucretia Mott, were Quakers.

[8] Once again, Stowe's influence seems pertinent. Jane Tompkins has argued that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is "typological" and that the title character is the story of Christ told as the story of a slave. One might also make the claim that here, Harbert's heroine is the story of a feminist activist as the Virgin Mary. To the contemporary audience, this analogy seems similarly unorthodox.

[9] This chapter title alludes to Eliza Lynn Linton's essay of the same name, which was published in England in 1868. The essay, a satiric account of the shallowness, vanity and "fastness" of the young generation of British women, was well-known on both sides of the Atlantic. Clearly, Harbert is using the title to allude to Maude's similar flaws.

[10] Because of the necessity of more egalitarian living conditions on the frontier, many western territories and states granted women either full or partial suffrage in the late nineteenth-century. See Flexner 147-56 for further discussion.

[11] For further discussion, see Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition" in *The Culture of Sentiment*, Shirley Samuels, ed. 92-114.

[12] Farrell is referring specifically to Woolf's fictional heroine, Judith Shakespeare.

[13] The term "revolutionary love," which I discuss at length on pages 12-14, comes from Ann Ferguson's work on oppositional community formation. Ferguson says "revolutionary love" is "the effect of a social relation only possible with a community of friends constituted to fight for social justice" ("Feminist Communities" 383).

[14] It is also interesting to note that it is Frank, and not Guy, who rescues Laura from being kidnapped on two occasions.

[15] Also during the interim between Guy's two proposals, Laura learns of Frank's true identity, thus quelling, on the conventional surface anyway, the possibility of an alternate love affair for Laura.

[16] This tactic actually became quite problematic for the later suffrage movement, because its increasing focus on obtaining the vote was used as a rationalization for ignoring reprehensible attitudes and behaviors by some of their sympathizers, such as the openly racist behavior of several Southern chapters of suffrage organizations.

[17] As Louise Michelle Newman observes in *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origin of Feminism in the United States*, before the Civil War, many woman's rights advocates had also been ardent abolitionists, and therefore, the disagreement over the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments -- enfranchising African-American men and inserting the word "male" into the Constitution -- was a complex, difficult issue. For example, some suffragists, like Anthony and Stanton, felt betrayed by the Republican Party who they thought would reward the suffragists' war effort by supporting woman suffrage as well as African-American male suffrage. Partly as a result of this anger, a racist strain of suffrage rhetoric emerged at this time, stemming from anger that "Sambo" would have the vote before educated, white women.

# CHAPTER 2

# EXPANDING THE VISION OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM: FRANCES E. W. HARPER'S *IOLA LEROY* AND HAMLIN GARLAND'S *A SPOIL OF OFFICE*

In her book of essays, *A Voice from the South* (1892), the African-American activist Anna Julia Cooper criticizes the exclusivity of the woman's rights movement and challenges it to see beyond the increasingly narrow agenda of woman suffrage:

> The cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class, -- it is the cause of human kind, the very birthright of humanity. Now unless we are greatly mistaken the Reform of our day, known as the Woman's Movement, is essentially such an embodiment, if its pioneers could only realize it, of the universal good. [. . . ]
>
> It is not the intelligent woman vs. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman vs. the black, the brown, and the red, -- it is not even the cause of woman vs. man. Nay, 'tis woman's strongest vindication for speaking that the *world needs to hear her voice*. It would be subversive of every human interest that the cry of one-half the human family be stifled. (120-1)

This comprehensive description of the woman's movement highlights its broader implications. Cooper realizes that this movement is a particular manifestation of an even

greater principle, that all humans should have equal rights, protection and opportunities within their society. Furthermore, as the author suggests, women span every socio-economic and ethnic group, and therefore, attention to women's rights is truly the "cause of [all] human kind." Implicit here is the notion that the "Woman's Movement" should not only be attuned to the varying situations of all women -- intelligent, ignorant, white, black, brown and red -- but should also be attuned to injustices everywhere. Ironically, this passage was written at a time when the actual activities of that movement suggested an increasingly conservative, discriminatory path. As the idea of suffrage gained more respectability and many middle-class women gained more economic independence in the 1880's and 1890's, the membership and rhetoric of the suffrage organizations became more anti-immigrant, reflecting the class and nativist bias of the American population at large. It also became more racist, reflecting among other things, the movement's catering to Southern suffragists who, like most people in their states, supported disenfranchising African-Americans of both genders.[1] In a well-documented episode, Susan B. Anthony asked Frederic Douglass, a staunch supporter of woman's rights since the 1840's, not to attend the 1894 NAWSA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, because she "did not want anything to get in the way of bringing the southern white women into our suffrage association" (qtd. in Davis 111). Here Anthony privileges gender over race reform to such an extent that she actively perpetuates racist segregation and white supremacy through her complicity.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to characterize all those who supported gender equality as racist and classist. While the reform communities devoted explicitly or exclusively to woman's rights tended to overlook other forms of inequality, many other

movements included female suffrage as part of their overall agenda. In this way, a growing number of activists in the 1890's began to see the bigger systems of disenfranchisement, and a great many reform movements included woman's rights as essential to their own political goals. For example, the National Association of Colored Women advocated woman's rights as part of an agenda that called for cultural and economic advancement for all African-Americans. In the West, growing discontent with the conditions of farm life sparked a radical collective movement by agrarians, who often supported woman's rights more heartily than their Eastern counterparts. More mainstream organizations, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Movement, supported woman suffrage as a way to infuse "feminine morality" into politics and defeat the liquor interests. These examples and many more suggest the fluidity of reform activities taking place in the United States, as well as the centrality of feminist activism in these efforts, during the first years of what has become known at the Progressive Era in American politics.

Two novels about feminist activists are products of this reform network. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office* were originally published in 1892, the same year that Cooper published *A Voice from the South*. Both novels seem informed by a conviction, like Cooper's, that the woman's rights movement is only part of a larger agitation for humanity's freedom. Also like Cooper's writings, these novels criticize the limited vision of much contemporary reform rhetoric; consequently, they contrast sharply with the works I have discussed earlier, both narratively and didactically. While *Out of Her Sphere* and *Fettered for Life* pit an enlightened heroine against an oppressive society from the beginning, Harper's and

Garland's texts are propelled by a growing political awareness by the central protagonist(s), letting the reader experience firsthand his or her conversion to a more enlightened position on equal rights. Furthermore, these gradual awakenings to political consciousness stress, in ways that the earlier novels do not, a need for an expansive coalition of reformers who advocate equality on many fronts: sexual, racial, economic. Nonetheless, Harper's and Garland's novels share with the earlier texts a reliance on feminist activist heroines who play pivotal roles in calling these coalitions into being.

Harper wrote *Iola Leroy* at the age of 67, when the author was already a veteran activist and widely read author. Frances Smith Foster, in her introduction to *A Brighter Coming Day*, provides useful biographical details about Harper's life and how she achieved such recognition. She was born free into a prominent African-American family in Baltimore and was educated at the school started by her uncle, the Reverend William Watkins.[2] By the age of 14, Harper was already publishing poetry, and by her early 30's she was a nationally recognized abolition and woman's rights lecturer, while her first book of poems, *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects*, had sold over 10,000 copies. Over the next 40 years, Harper worked continuously as a writer and speaker for African-American rights, suffrage and temperance. As a young woman, she was a member of the American Equal Rights Association, alongside Frederic Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and later she worked for the American Woman Suffrage Association and served as the first African-American officer in the Women's Christian Temperance Union; in 1896 she was elected the vice-president of the National Council of Negro Women. As her activities and affiliations suggest, Harper did not confine herself by privileging either race or

gender reform, but rather, worked from a perspective that acknowledged the interconnectedness of these forms of oppression.

Although during her lifetime Harper was best known for her poetry, *Iola Leroy* is her last major work and has received considerable literary attention, both from Harper's contemporaries and from modern critics. For several years, it was considered the first novel written by an African-American woman, though recently, even earlier novels have been discovered.[3] Nevertheless, the publication of *Iola Leroy* is significant in African-American literary history. As Frances Smith Foster notes, because of her prominence, Harper's writing a novel late in life was a risky endeavor: "Harper's gains were considered the gains of her race. [ . . . ] Were she to fail [in writing a successful, moving book], Harper knew her failure would be cited as evidence not only of her own declining abilities but also of the artistic inferiority of Afro-Americans in general" (Intro, *IL* xxxiii-xxxvi).

It may be, though, that Harper's secure position as an "elder statesperson" in the African-American community enabled her to produce finally a lengthy, sustained narrative. As her heroine, Iola Leroy, observes, "one needs both leisure and money to make a successful book," and the older author had more of both at this age (262). Harper explains what she means by a "successful book" in the note appended to the novel, saying that it is not one that makes money, but one that can "awaken in the hearts of our countrymen a stronger sense of justice and a more Christlike humanity" (282). According to this note, Harper attempts such a book because she is convinced that "out of the [African-American] race must come its own thinkers and writers" (*IL* 263), and she

appeals specifically to her African-American readers to follow her example and write of their experience in order to change the current national political climate:

> There are scattered among us materials for mournful tragedies and mirth-provoking comedies, which some hand may yet bring into the literature of the country, glowing with the fervor of the tropics and enriched by the luxuriance of the Orient, and thus add to the solution of our unresolved American problem. (*IL* 282)

Harper's own fictional contribution to "the solution of our unresolved American problem" is a story, not surprisingly, of feminist activism, a book uniquely concerned with both the circumstances of being an African-American woman in the nineteenth-century and the opportunities for active political intervention from such a perspective. In the novel, she incorporates the elements that she believes will motivate her audience, both white and African-American, and transform their world: Christianity, nationalism, and moral responsibility. Her heroine, Iola Leroy, and the eclectic community that coalesces in the novel both provide utopian archetypes of this transformation.

The complex, contradictory critical response to Harper's heroine suggests the difficulties in creating a politically engaged African-American heroine who would be both palatable to readers and true to Harper's activist imagination. Iola's appearance is one source of contention among both contemporary and twentieth-century readers. The first physical description of Iola in the text comes from her friend and fellow slave, Tom: "My! But she's putty. Beautiful long hair comes way down her back; putty blue eyes and jis' ez white ex anybody's in dis place" (38). Tom also assures his listener, "ef you seed dem putty white han's ob hern you'd never tink she kept her own house, let alone

anybody else's" (38). From Tom's perspective, markers of affluence and whiteness, like light hair and eyes, as well as soft hands, make Iola's enslavement even more tragic. Many scholars condemn Harper for this seemingly uncritical example of colorism, claiming that the author fails by inventing a conventionally attractive, domestic "near white" heroine, or an incarnation of the "tragic mulatta" stereotype, even as these critics acknowledge Harper's ostensible motivation for creating such a character.[4] For example, Deborah McDowell argues that Harper and other contemporary African-American writers misrepresent African-American experience by offering only "an alternative homogenization" of femaleness still shaped by Anglo-European expectations and that the "ideology of domesticity" which informs their books is "the veritable antithesis of the black woman's reality" (284). Nevertheless, McDowell believes that this characterization was seen as a necessary concession to "a predominantly white readership" who could only identify with a white character (285).

Other critics, while acknowledging the "whiteness" of Iola's character, focus more on the political gains of such a depiction. Claudia Tate says that *Iola Leroy* "uses the mulatto's inherent transitional racial and class status to construct emancipatory resocialization"(147). Similarly, Hazel Carby says that the mulatta was a useful literary device that "mediated an increasing separation of the races" (89). Iola's appearance can perhaps be interpreted as a visible signifier of Harper's appropriation of the "true woman" ideal for African-American women, showing that they, too, are capable of the "lady-like," chaste, self-effacing qualities that heretofore had been attributed exclusively to privileged white women. On one hand, scholars chide Harper for acquiescing in these sexual conventions. On the other hand, many recent critics have remarked upon the "real

world" reasons that underlie the novel's insistence on African-American women's morality and purity, such as refuting the racist rhetoric of black promiscuity and depravity that justified the frequent lynchings and rapes of African-Americans.[5] Iola, however, is not merely a passive embodiment of the "true woman" ideal; she is a feminist re-interpretation of this ideal, much like Marjory Warner in *Out of her Sphere*. In this case, however, this fictional re-interpretation addresses the dual concerns of sexism and racism in the lives of African-American women and encourages women, white and black, to intervene in this oppression.

While most critics, including myself, agree that Harper's representation of her heroine is problematic because it depends upon status quo norms of beauty and propriety, my primary concern is what the narrative can accomplish didactically and politically through such a character. I would argue that Iola's skin-tone and sheltered childhood (she is raised to believe she is white until shortly before the Civil War) open a narrative space for a unique paradigm of feminist activism and oppositional community formation.[6] First of all, Iola's story is a conversion narrative; her unwitting passing during her childhood sets up a trajectory of gradual enlightenment to the plight of African-Americans, both male and female, rich and poor, that privileged readers both white and African-American are invited to follow and replicate.[7] At the same time, her unusual status as an African-American fictional heroine provides a strong model of a politically active woman who could inspire more passive African-American readers to engage in the struggle for racial and gender advancement. Secondly, Iola's liminal racial status creates the conditions necessary for an oppositional community to coalesce because of choice, and not merely because of racial identity politics. As I will argue later, this element of choice provides

an extremely powerful, persuasive example of communal activism that Ann Ferguson calls "existential communitarianism," in which members are bound not by cultural similarities or demographic proximity, but by a conscious decision and an active desire to effect change, thus complicating any naturalized (or exclusionary) construction of the community based on an uncritical affiliation with one's race or gender.

Rather than a story about a heroine who is always politically progressive and trying to enlighten others, as in *Out of Her Sphere* and *Fettered for Life*, Harper's protagonist begins life unaware of the worst effects of race and gender oppression. As a young girl at a Northern boarding school, Iola counters her classmates' opposition to slavery with personal anecdotal evidence: "Slavery can't be wrong [ . . . ] for my father is a slave-holder, and my mother is as good to our servants as she can be. [ . . . ] I never saw my father strike one of them. I love my mammy as I do my own mother, and I believe she loves us just as if we were her own children" (97). Here, the heroine speaks the conventional rhetoric of an ostensibly benevolent *noblesse oblige*. She continues in this vein for several paragraphs, claiming that "[their] slaves do not want their freedom" and that, according to her father, "slavery is not wrong if you treat them well and don't sell them from their families" (98). Typical of her youthful levity, Iola ends her defense by inviting her friends to visit her in the winter to see slavery for themselves because "this will be [her] first season out [in society]": "We will have such gay times, and you will so fall in love with the sunny South that you will never want to come back to shiver amid the snows and cold of the North. I think one winter in the South would cure you of your Abolitionism" (99). Iola's limited knowledge about slavery prevents her from seeing the

cruelty and injustice that is pervasive in the system, and thus she uncritically romanticizes conditions in the "sunny South."

Having Iola, whom the audience reader already knows is destined for slavery herself, speak most of the common pro-slavery arguments, is a powerful tool for refuting those claims throughout the rest of the text. Harper makes it clear that Iola speaks uncritically, that she has absorbed her view of slavery from narrow life experiences stemming from her sheltered social position and age: "Iola, being a Southern girl and a slave-holder's daughter, always defended slavery when it was under discussion" (97). Here, the text demonstrates the limited "self-horizon" with which Iola begins life. As Ann Ferguson explains, "The self-horizon is that part of the person's social and bodily behavior, motives, and their implications that remain unknown to one, because it is either unconscious or invisible," and the limits of this horizon are "obscured from the person's awareness because of the person's social position of privilege or oppression" ("Moral Responsibility" 129). For a person to reconstitute herself (as well as her world) in a more humane image, she must expand the limits of this self-horizon through a critical self-awareness. Harper models this self-reconstitutive process for her readers by having Iola's "horizons of self" broadened by both literally and figuratively challenging her position of privilege in the book. Of course, Iola's initial opinions on slavery and race, while clearly naïve, are not uncommon, and any readers who share them are encouraged to likewise broaden their horizons through the process of reading the novel.[8]

The first step in Iola's reconstitution of self begins with a plot twist involving her father's death, a traitorous relative and a legal loophole that results in Iola, her siblings and mother being remanded into slavery. Without knowing these circumstances, Iola is

escorted south on a train by one of her relative's associates, and falls asleep, only to be awakened by her escort's sexual advances. In a vivid scene, Harper juxtaposes the relative comfort Iola has experienced as a white woman with the physical, sexual peril of her future life as a black woman:

> In her dreams she was at home, encircled in the warm clasp of her father's arms, feeling her mother's kisses lingering on her lips, and hearing the joyous greetings of the servants and Mammy Liza's glad welcome as she folded her to her heart. From this dream of bliss she was awakened by a burning kiss pressed on her lips, and a strong arm encircling her. (103)[9]

Although Iola is still unaware of her new status as chattel, this scene is the beginning of what Ferguson would identify as the "existential moment" in the heroine's development, a crucial first step in the "development of self-consciousness":

> The 'existential moment' makes possible the self-reconstitutive function of a self-process. This is the reflexive moment of subjectivity, when the person evaluates and critiques who she is and what she takes as her interests [ . .. ] It is a moment of self-understanding [ . . . ] [in which one can] reject, expand and reformulate the prudential and moral codes and norms the person has hitherto been taught to interpret as part of herself. ("Moral Responsibility" 127)

In this narrative, Iola has a "reflexive moment of subjectivity" thrust upon her when she realizes that her dream of security has been founded on a false notion of racial superiority as well as a false sense of the master/slave dynamic. In her dream, Iola not only experiences a loving maternal kiss, but she and one of the family's slaves, Mammy Liza,

embrace fondly. However, she is awakened by an intrusive, domineering kiss into a world in which her position has changed from master to slave. From this new perspective, Iola is made aware of the violence and cruelty possible in slaveholders, as well as the vulnerability and fear felt by slaves. After this awakening, she must reformulate her moral codes because she is now aligned with the race that she has been only too willing to enslave heretofore. Through this realignment, Iola has learned firsthand of the injustices that attend the slave system. Therefore, when she is taken to her mother, who explains how and why Iola's social identity has changed, the newly critical heroine laments, "I used to say that slavery was right. I didn't know what I was talking about" (106).

At this point in the story, it would be incorrect to call Iola's alignment with the African-American race a choice. However, Iola's "self-reconstitutive process" has only just begun; subsequent events offer Iola the opportunity, which she repeatedly rejects, to recoup her social status as white and affluent, and one can attribute this rejection to Iola's newly acquired knowledge of racial oppression and the moral duty she feels to fight against it. A wiser, maturer Iola articulates her choice this way: "It was through [enslaved African-Americans'] unrequited toil that I was educated, while they were compelled to live in ignorance. I am indebted to them for the power I have to serve them. I wish other Southern women felt as I do" (235). Iola recognizes the interdependence of white and black, affluent and oppressed, and she makes a compelling argument for the political intervention of her educated readership, appealing to their Christian virtues: "I think they [the Southern women] could do so much to help the colored people at their

doors if they would look at their opportunities in the light of the face of Jesus Christ" (235).

*Iola Leroy*, like other novels about feminist activist heroines, uses the conventions of the heterosexual romance plot to make some of its political arguments. Among other things, the choice of life partners becomes a metaphor for Iola's choice to be part of an oppositional community fighting for racial and gender advancement. Iola's crucial decision, to self-identify as an African-American woman, comes right before the end of the Civil War, when she is working in a Union Army hospital as a nurse. Dr. Gresham, a white doctor from a highly respected family, falls in love with Iola and proposes in spite of her African-American blood. Although Gresham is a sympathetic character who is "noble and generous," the narrator nonetheless reveals his shortcomings: "[H]e had scarcely ever seen a colored person, and around the race their misfortunes [sic] had thrown a halo of romance. To him the negro was a picturesque being, over whose woes he had wept when a child" (110). This "halo of romance" prevents Dr. Gresham from treating African-Americans as his unequivocal equals and his offer to Iola shows that he would expect her to renounce what he considers her inferior affiliations: "Your complexion is as fair as mine. What is to hinder you from sharing my Northern home, from having my mother to be your mother?" (116). Dr. Gresham's romantic benevolence towards African-Americans would have made him an appropriate match for the younger, more naïve Iola; however, now that she has seen firsthand the reality of slavery and race oppression, she recognizes the dangerous limitations of his perspective.

The proposal from Dr. Gresham positions Iola to decide whether she will lead a comfortable life of material wealth in a white community or choose to fight the current climate of oppression and violence by joining the African-American community. There are broader implications in the choice as well. Iola is not merely deciding whether she will be "white" or "black." Rather, she must choose between a restrictive racial designation that denies the complexities of her lived experience and a more fluid conception of race in an environment that embraces those complexities. This moment is pivotal in the text, and Harper highlights the significance of Dr. Gresham's proposal by treating it as a "cliff hanger." The first eight chapters of the novel take place when Iola is already enslaved and working in the Union hospital.[10] Chapter VIII ends with Dr. Gresham asking Iola, "And now I ask, will you not permit me to clasp hands with you for life? [ . . . ] Give yourself time to think over what I have proposed" (60). The narrative then flashes back to the story of Iola's parents' courtship and marriage, which takes place before the Civil War, showing how their complicity in the slave system caused the eventual dissolution of the family.[11] This embedded narrative seems designed to explain Iola's refusal of what seems such a promising offer, by demonstrating the high costs of racial "passing" and denying one's affiliation with people who need her. Four chapters later, the text returns to Iola and Dr. Gresham, and her refusal of the life he promises her is tied to the lessons she has learned from her past as well as her new found commitment to political activism:

> Thoughts and purposes have come to me in the shadow I should never have learned in the sunshine. I am constantly rousing myself up to suffer and be strong. I intend, when this conflict is over, to cast my lot with the

> freed people as a helper, teacher, and friend. I have passed through a fiery ordeal, but the ministry of suffering will not be in vain. [ . . . ] In telling you this, do you not, can you not see, that there is an insurmountable barrier between us? (114)

The "insurmountable barrier" that exists between Iola and Dr. Gresham is the latter's limited understanding of racial oppression and his complicity with the socially arbitrary way that race is designated. He does not mind that Iola has "African-American blood," as long as she is willing to repudiate it and represent herself exclusively as white. Iola sees how marriage with Dr. Gresham would limit her open interaction with her family, as well as her activist plans. Refusing to retire to a leisurely life with a white family (and deny her African-American connections), Iola instead plans to act on the lessons she has gleaned from her "fiery ordeal" to help the newly freed slaves better their conditions. Iola's decision is also motivated by her desire to find her mother after the war: "I should be ashamed to live and ashamed to die were I to choose a happy lot for myself and leave poor mamma to struggle alone" (119). Here, Iola's personal longing for her mother has political implications as well; she would be denying her moral responsibility to all those who struggle, including her mother, were to she to deny her affiliation with the race.[12]

Several characters in the novel are placed in similar situations, and each time the novel reiterates the moral imperative of aligning oneself where one "can do the most good." For example, the man Iola eventually marries, Dr. Frank Latimer, also "belongs to the negro race both by blood and choice," refusing to be received by his white relations as an heir (238). Robert, one of the first slaves mentioned in the novel (and who turns out to be Iola's uncle), refuses his captain's offer of a white regiment, saying, "I think my

place is where I'm needed most" (43). In all of these cases, the characters are not denying an affiliation with white culture *per se*; rather, they are choosing a position where they can freely and productively associate with a broad range of people, many of whom need a supportive community. Harry, Iola's brother, is given a military opportunity similar to Robert's, and in his answer lies perhaps the most significant commentary the novel makes on personal choice and oppositional community formation:

> It was as if two paths had suddenly opened before him, and he was forced to choose between them. [ . . . ] Since Harry had come North he had learned to feel profound pity for the slave. But there is a difference between looking on a man as an object of pity and protecting him as such, and being identified with him and being forced to share his lot. To take his place with them on the arena of life was the test of his life, but love was stronger than pride. [ . . . ] His mother and sister were enslaved by a mockery of justice. It was more than a matter of choice where he should stand on the racial question. He felt that he must stand where he could strike the most effective blow for their freedom. (125-6)

Again, familial connections are intimately tied to Harry's social and political decisions. However, the key to this passage, and in some ways the entire novel, is the choice between "looking on a man as an object of pity" and "being identified with him and being forced to share his lot." Here, *Iola Leroy* calls for a much deeper commitment to political activism than rather condescending compassion from both whites and privileged African-Americans who are somewhat shielded from racism because of their education and wealth. Instead, Harper's novel advocates a committed oppositional community willing

to bear the material and social repercussions of political activism and affiliation with the oppressed race. In this ideal community, whites and African-Americans of all backgrounds would identify with each as true equals because of their common humanity, and racial distinctions would cease to matter except as the source of injustice against which they are fighting.

Of course, there are plenty of characters in the novel without the physical and cultural attributes necessary to offer them the "choice" to be African-American. Some have argued that this concentration on privileged characters reflects a shortcoming of the broader political movement underlying the narrative, the Black Uplift Movement. This movement, founded on Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, but complicated and radicalized by later texts such as Cooper's *A Voice from the South* and W. E. B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, was a call for racial progress based on education, self-improvement, and assistance to poorer, more oppressed African-Americans from the black middle class, or as DuBois calls them, the "Talented Tenth," and it often appealed to the Christian and patriotic values of its subscribers.[13] The historian Kevin Gaines, who is rather critical of this movement, calls it "a middle-class ideology of racial uplift that measured racial progress in terms of civilization, manhood and patriarchal authority" made up primarily of the "black intelligentsia who took for granted that black elites, as 'representative Negros,' necessarily spoke for the black majority" (129). Carla L. Peterson applies this criticism specifically to *Iola Leroy*, observing that the novel ignores the grueling reality of the "black subaltern" or laborer by depicting a genteel African-American community, although Peterson does acknowledge that Harper tries to represent

the African-American "folk culture" in a way that will be acceptable to her white readership (103).

Certainly, *Iola Leroy* is a product of the racial uplift movement. At the end of the novel, Harper says her literary efforts will not be in vain if they "inspire [African-Americans] [ . . . ] to determine that they will embrace every opportunity, develop every faculty, and use every power God has given them to rise in the scale of character and condition and to add their quota of good citizenship to the best welfare of the nation" (282). However, I would argue that, while much of *Iola Leroy* is "genteel," Harper is too aware of the condition of the "black subaltern" to create a simplistic vision of oppositional community that ignores or diminishes the importance of the laborer's plight. In Farah Jasmine Griffin's essay, "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in the Reconstruction South," the author describes Harper's extended visit to the South in the 1870's. Griffin argues that Harper's speeches and essays from this time show that "her values are [ . . . ] more in tune with the masses of Black Southerners than are those of other Black leaders" (45). This experience seems to have influenced Harper's novel, which seeks to model an oppositional community in which black elites "cast their lot" with the black "masses" in an egalitarian way. If heterosexual romance serves as a conduit for Iola's personal political choice, then among the novel's African-American society at large, the deliberate reconstitution of family in some ways represents the choice to create an oppositional community that is not limited by color, regional identity, gender, or access to wealth or education. Of course, the forced separation of African-American families under the slave system and the resulting fragmentation of both familial and communal connections is a complex issue, and the desire to reunite families and repair those connections cannot be

reduced to a simplistic quest for political affiliations. Nevertheless, in *Iola Leroy*, it is the case that the process of forging (and in many cases, re-forging) familial ties is inextricably linked with one's commitment to working for the advancement of the African-American community.

As we have seen, Iola's and Harry's choice to identify as African-American is motivated largely by their love for their immediate family. Perhaps, though, Robert Johnson's story is the novel's best example of the relationship between family, political activism and community formation. Robert has been raised as a slave and identifies with this community; nevertheless, his skin color, education and familial relations connect him to those African-American characters who are relatively more privileged. Peterson posits that "Robert in some sense rivals Iola as the novel's center" and that "his function is [ . . . ] to introduce the reader to the different social groups that inhabit *Iola Leroy* and then to mediate between them, to recognize, comprehend and bridge difference" (107). While Peterson argues that Robert's mediating role prevents him from achieving heroic status in the book, I would suggest that his liminal position indicates that the novel privileges communal life over isolated individuality (often a trait of the traditional "hero"). Robert shares common traits with many of the seemingly disparate groups in the book; he lives on a slave plantation with many of the characters identified by some critics as "folk," such as Aunt Linda, Uncle Daniel, and Tom Anderson. These folk characters are distinguished in the book by their colloquial speech, written in dialect, and their immersion in slave culture from the beginning of the narrative. Robert, like the other "folk" characters, has always lived as a slave, but unlike Aunt Linda and others, he has been taught to read and speak standard English by his mistress, and she has used him to

keep her books. However, as Mary Elkins observes, these qualities do not elevate Robert over the other folk; Elkins convincingly argues that *Iola Leroy* does not "privilege standard white speech over realistic black dialect," pointing out that Aunt Linda and Robert are clearly equals in the slave community, despite their varying education (51). Therefore, from the beginning, Robert is both aligned with and distinct from other slaves on the plantation, but this distinction is not hierarchical in either his eyes or those of his fellow slaves. He does not choose to take advantage of the privilege his education and skin color have offered him, and those in his slave community treat him as a valued, loved member, but not as one who is, or sees himself as, "better" than they are.

At the heart of Robert's desire for freedom is his lingering anger that his mistress sold his mother and sister away from the plantation when he was very young. According to the narrator, after the war, "[t]o bind anew the ties which slavery had broken and gather together the remnants of his scattered family became the earnest purpose of Robert's life" (148). What the reader discovers, however, as the novel progresses, is that Robert's desire to find his mother and sister is not sustained by a wealth of shared memories or experiences, the things that typically bond a family. He tells Iola he would not recognize his sister if he saw a picture of her, and later, when he meets his sister, Marie (who is also Iola's mother), the two of them talk for a long time before "they conclud[e] that they [are] brother and sister" (201). Robert's reunion with his mother happens in a similarly gradual, tentative fashion. Robert recognizes her, not by sight, but from the familiar details in the story she tells at a prayer meeting of ex-slaves. However, once Robert, his mother and sister have confirmed their biological relationship, they make sacrifices for each other and feel responsible toward each other as if they had

always been together. Robert, committed to living with his mother, moves out of a neighborhood in which she is shunned because of her darker skin color, and Marie willingly sends Iola to live with them in order to care for her grandmother in the North, even though Marie would like to keep her daughter at home.

My point here is that familial connections are chosen in *Iola Leroy* as much as they are a result of biology, and the intricacies of these connections represent the ways an oppositional community bound by genuine affection can become a political and moral force in the world. Robert's mother is clearly aligned with the black "folk" through her speech and her shared memories with Aunt Linda, and of course, his sister, Marie, the well-educated, fair-skinned mother of Harry and Iola, is a matriarch of the black "elite" in the novel. Through these relationships, familial love becomes "revolutionary love," a chosen emotional bond that is at once politically committed and personally charged. This sympathetic love is not only the motivation for privileged members to "cast their lot" with less privileged members of an oppositional community, but it also serves as the vehicle through which intra-community differences, such as colorism and class elitism, can be overcome. Ferguson describes the intangible benefits of revolutionary love, calling it "the kind of love that can motivate us to weather such difficult processes [of community formation] and yet find it all worth the effort" ("Feminist Communities" 377).

As much as *Iola Leroy* is about the maturation of an African-American community committed to racial advancement, it is also about the needs of that community to become part of a larger spirit of reform informed by other progressive movements, such as temperance and woman's rights. Harper's novel demonstrates the

interdependence of seemingly diverse reform ideologies, arguing that all must be addressed simultaneously to bring about radical change in the nation as a whole, and the African-American community in particular. In *Iola Leroy,* Harper revisits temperance ideology, a topic she pays considerable attention to in her speeches, poetry, and earlier fiction. Debra Rosenthal speculates that in some of these earlier works, such as "The Two Offers" and *Sowing and Reaping: A Temperance Story*, the author does not identify the race of her characters so she can stress "the shared identity between black and white and a common goal of achieving middle-class respectability" (164). By the time she writes *Iola Leroy*, however, Harper's argument is more nuanced, showing the ways temperance is useful in resisting racial disenfranchisement. Aunt Linda laments how alcohol has weakened the African-American community when she says, "I beliebs we might be a people ef it warn't for dat mizzable drink" (160). Instead of blaming individual drinkers, however, Aunt Linda notes the social forces that create the situation: "But it does rile me ter see dese mean white men comin' down yere an' settin' up dere grog-shops, tryin' to fedder dere nests sellin' licker to pore culled people" (159). Here, Aunt Linda shows that the real enemy to be fought, instead of King Rum, is the white establishment who would continue draining the black community of its resources. Robert also links temperance with radical political activity: "The colored man has escaped from one slavery, and I don't want him to fall into another. I want the young folks to keep their brains clear, and their right arms strong, to fight the battles of life manfully, and take their places alongside of every other people in this country" (170). Far from seeing the need for alcohol reform as a commonality among blacks and whites, *Iola Leroy* shows that a coalition with

temperance societies is one way the African-American community can wrest some power from the controlling white establishment.

Harper's novel is also concerned with the relevance of the woman's rights community to the efforts for racial uplift. However, the novel engages in a more thorough critique of and re-imagining of this reform movement, exposing the often vexed relationship between gender and race at its heart and offering an alternative model of feminist activism that opposes racism as well as sexism. Again, Iola Leroy's choices play a crucial role in this model. Although Robert tells her that "there is no necessity for [her] to work" while she lives with him, Iola prefers to get a job because she believes "every woman ought to know how to earn her own living" (15). The heroine's feminist convictions about economic independence challenge the dependent domesticity expected of the "true woman." Unfortunately, she receives a hostile reception from the white women with whom she works; when they find out she is African-American, they force the manager to fire her. It is significant that this rejection causes one of Iola's most despondent moments in the text: "I feel out of heart. It seems as if the prejudice pursues us through every avenue of life and assigns us the lowest places" (207). Apparently, the racism of white women with whom she feels an affinity as a fellow worker is an especially painful experience for the heroine. Iola's disappointment recurs at other times in the novel when she is ostracized by white women in her attempts to be independent. She applies for a room in a boarding house run by "Christian women," but they refuse her because of her color. The narrator points out their hypocrisy: "And these women, professors of a religion which taught, 'If ye have respect to persons ye commit sin,' virtually shut the door in her face because of the outcast blood in her veins" (209).

Elizabeth Ammons claims that through these and several other examples, "[T]he racism of white women, particularly as it is directed against black women, emerges as a significant supporting theme in *Iola Leroy*" (33). I would add that these fictional episodes are representative of larger patterns of black women's exclusion from female communities, and in particular, organizations of feminist activists. In the novel, the author directly addresses this racial schism:

> It was as if two women were sinking in the quicksand, and on the solid land stood other women with life-lines in their hands, seeing the deadly sands slowly creeping up around the hapless victims. To one they readily threw the lines of deliverance, but for the other there was not one strand of salvation. (232)

Harper's critique here is similar to Anna Julia Cooper's, foregrounding the problems with creating a radical feminist oppositional community when the self-horizons of many white women are severely limited by racism and classism.

In contrast, *Iola Leroy* offers several counter examples of African-American women's public reform activity that is informed by both race and gender concerns, enacting for the reader ways to publicly intervene to bring about change. Marie anticipates her daughter's feminist activism when, as a young woman, she gives a commencement address entitled, "American Civilization, its Lights and Shadows," in which she speaks on "behalf of freedom for all and chains for none" (75). In addition to working for economic independence, Iola spends time as a teacher in an African-American school, where "she was not satisfied to teach her children only the rudiments of knowledge. She tried to lay the foundation of good character" (147). Here we see Iola's

feminist impulse for a profession and economic independence working in conjunction with her activist commitment to educating African-American children, presumably male and female, to be informed, ethical citizens. We see this same commitment to education as a form of activism in Iola's most significant moment as a reformer. This moment comes at the *conversazione*, a gathering of "a select group of earnest men and women deeply interested in the welfare of the race" (246). As such, it gives voice to many of the political concerns actively debated in African-American intellectual circles of the time. During this meeting, Iola takes center stage, presenting a speech entitled the "Education of Mothers."

While the text of this speech is not included, Iola speaks again, more generally, at the end of the gathering: "'And is there [ . . . ] a path which we have trodden in this country, unless it be the path of sin, into which Jesus Christ has not put His feet and left it luminous with the light of His step? [ . . . ] And never, [ . . . ] will I recognize any religion as His which despises the least of His brethren'" (256-7). Iola's feminism here is similar to Marjory Warner's in *Out of Her Sphere*; Iola's promotion of enlightened mothers depends upon the uniquely feminine sway women can have in the maternal role, but her speaking on the subject in a public forum embodies the more active, political stance women must take to expand their influence. Furthermore, her distinction between "true" Christianity as represented by Jesus's example and organized religion which would ignore or hate the less fortunate, is a strategic political move that links religious and political reform. This distinction suggests that only through a return to original Christian doctrine can the country's race problems be solved, thereby implicating as "un-Christian" those readers who are complicit in perpetuating the religious and racial status quo.

One could argue that Iola's acceptance of conventional notions about maternity and Christianity mediates the radical potential for her feminism here, and this capitulation to cultural norms might cause one to question the novel's commitment to gender reform. However, as in *Out of Her Sphere*, these types of expediency arguments, rather than merely accepting sexual ideology, attempt to re-envision gender roles to allow for more active female participation in the public sphere, even though they perhaps blunt the opposition to change (and the possibility of systemic reform) by appealing to widely-shared, often conservative ideas about the "natural" differences in the sexes. Furthermore, one must acknowledge that an African-American woman has a different relationship to these cultural values, which are often explicitly or implicitly applied to white men and women only. Therefore, claiming the right to one's children as an enlightened mother (or father) is an act of empowerment for African-Americans who had historically been denied control over themselves as well as their offspring, just as claiming a similarity between Jesus's suffering and that of the former slaves makes a convincing argument for merging radical politics with religious sentiment.

In *Iola Leroy*, Harper does not offer a monolithic view of feminism and the way it relates to race; instead, she shows different modes of feminist activism co-existing. In this way, Harper suggests that no perfect choice for feminist intervention is available, but that the combination of varying strategies can be effective in bringing about change. Like Lillie Devereux Blake, Harper seems to have embodied her more controversial notions about feminism in a secondary character. Lucille Delany, like Frank Heywood in *Fettered for Life*, gives life and voice to this more unorthodox perspective, and although she is not the central heroine, the text makes clear that she is worthy of emulation.[14] At

the age of 25, Lucille has graduated from college and founded her own girls' school, now a large, thriving institution. Dignified and refined, she also defies both conventional "white" expectations of beauty and prejudice based on skin tone. According to Iola's brother Harry, "[n]either [her] hair nor complexion show the least hint of blood admixture" (199), intimating that Lucille's dark appearance marks her as distinctly African-American, and thus impervious to the racist charge that her "white blood" makes her attractive or talented. While Iola longs for an independence she never fully achieves, Lucille is the embodiment of self-reliant womanhood. She is also not afraid to speak out in unconventional ways about gender and race, as the following dialogue from the *conversazione* demonstrates:

> "I agree," said Rev. Eustace, of St. Mary's parish, "with [Iola's] paper. The great need of the race is enlightened mothers."
>
> "And enlightened fathers, too," added Miss Delany, quickly. "If there is anything I chafe to see it is a strong, hearty man shirking his burdens, putting them on the shoulders of his wife, and taking life easy himself."
>
> "I always pity such mothers," interposed Iola, tenderly.
>
> "I think," said Miss Delany, with a flash in her eye and a ring of decision in her voice, "that such men ought to be drummed out of town!" As she spoke, there was an expression which seemed to say, "And I would like to help do it!" (253)

Iola demonstrates heartfelt "feminine" emotion here, but it is juxtaposed with Lucille's less demure righteous indignation.

The narrator, however, makes it clear that Iola and Lucille complement each other, rather than compete: "There were no foolish rivalries and jealousies between them. Their lives were too full of zeal and earnestness for them to waste in selfishness their power to be moral and spiritual forces among a people who so much needed their helping hands" (200). The two women are linked through a mutual commitment to race and gender reform, and this bond demonstrates that an oppositional community can exist in harmony even if all its members do not share an identical approach to achieving its reform objectives. Peterson contends, "In developing the characters of Iola and Lucille, Harper sought to construct a feminist agenda that would deconstruct the dichotomy of public and private spheres and thus forge a space for black women's social activism in the Reconstruction Era" (102). By developing these characters differently, Harper also shows that this space can and should accommodate a wide range of feminist reform activity.

Iola's and Lucille's marriages bring closure to the romance narratives in the novel and contribute to the utopian ending by strengthening familial bonds and solidifying an oppositional community committed to a sweeping vision of reform. During one of their initial encounters, Dr. Latimer says to his future wife, "I think, Miss Leroy, that the world's work, if shared, is better done than when it is performed alone" (242). As I have argued, this pairing of duty and love is found throughout *Iola Leroy*, and it figures prominently in the novel's appropriation of the heterosexual romance plot for its political goals. As such, Iola and Frank's marriage is imbued with a revolutionary romantic love that is both personally satisfying and politically committed: "In their desire to help the race their hearts beat in loving unison. One grand and noble purpose was giving tone and

color to their lives and strengthening the bonds of affection between them" (266). The way that this revolutionary love manifests itself is rather conventional, however, in keeping with Iola's more mainstream ideas about gender roles. The pair moves to the South, where Iola "quietly [takes] her place in the Sunday-school as a teacher, and in the church as a helper" while Dr. Latimer becomes a successful doctor in the community. Although Iola continues to reach out to the African-American community, she does so through traditionally feminine work, playing a supporting role in the church. M. Giuli Fabi asserts that "Dr. Latimer shares Iola's twin ideals of independent womanhood and racial uplift, and his marriage proposal therefore promises to open a utopian heterosexual space of gender equality" (235). While the two clearly are in sympathy when it comes to reform ideology, both racial and gender, the manifestation of their political efforts is still informed by a traditional middle-class ideology of separate spheres that places Iola's activism in a subordinate role.

Some critics provide extra-textual evidence to suggest Iola's married life is more "feminist" than it might seem. Jennifer Campbell rightly points out that, for African-American women, marriage (like parenthood) was considered empowering, because for years they had been denied this legal status. In addition, P. Gabrielle Foreman draws some intriguing conclusions about Harper's heroine by tracing parallels between Iola and the real-life feminist activist to whom her name alludes, the outspoken, controversial journalist Ida B. Wells, who wrote under the pseudonym "Iola" and who started her famous anti-lynching campaign the same year that Harper published *Iola Leroy*. By comparing details of Wells's life with the fictional heroine Iola - both wanted to write a "good strong book" for the race, and both were involved in the black activist church as

young teachers - Foreman concludes that "Harper ends her novel by positioning Iola to develop into Wells, or in other words, into her more radical homonymic sister," thereby creating a space of possibility beyond the narrative closure (341).

Nevertheless, in the text itself, Lucille Delany's romance is the more convention-defying narrative. Rather than a seamless sequence of proposal and marriage, Lucille initially rejects Harry's love because she is afraid that his family will object to her darker skin; Harry, however, assures her that it is not an issue. While this is a short conflict, it is a realistic representation of courtship and romance, depicting the sometimes-difficult negotiations necessary to achieve revolutionary love. Not surprisingly, then, it is Harry and Lucille's marriage, more than Iola and Dr. Latimer's, that can be described as a "utopian space of gender equality." At the end of the novel, the two work together at "the head of a large and flourishing school" and Lucille continues working full-time as an educator, "her chosen work, to which she was too devoted to resign" (280). While Iola and Frank's marriage is a union with the potential to do many wonderful things in their community, Harry and Lucille seem to marry their work with their love in an even more balanced partnership. Nevertheless, both couples attest to the power of revolutionary love to transform families and societies.

Both young couples live within a network of family and friends who have, by the end of the novel, developed into a strong oppositional community. All the major characters, both "folk" and "intelligentsia," have moved south, because this region is the place where their reform work is most needed. Robert has purchased a large piece of land and leases small portions to industrious African-American farmers at a fair price; Uncle Daniel, Aunt Linda and her husband John Salter, Grandmother Johnson (Marie and

Robert's mother) are exemplary citizens, supportive of the efforts for Black Uplift in the community. However, through the example of Dr. Latimer, the novel stresses that true reform work should not be limited to questions of race: "[H]e is a true patriot and a good citizen. [ . . . ] He is a leader in every reform movement for the benefit of the community; but his patriotism is not confined to race lines" (279). At the end, then, Harper returns to a theme she has woven throughout the book and which echoes Anna Julia Cooper's claim that "the cause of freedom in not the cause of a race or a sect" only. Rather, an effective oppositional community must fight against larger systems of oppression. The novel, then, inspires its readers to answer Dr. Latimer's plea at the *conversazione*: "[I]nstead of narrowing our sympathies to mere racial questions, let us broaden them to humanity's wider issues" (260). It does so by demonstrating that injustice stemming from racism and sexism is a pressing national concern because it undermines the tenets of democracy and Christianity upon which, in Harper's view, America was founded.

Hamlin Garland was also concerned about the ways democratic ideals were being undermined in late-nineteenth-century America, and like Harper, Garland expressed these concerns in both speeches and fiction, achieving fame as an accomplished writer and enthusiastic political activist and lecturer. However, in 1892, when Garland published his own novel about reform and feminist activism, *A Spoil of Office*, he was, unlike Harper, at the very beginning of career. Garland had published one well-received book, *Main Travelled Roads* (1891), when he was hired by B. O. Flower, editor of the liberal journal, *The Arena*, to write a serialized story about the recent agrarian revolt in the Midwest, a movement known historically as Populism, or the People's Party.[15] Consequently, Garland toured the Midwest, including Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa, to gather material for

his work, and in the process he became an avid supporter of the farmers' cause, enlisting as a traveling lecturer for the movement. During this tour, Garland saw first-hand the poverty and disenfranchisement of the galvanized agrarian community, and spoke out against those who he believed monopolized the land and the modes of transportation, causing an unfair business environment that resulted in the farmers' perpetual economic hardship.

Garland views this economic hardship, however, through the lens of a fiction writer, and his assessment of it directly links art and poverty. In an essay published in *The Arena* in 1893, "The Land Question, and its Relation to Art and Literature," Garland articulates this relationship:

> We all [artists] dream of somehow touching this great, strange, wallowing, hydra-headed something called "the public" and waking its better nature into life. We dream of playing upon its heartstrings as a lute, and all the time we passively acquiesce in conditions which keep all the devilish and sordid passions of our audience as an impenetrable barrier between us. We stand mournfully regarding the blind and suffering monster, and do nothing to help it rise. (167)

Garland warns that the complicity of many of his fellow artists will not only perpetuate the unfair disparity of opportunity in the country, but it will also harm their own aesthetic endeavors by inhibiting the number of readers with the time and inclination to read their work: "The cause of art is the cause of humanity. The dignity of the drama depends upon the comfort and leisure of the common man. The whole social order must undergo

change before American art will become the jubilant and wholesome art it should be" (174-5).

Ultimately, Garland tells his audience that the only way to avoid stagnation and bring about this "jubilant and wholesome" era is their political involvement: "You too must become reformers. You too must stand for equal rights, with all that the fearless leaders of present-day thought have made that phrase mean" (175). In an article published in the *Forum* a year later, Garland explains specifically the ways the novelist can use his or her work to usher in this new social order. To do so, he or she must be a writer,

> who stands for individuality and freedom; who puts woman on an equality with man, making her a human being; who stands for a pure man as well as a pure woman; who stands for an altruistic and free state where involuntary poverty does not exist; who teaches the danger and degradation of lust and greed, and who inculcates a love for all who live, teaching justice and equal rights. ("Productive Conditions of American Literature" 694)

Without question, these are lofty goals for any writer, and Garland's enthusiasm and unbounded optimism perhaps betray a youthful naivete about the potential for human altruism and sweeping social changes. Nevertheless, Garland attempts such an idyllic reform project in *A Spoil of Office*, which anticipates many of the criteria the author outlines in this slightly later essay.

Garland seems to perceive writing *Spoil* as a patriotic endeavor that promotes the individual freedom of all his fellow citizens. A contemporary reviewer for the *Atlantic Monthly* applauds the nationalistic impulse of Garland's story, even though he believes

the author is too young to do it justice: "In theme [ . . . ] the book is magnificent. He who will embody in a noble fiction, as Mr. Garland has here tried to do, the career of a Western farm-hand, from the time of his early struggles for an education to the time of his election to the national legislature, will achieve, as nearly as any one, the great American novel" ("New Figures in Literature and Art" 843). To be sure, *A Spoil of Office* is a classically American "rags-to-riches" story in the Franklinian tradition, a celebration of the individual who relies almost exclusively on his own resources to rise in the world. However, Garland's story ultimately reminds the reader more of Walt Whitman (one of Garland's favorite authors) in that the rise of the protagonist, Bradley Talcott, directly results from his growing awareness, not only of his individual talent, but also of his connection with and responsibility to the many other citizens he encounters. Thus, the hero's success is measured, not primarily in material wealth, but in his commitment to broad-based political reform. In this way, although the subject matter is very different, Garland shares with Harper the understanding that discrimination against a certain group never takes place in a vacuum; it is always part of a larger system of oppression. Also like Harper, he creates a central character whose political conversion occurs through a series of "existential moments" in which his self-horizon expands to accommodate an increasingly inclusive perspective. Finally, and perhaps most pertinent to this study, Garland chooses, like Harper, to use a politically committed female character to serve as the narrative catalyst for change in his novel.

The argument that *Spoil* is an important literary representation of organized reform activity, written in an attempt to persuade readers to join that reform community, is not exactly new. Recently, critics like Quentin Martin and Keith Newlin have tried to

reclaim Garland's early fiction in general, and *A Spoil of Office* in particular, from the scholarly dismissal it received from a previous generation of critics skeptical of overtly political art. Instead, Martin praises the novel for the very thing earlier scholars like Eberhard Alsen dismiss -- an unabashed commitment to its reform ideology. According to Martin, *Spoil* is worthy of critical consideration because it "illustrates and analyzes, as no other novel comes close to doing, crucial intellectual movements in American life, specifically the birth and ideological core of the Populist movement" ("'This Spreading Radicalism'" 31). Martin also shares my contention that the most important transformation of Bradley, and perhaps the reader, is "the recognition that the interests of the farmer are and must be linked to the interests of other exploited groups" (33). However, the crucial point on which my analysis differs from Martin and others is my assessment of the heroine, Ida Wilbur, and her role in creating this coalition of reformers.

Beginning with William Dean Howells's commentary on the novel, Ida has received dubious recognition at best. Howells (to whom *A Spoil* is dedicated) writes to Garland privately that "It was *brave* of you to take a Woman's Righter for a heroine; but Nettie Russell [a minor, more conventional female character] was worth a lot for her human nature" (emphasis added, qtd. in Alsen vii). Even Martin, who seems determined to resurrect critical respect for the novel and promote its radical message, claims that "the characterization of Ida and the description of her and Bradley's romance" are some of the "major drawbacks of the novel" (31). I would agree with Howells's comment that Garland was "brave" in creating Ida, but I would not agree with the disapproval that underlies it.[16] Rather, I would argue that Ida is perhaps the most unconventional representation of a feminist activist of the ones I study, and it is this unconventionality

that makes the novel's relatively radical vision of an oppositional community possible. While Ida occupies a traditionally feminine narrative role, that of "muse" for the male hero, she is unusual nonetheless in that her words and actions act as a powerful catalyst for progressive political change, on both an individual and a communal level. Specifically, Bradley's maturation is so intimately tied to Ida's political activity and intellectual guidance that it is almost impossible to talk about his development without reference to her. In his laudatory review of *Spoil*, B. O. Flower observes that the novel "might be separated into four major divisions: The farmer boy, In school; In state politics; In national politics" (48). Later critics such as Martin and Newlin have explicitly or implicitly referred to these turning points in the reform-minded *Bildingsroman*, and they have also acknowledged generally that Ida is an important influence on Bradley's development. However, no one has yet noted that each new stage in Bradley's life is either precipitated by or in some way dependent upon interaction with Ida.

*A Spoil of Office* opens on an idyllic summer day in the 1870's at the start of a festive Grange picnic: "At the four corners below stood scores of other wagons, loaded to the rim with men, women and children. [ . . . ] Everywhere were merry shouts, and far away at the head of the procession the Burr Oak band was playing. All waited for the flag whose beautiful folds flamed afar in the bright sunlight" (3). Although avowedly apolitical, in that they do not endorse either of the two major parties, these local Grange organizations work together for the economic advantage of the farmers, and perhaps more importantly, provide a much-needed social outlet, giving the agrarian community a sense of unity and shared interests. In his book, *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898*, Robert McMath demonstrates the importance of Grange events in

precipitating "rural men and women binding themselves together in communities that were as familiar as the churches and lodges to which many belonged, and yet were self-consciously new and purposeful"(124). Garland's version of a Grange event is optimistic, suggesting the foundation of an oppositional community; however, he also imbues it with a naivete about entering the political fray that clearly must be overcome if the farmers are to be a political force. The chairman of this particular Grange organization tells the crowd, "I think that politics will destroy the grange. To make it a debating school on political questions would bring discord and wrangling into it. I hope I shall never see the day" (11).

This communal naivete mirrors that of Bradley Talcott, who comes to the picnic as a hired man for one of the Grange farmers. As the farmer's driver, Bradley stays on the fringe of the festivities and remains uninterested in the speeches made about the movement, until he hears the one given by Ida Wilbur, who is introduced as "our State lecturer."[17] Ida speaks of the "poetic side" of the Grange, the communal element: "The farmer is a free citizen of a great republic, it is true; but he is a Solitary free citizen. He lives alone too much. His dull life, his hard work, make it almost impossible to keep his better nature uppermost. The work of the grange is a social work" (13). Although she, too, at this point thinks that the Grange should remain apolitical, she is the first to comment on the importance of community in bringing out one's "better nature," and in the world of the novel, one's better nature is linked to one's commitment to reform. Here, Ida anticipates Ferguson's warning that it is almost impossible to sustain one's progressive impulses in isolation.

By far the most sophisticated intellect and reformer at the picnic, Ida has a profound and life-changing effect on Bradley:

> On Bradley, standing there alone, there fell something mysterious, like a light. Something whiter and more penetrating than sunlight. As he listened, something stirred within him, a vast longing, a hopeless ambition, nameless as it was strange. [ . . . ] His eyes absorbed every detail of the girl's face and figure. There was wonder in his eyes at her girlish face, and something like awe at her powerful diction and her impersonal emotion. She stood there like an incarnation of the great dream-world that lay beyond his horizon, the world of poets and singers in the far realms of light and luxury. (14)

Bradley's fascination with Ida is not an anomalous scene in American literature, as Caroline Levander demonstrates in her book, *Voices of the Nation.* Levander presents ample evidence that "American novels devote much space to describing how women's voices sound and what reactions women's speech produces, especially in their male listeners" (2). Levander argues that this trope most often is used to reiterate the public/private distinction between males and females, by fixating on the sound and ignoring the content of the female speaker's voice, thereby beginning "a process by which women have been effectively excluded from the political arena" (34).Garland's novel, however, unequivocally contradicts this pattern. While Bradley is certainly taken with Ida's physical presence and the sensation of hearing her voice, the content of her speech also infiltrates his intellect and distracts him, even as he works a few days later: "The centre of his thinking was that slender young woman and the words that she had

uttered. He repeated her prophetic words as nearly as he could a hundred times. [ . .. ] He began to look ahead and wonder what he should do or could do. [ . . . ] His mind moved slowly from point to point, but it never returned to its old dumb patience" (28). On a more visceral level, Bradley has also been moved by the passion for her work that Ida radiates. Having been affected by Ida's words and her presence, Bradley experiences his first "existential moment," when he ceases to accept the norms of society uncritically. Consequently, unlike the "heroes" in the novels Levander discusses, Bradley is inspired to change his own political involvement, rather than inhibit that of the lecturess by whom he is captivated.

During this initial encounter, Ida represents to Bradley a "dream world [ . . .] beyond his horizon." Like Iola Leroy's, Bradley's "horizon of self" is limited by privilege and ignorance which obstruct his awareness of oppression and the need for change. Seeing Ida gives Bradley the courage to think beyond his immediate self-horizon and consequently, to "better" himself through education, first by leaving the farm and registering at the seminary and then by studying law with the paternal Judge Brown. In these early stages of the narrative, Bradley makes his decision to improve his oratory and debating skills with an eye toward entering politics, because "he thought it would please Her best" (66). Bradley almost deifies Ida, as the narrative suggests by capitalizing references to her. By idealizing her to this extent, Bradley seems to reduce Ida to the traditionally passive role of "muse," and one could argue that the novel consequently diminishes Ida's political agency by making her merely the catalyst for Bradley's activism. However, Ida's influence is not of the vague moral or romantic sort; she is instead a political and scholarly mentor, and the skills to which Bradley aspires –

lecturing and campaigning – Ida has already mastered. Therefore, she is a creator and a force in her own right, and Garland significantly transforms the romance narrative by having his hero work not only to impress his love interest, but also to emulate her political example.

In these early stages of Bradley's political enlightenment, the farming community at large undergoes a corresponding nascent progressivism. Finally angered enough by their exclusion from the decisions of the local Republican committee, the farmers start searching for alternatives. According to the narrator, "[I]t was a singular thing to see the farmers suddenly begin to ask themselves why they should stand quietly by while the townsmen monopolized all the offices" (95). This dawning awareness results in the farmers breaking with the larger party and holding their own successful campaigns for local offices, defeating the incumbents soundly. Bradley, following Ida's example, tours the county giving several speeches in support of these third party candidates. The resultant victories reiterate Ida's lesson about the strength in community, and the novel highlights the momentous historical significance of this revelation: "For the first time in the history of the county, the farmers had asserted themselves. For the first time in the history of the farmers of Iowa, they had felt the power of their own mass" (120-1). This narrative optimism cheers the farmers' first foray into oppositional community formation; however, the novel also reminds the reader that this community is still in its infancy because of its solipsism: "[The farmers] saw the smaller circle first. They had not yet risen to the perception of solidarity of all productive interests. That was sure to follow" (121). Though they have taken the initial step toward political activism, the farming

community's horizon, like Bradley's, is still limited by a rather shortsighted perspective that does not allow them to see the advantages to a broader reform agenda.

As Bradley's story enters what Flower would call its third stage, state politics, Ida once again serves as the harbinger of progressivism. Her second speech of the novel, "The Real Woman Question," teaches Bradley (and the reader) that he must expand the "smaller circle" of agrarian interests to include those of gender as well. The second meeting between hero and heroine shows that Ida has also developed in her political commitment and refined her ideas of justice:

> She was the same woman, his ideal and more. She was fuller of form and the poise of her head was more womanly, but she was the same spirit that had come to be such a power and inspiration in his life. As a matter of fact, she had grown also. If she had not, she would have seemed girlish to him now; growing as he grew, she seemed the same distance beyond him. (142)

The speech that Ida gives shows that she has grown, not merely beyond Bradley, but also beyond many of her "real world" feminist counterparts who were increasingly streamlining their discussions of sexism to focus exclusively on suffrage.[18] In contrast, Ida tells her audience, "It is not a question of suffrage merely – suffrage is the smaller part of the woman question – it is a question of equal rights. It is a question of whether the law of liberty applies to humanity or to men only" (143). Ida's arguments are based solely on natural rights philosophy and fall squarely in the more controversial category of "arguments from justice" that, as we have seen, were taken up by woman's rights activists who want to do away with gendered legal distinctions. Ida takes her radicalism

one step further when she links women's interest to those of the farmers and other financially disadvantaged groups: "The woman question is not a political one merely, it is an economic one. The real problem is the wage problem, the industrial problem. The real question is woman's dependence upon man as the bread-winner" (143). Certainly, Ida's speech (and Garland's novel) is not the first one to point out the inextricable link between money and sexism; however, at a time when the "woman question" was increasingly defined as political exclusion, Ida's speech refocuses the debate in economic terms. In so doing, Garland's novel points out the commonality between women and men who are financially impoverished, laying the groundwork for a broader coalition of reformers.

Once again, the novel shows Bradley's "self-horizons" growing because of Ida: "She was destined to again set a stake in Bradley's mental horizon. [ . . . ] He saw women in a new light, and the aloofness of the speaker grew upon him again. He felt that she was holding her place as his teacher" (144). The novel validates Ida's feminist political activity by valuing woman's unique perspective as marginalized citizens, much as Anna Julia Cooper does in her collection of essays. Bradley tells Ida that her speech "was right," and that "[he'd] never thought about it before. Women have been kept down. [ . . . ] The trouble is we men don't think about it at all. We need to have you tell us these things" (148). Bradley's narrow range of experience has prevented him from thinking critically about others' oppression. When Bradley speaks these words, his and Ida's "minds seemed to come together at that point as if by an electrical shock" (148). This first moment of mutual attraction is crucial in the development of the heterosexual romance plot; however, Garland once again refuses to rely on easy gender stereotypes to further this plot. Instead of stressing her femininity, Ida is described in masculine terms,

looking at Bradley "precisely as one man looks at another, without the slightest false modesty or coquettishness. She evidently considered him a fellow-student on social affairs" (6). In some ways, de-emphasizing the physical differences between the hero and heroine creates the possibility of a revolutionary love based on a sustained intellectual exchange and a growing sympathy for humanity. Nevertheless, their connection is described in explicitly physical terms, an "electrical shock," suggesting that, far from being a passionless, cerebral bond, their love for each other (and by extension their sympathy for those in need) is emotional and visceral as well.

Ida responds to Bradley's new feminist sensibility with words that prove prophetic in the hero's development: "One radicalism open[s] the way to the other. Being a radical is like opening the door to the witches" (148). After Ida opens Bradley's eyes about gender discrimination, he is increasingly attuned to other forms of oppression. Specifically, Bradley grows more sensitive to the pervasive racism surrounding him and to which he was formerly oblivious. The novel charts this growing awareness through a subtle change in word choice, as well as through straightforward dialogue. For example, when Bradley goes to visit Ida at her hotel, the clerk takes his card and "[gives] it to the insolent little darky who served as 'Front'" (146). Here, the narrative voice seems closely aligned with Bradley's perspective in its uncritical use of these racist, derogatory terms. However, soon after Bradley is elected to the state legislature, he notices that the young African-American boy tending him in his hotel "was not allowed to ride in the elevator" (206). The narrator tells us, "For the first time in his life [Bradley] had met the question of caste" (206). Although the narrator still calls African-American men "darkys" at this stage in the novel, Bradley increasingly pays attention to details such as the young man's

"badly broken shoes, though [they were] highly polished" after this epiphany (207). While the narrative does not return to the "question of caste" until the fourth stage of the novel, the reader can already see Bradley's self-horizon regarding race being challenged. Likewise, Bradley sees young women in the capitol building lobbying for jobs and making themselves vulnerable to politicians who would take advantage of their necessity in economic and other ways. Rather than merely condemning the women for "this unwomanly struggle for office," however, Bradley now sees that it is "the need for employment which really forced these girls into such a contest" (219). In both cases, Bradley (and the reader) learns that racial and sexual stereotypes are inaccurate, and that their subordinate status results from poverty and a lack of opportunity rather than personal defects.

At their second meeting, Ida also impresses upon Bradley the need for communal action and coalition politics to fight against economic, sexual and racial injustice. Ida is the first character to see beyond the "smaller circle" of farming interests, and she recognizes that other reformers must do the same. According to the heroine, the Grange is failing because "the farmer can't seem to feel his kinship. [ . . . ] He must come some day to see that to stand by his fellowman is to stand by himself" (149). Ida predicts that the Grange "must include more or fail" (151); she therefore intuits two of the crucial elements of oppositional community formation that Ferguson articulates. First, Ida recognizes how hard it is to sustain a defiant stance against the status quo in isolation; the farmers will fail if they do not realize their own inter-dependence. Furthermore, Ida sees that a particular interest group, such as the farmers, is ultimately more successful when they develop "affinities and political affiliations with those in other identity positions

who share critiques of the dominant order" (Ferguson "Feminist Communities" 372). This early stage of agrarian revolt, the Grange, is doomed because of its myopic vision; it must "include more or fail."

As *A Spoil of Office* moves into the final stage, national politics, the reader learns how the current political climate stifles the formation of coalitions that have the potential to bring about significant change. Although he is elected to be a Democratic representative to the U.S. Congress, Bradley learns how difficult it is to maintain an oppositional stance in mainstream politics, because his increasingly radical ideas alienate him from both his fellow congressmen and his constituency. Almost the last fourth of the novel chronicles his increasing disillusionment with organized politics, even as it shows his rapidly maturing sensitivity to many forms of injustice. In Washington D. C., where he has daily contact with African-Americans, he is uncomfortable with the "oppressive courtesy" they show him, and he notices for the first time the complexity of their situation: "The negroes attracted his eyes constantly. They drifted along the street apparently aimlessly, many of them. Their faces were mainly laughing, but in a meaningless way, as if it were a habit. He soon found that they were swift to struggle for a chance to work" (274). By using words such as "apparently" and "habit," Garland's narrator suggests that the carefree demeanor of African-Americans is a façade and shows that in reality, they are desperate to earn a living. In this way, Garland's novel is like *Iola Leroy* in exposing the inaccuracy of an outsiders' perception of African-American life by intimating the actual conditions of that life. Furthermore, the word "negro" is markedly less racist than the "darky" used in the first half of the book. During a visit to the U. S. Capitol building, Bradley chooses to sit with the African-Americans in the common

gallery, instead of entering the private gallery with the other representatives. Here, Bradley physically aligns himself with the marginalized people he hopes to help, instead of the privileged politicians who are his colleagues, and this physical separation foreshadows the complete break with mainstream politics and status quo interests in which the novel culminates.

Until this point, Bradley has worked through the traditional channels of political activism, hoping to reform society through the two-party system. However, he learns that he must join a community that is not only truly inclusive but also truly oppositional if he is to alter society in a substantive way. Martin calls this "the novel's most important Populist transformation: the formation of a new party," noting that in this ending, "*Spoil's* romance plot parallels a coalition political plot" (39). After losing re-election to Congress because of his "cranky notions," Bradley determines to leave politics, but is once again re-focused by Ida. She writes to him of the new organization that has replaced the Grange, the Farmer's Alliance, which she says is "deeper in thought and broader in sympathy," and she assures him, "This order will become political," unlike the Grange. (304). Bradley travels to Kansas on business and hears her speak at an Alliance gathering that serves as a counter-balance to the more celebratory Grange picnic at the beginning of the novel:

> Up the broad street [ . . . ] came the long procession of revolting farmers. There were no bands to lead them; no fluttering of gay flags; no cheers from the bystanders. They rode in grim silence for the most part, as if at a funeral of their dead hopes – as if their mere presence were a protest. (337)

The visible poverty and grim countenances of the farmers underscore their desolate situation and their commitment to reform, garnering sympathy and understanding for the Alliance. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of meetings reminds the reader how the novel has moved toward radical political activism, both for the individual characters and the farming community: "[Bradley] wondered if there used to be so many tired faces at the Grange picnics in Iowa. Were the farmers really less comfortable and happy, or had he simply grown clear-sighted? He ended by believing in both causes" (342). Bradley's horizons have been widened to the point where is no longer "short-sighted" but more "clear-sighted," a perceptive critical thinker. At the same time, the farmers' situation has become more dire and the need for reform more urgent.

Bradley, however, still needs to learn more about the Alliance before he is willing to embrace it, and it takes Ida's final recorded speech in the novel to render the hero completely "clear-sighted." This speech is also juxtaposed with Ida's first in the novel, which she gave when she was much younger; that speech was concerned with the "poetic side" of farming life and was given with Ida standing in the "dapple of shadows," suggesting a certain romanticism. In contrast, as she speaks for the Alliance, Ida stands in "broad daylight" and her rhetoric is "of the contemporaneous sort" (18). Like the farmers, Ida has lost her nostalgia and become modernized. In this final speech, Ida fully articulates the inclusiveness and radicality toward which the novel has been building from the beginning:

> The heart and centre of this movement is a demand for justice, not for ourselves alone, but for the toiling poor wherever found. [ . . . ] With me, it is no longer a question of legislating for the farmer; it is a question of

> the abolition of industrial slavery. [ . . . ] We're just coming to understand what the fundamental principle of our order means*: Equal Rights to all, and special privileges to none.* [ . . . ] That means equal rights to women, to the negro, to the Chinese, to the Irish, to everybody that today is hedged in by class prejudice, or by the walls of caste. (346-7)

The reader sees how affecting Ida's vision is, not just for Bradley, but for the large group of farmers around her. As they all gather around and take "her strong, smooth hand in their work-scarred, leathery palms," the farmers' wives are especially moved by her presence. One older woman tells Ida how important her work is: "You've helped us. I reckon life won't seem quite so tough now. We kind o' see a glimmer of a way out" (349). Ida is a feminist activist who has learned Anna Julia Cooper's lesson that "[t]he cause of freedom is not the cause of a race or a sect, a party or a class." She works tirelessly for people less fortunate than she is, becoming what Ferguson calls a "class traitor" through her sympathetic identification with the poor farmers' wives.

In Garland criticism, the historical precursor for Ida's character is almost uniformly assumed to be Mary Elizabeth Lease. According to Walter Lazenby, Garland toured with Lease in Iowa during the year of 1892. However, Garland never claims that Lease was his inspiration for Ida; instead, Vernon Parrington first proposed in 1930 that Ida "may have been suggested by Mary Ellen [sic] Lease" (161). That Parrington gets Lease's name wrong, and that most critics take at face value Parrington's assertion, is indicative of a pervasive dismissiveness in *Spoil* scholarship about feminist contributions to Populism in general, and the feminism in the novel in particular. This carelessness is especially glaring when one notes the meticulous historical research done about other

aspects of Populism and its relation to Garland's novel. If one compares Garland's fictional heroine to the description of Lease in MaryJo Wagner's *Farms, Families and Reform* (1986), one finds little resemblance. Wagner claims that Lease was a controversial character who "had a tendency to stretch the truth and exaggerate" (21). Perhaps more damning, Lease was known to be discriminatory and anti-Semitic; Wagner calls Lease's work, *The Problem of Civilization Solved* (1895), "a racist, outlandish book" (24). Ida, in contrast, is earnest, sincere and open-minded, committing herself to racial, gender and economic equality, and her espousal of universal equality is a far cry from Lease's bigotry.

While not acknowledging these discrepancies, some recent feminist scholars have argued for alternative historical predecessors for Ida. Frances Kaye, in "Hamlin Garland's Feminism," suggests that "Ida was pleasantly liberal, but by no means 'in advance of her time' [Garland's description of her], and would have been completely at home with the WCTU or most woman's clubs" (154). However, the radical natural rights philosophy of woman's rights espoused by Ida, along with her simultaneous commitment to class and race reform, is very different from the more acceptable expediency arguments promoted by Frances Willard and other clubwomen. As a fictional heroine, Ida exists as a more inclusive, radical feminist activist than one finds in the "real world." She is limited by neither the racism of the Populist lecturer Lease nor the strictures of femininity adhered to by more mainstream feminist activists. She is instead a wholly new creation, an ideal who embodies the optimistic, progressive idealism about equal rights that Garland himself expresses elsewhere.

*Spoil* ends in a hopeful, idyllic ending fitting for such an extraordinary hero and heroine. Bradley gives up his affiliation with the Democratic party, pledging himself to the Alliance movement, which will launch the independent Populist party for the 1892 election (the novel closes a few years before). As Ida leads Bradley through this final political transformation, their relationship undergoes an attendant personal one. When Bradley tells her he is going to work for the Alliance, the reader gets a rare glimpse into Ida's interior thoughts: "She was deeply gratified to think he had entered the great movement, and that she had been instrumental in converting him" (376). Her emotions prompt Ida to grasp Bradley's hand with a "great, sudden resolution" and tell him, "We'll work *together*." While the convergence of political and personal sympathies in a happy ending of "revolutionary romance" is a recurring narrative in novels about feminist activists, the ending of *A Spoil of Office* is more controversial than most, and more promising. After their marriage, Ida joins Bradley in Washington, D. C. as he ends his present congressional term, but after a few weeks, she tells him that she must return home to continue lecturing and to encourage the farmers and their wives in the Alliance who depend on her: "Now, we mustn't be selfish, dear; you've got your work to do here, and I've got my work to do there" (384). Bradley responds, "All right, Ida, we enlisted for the whole war" (385). The physical separation of the newlyweds is unusual, but it is an important transformation of the marriage plot in the service of political reform. Theirs seems to be a truly equal partnership; neither's duties or desires are subordinated to the other person's, and Ida shows an independence and self-reliance rare even for feminist activist heroines. Accordingly, Bradley and Ida's relationship shows that "revolutionary love" defies physical bounds and can unite the lovers even as they are apart, pursuing

their political goals; political commitment, while physically separating them, is the same bond that will keep their marriage emotionally strong. The critics Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett acknowledge the value of *Spoil*'s unorthodox ending, claiming, "In his conclusion Garland takes the most radical position possible about the way in which political action will unite Bradley and Ida" (178).

Other critics, feminist and otherwise, have been less convinced by Garland's "happy ending," and their skepticism seems a result of their assumptions about heterosexual romance. In another article about Garland's feminism, "Hamlin Garland and the Cult of True Womanhood," Roger E. Carp claims that, "It is something of a paradox that Garland's ideal marriage of equals is not presented as an enduring relationship," and he cites Ida's returning to the West as proof of this breach (88). The text itself, however, does not suggest that this physical separation means that Ida and Bradley's marriage will not "endure." In fact, Ida reminds Bradley that once his term is over they will be able to work side-by-side for two years. Similarly, Eberhard Alsen says that the ending is weak because of the "rather implausible self-imposed separation of the newlywed hero and heroine" (95). In both cases, the critics are incapable of believing that the characters' political commitment is a valid reason for their separation, and thus they assume that the marriage is either not viable or not realistic. In Alsen's case, especially, there seems to be a gender bias because it is the female who insists on the separation so she can continue her work; there are countless stories in which men return to the battlefield, to the sea, or other places of "work" without the reader assuming that the separation is "implausible." Even Garland's strongest advocate, his editor B. O. Flower, is not entirely comfortable with the novel's ending. In his review for *The Arena*, published in 1892, Flower laments,

"one almost wishes the curtain might have fallen when the lovers reached the station after the night ride from the little Kansas schoolhouse [before their marriage and move to Washington]" (50).

One could argue that one of the reasons Garland creates such an unabashedly independent, radical heroine and such an unorthodox ending is because, as a male writer, he does not feel substantial pressure to conform to gender conventions. However, reactions such as Howells's and Flower's apparently induced him to capitulate somewhat to mainstream expectations. Garland revised *Spoil* in 1897 and in so doing, he erased much of Ida's power. According to Martin, Garland cut twelve pages of text that included most of Ida's political oratory and re-wrote the ending so that instead of remaining a committed political activist, Ida gets pregnant and becomes a "defenseless and childlike woman" who is planning to "stay at home with her husband and raise children like a good wife and mother" (46).[19] In his later autobiography, Garland seems disappointed by the unkind reaction to his heroine and by his own failure to depict faithfully his vision of a feminist activist: "Ida Wilbur was in advance of her time. As I look back on her, I see that she was a lovely forerunner of the well-dressed and wholly competent leaders who followed Susan Anthony's austere generation. I find her not altogether despicable. I knew her type as well as I did that of Bradley Talcott, but I failed to make her lovable" (154). The author acknowledges that his readers were not ready for such a radical heroine, and one must wonder how much of his political and artistic integrity Garland sacrificed in these revisions to make Ida more "lovable" to his audience. Nevertheless, it was the 1892 version of *Spoil* that reached the widest readership, and in it, Ida's feminist activism is

undiminished. She represents what, as one character says, "a woman can do if y' give 'er a chance" (349).

Just as Ida is in many ways a utopian figure, whose actions do not need to bend to "real world" expectations of propriety, it must be acknowledged that the oppositional communities fictionalized in *A Spoil of Office* and *Iola Leroy* are in some ways ideals rather than realistic depictions. While Harper's and Garland's novels are products of what Garland calls the "spreading radicalism" of the 1890's, the actual dissemination of progressivism was not nearly so uninhibited. In *Uplifting the Race*, Gaines shows that many middle-class African-American advocates, including Anna Julia Cooper, were against the Populist movement, because they saw "organized labor as a threat to social peace" (135). Gaines says that Cooper specifically is anti-immigrant, seeing "confrontation between labor and capital as evidence of foreign subversion" that threatened African-American job security (145). At the same time, we have already seen the presence of racism in the Populist movement in Lease's work, and according to McMath, the "issue of race was the most vexing problem for Populist success [ . . . ] In the Northwest [the Populists] championed the exclusion of Chinese workers and the South exploited African Americans" (172). Ultimately, the Populists also refused to support a woman suffrage plank, thereby sharing "with other Americans of their time a myopic view of equal rights, one still distorted by racism and sexism" (McMath 210). Nevertheless, as artists and activists, Harper and Garland imagine oppositional communities that are optimistic and idyllic in their openness and inclusiveness, and both authors find strong feminist activist heroines essential to this inclusive vision. In this

way, they give their readers, male and female, an ideal to which they can aspire, even if their "real-world" counterparts fall short.

Even though Harper and Garland try to inspire their readers to work toward this utopian vision, they nevertheless rely on realistic descriptions to do so. Unlike the sentimental portrayal of Marjory Warner in *Out of Her Sphere* or the sensational world of kidnapping and disguise in *Fettered for Life*, the communities in *Iola Leroy* and *A Spoil of Office* reflect the authors' adherence to the prevalent verisimilitude in American literature of the late nineteenth century. Once again, however, these literary conventions are employed for political reasons. Harper's use of dialect, a common element in Realist writings, not only reflects the actual voices of her folk characters but also dispels stereotypes of ignorance or imbecility often associated with those who speak in vernacular English. Instead, as we have seen, characters like Aunt Linda, Uncle Daniel and Tom Anderson are fully realized, complex characters who act courageously and who speak some of the most perceptive, persuasive arguments for reform in the book. Likewise, Garland's detailed descriptions of the vast agrarian landscape, as well as his minute delineation of the farmers' impoverished lives, impresses upon the reader the justness and urgency of their cause. In these Realistic depictions of idealized reform communities, the difference between the actual and the imagined collapses somewhat, making it easier for the reader to see how to traverse the distance between "what is" currently and "what is possible" in the future. As we shall see, twentieth-century feminist activist writers respond to the changing literary landscape as well, utilizing the Modernist reliance on innovation to account for the corresponding innovations in the late suffrage movement in America.

## Notes

[1] The National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) merged in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). By this time, many of the philosophical differences had been erased as the NWSA had increasingly focused on the vote and depended upon expediency arguments; however, there was still a disagreement over the best tactic for gaining suffrage (state referendum or national amendment) that would not be settled until 1916 with Carrie Chapman Catt's "Winning Plan." See Flexner 208-217 for further discussion.

[2] Little is known about the identity of Harper's parents, although there is speculation that her father was white. See Frances Smith Foster's introduction to *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader* for a thorough biographical sketch of Harper.

[3] These earlier novels include *The Bondswoman's Narrative* by Hannah Crafts, published in 2002 by Henry Louis Gates, as well as Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*, published in 1859, and some of Harper's own serialized works.

[4] "Colorism" is often used to describe the prejudice based on relative lightness of skin tone, both within the African-American community and in society at large.

[5] See, for example, Deborah McDowell, Mary Elkins, Barbara Christian, and Elizabeth Ammons.

[6] See pages 10-12 for a more developed discussion of this term, which comes from the philosopher Ann Ferguson and describes "networks of people who share a

critique of the existing order and who choose to identify with and engage in some material or political practices to express this critique" ("Moral Responsibility" 132).

[7] By "privileged readers" I mean both white readers and members of the African-American "elite," the black middle class whom DuBois called the "talented tenth" and who had social, financial and educational opportunities not available to most African-Americans.

[8] Of course, this parallel between Iola and the reader is complicated by the time difference in the narrative and the actual date of publication. While Iola speaks from an antebellum perspective, contemporary readers are situated almost 30 years after the Civil War. Nevertheless, the rapidly degenerating racial climate of the U. S. in the 1890's was fostered by the same rhetoric of racial inferiority and dependence.

[9] Lauren Berlant also notes the pivotal role of this scene, saying that Iola's "transition between lexicons, laws, privileges, and races takes place, appropriately, as a transition from dreaming to waking" ("The Queen of America" 557).

[10] Iola's presence is not central to the first few chapters, which describe an African-American slave community and their actions before emancipation.

[11] Iola's mother, Marie, had been a slave, but Iola's father, who is white, chooses to marry her anyway. The two of them remain in the South as slaveholders and conceal Marie's former identity, even from their children. When Mr. Leroy dies, his cousin finds a legal loophole that allows him to re-possess Marie and her children, who did not know their racial heritage until that moment.

[12] M. Giulia Fabi says of Iola's rejecting Dr. Gresham: "[Iola is] able to assert [her] free will and negotiate, at least, less victimizing conditions of survival through the

exercise of negative freedom, that is the liberty of turning down offers, rather than that of making choices" (231). While I clearly agree with Fabi that Iola's turning down Dr. Gresham's offer is crucial for her survival, I do not see it as a merely passive "negative freedom;" in fact, I see her refusal as part of an active choice-making process.

[13] Racial Uplift in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century was a broad-based, often contradictory movement with internal and external debates and disagreements about its major tenets, and I can only touch on this complexity here.

[14] Some critics note that Lucille Delany is probably named after the historical Lucy A. Delany, a slave woman who sued for her freedom in 1844, and who had published her autobiography in the 1880's. See, for example, P. Gabrielle Foreman's essay.

[15] The earlier incarnations of this movement, which began in the 1870's, were known as the Grange movement and then the Farmer's Alliance.

[16] In this paragraph, I am responding to writers exclusively concerned with analyzing *A Spoil of Office* as a novel. There is a strain of Garland criticism, which I will address later in the chapter, that deals with the author's "feminism," and Ida is often mentioned as one of several examples in those articles. However, as far as I can tell, no one has done an extended feminist reading focused primarily on *Spoil.*

[17] While there is not enough material evidence to argue persuasively that Ida B. Wells was a role model for Garland's fiction as well as Harper's, it is certainly worth noting that the name of his heroine is also reminiscent of Wells. The year both books were published, 1892, marked Wells's entrance onto the national stage with the publication of a controversial editorial about lynching which received a great deal of

attention, resulting in her permanent exile from the South. That same year, she presented a speech which stemmed from that editorial, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases,” to many high-profile audiences.

[18] A notable exception to this trend is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, whose “Solitude of Self” (1892) argues that, because all humans are individual, solitary beings, regardless of their sex, they must be allowed the full development of their faculties to cope with the many situations each person must ultimately confront alone.

# CHAPTER 3

# MAKING IT NEW:

# INNOVATIONS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SUFFRAGE FICTION

When Harriot Stanton Blatch returned to the United States from England in 1902, she found her fellow suffragists mired in "the doldrums," a self-described stagnation that had stymied the movement since the mid 1890's.[1] According to Blatch's memoirs,

> The suffrage movement was completely in a rut in New York State at the opening of the twentieth century. It bored its adherents and repelled its opponents. Most of the ammunition was being wasted on its supporters in private drawing rooms and in public halls where friends, drummed up and harried by the ardent, listlessly heard the same old arguments. Unswerving adherence to the cause was held in high esteem, but alas, it was loyalty to a rut run deeper and deeper. (98)

Blatch proposes escaping from this rut through several methods, perhaps most notably by infusing the movement with an element of spectacle inspired by the more militant British suffragism in which she had been immersed for years. Blatch, noting the ineffectualness of traditional attempts to convert the public through education, says she conceived of the idea of a suffrage parade because people are "moved to action by emotion, not by argument and reason" (129). The success of this plan, she advises, depends on a lively

performance: "The enemy must be converted through his eyes [ . . .] [He] must hear music, as must each [parade] marcher, music all the time" (180).

According to Ellen DuBois, Blatch thus led the way to a more up-to-date, publicity-driven campaign for suffrage by introducing methods she learned in England, "especially tactics that sexually integrated public space, such as open-air meetings and parades" ("Harriot Stanton Blatch" 168). These tactics particularly appealed to laboring-class women, both immigrant and native-born, because they "drew on the militant tradition of the labor movement, and its protest tactics, such as outdoor rallies, [and] were suitable to a constituency with little money" (DuBois "HSB" 169). Similar tactics had been used by socialists in Europe for years, and in order to capitalize on some of the immigrant population's familiarity with them, the suffragists "issued propaganda in Yiddish, Italian, and other immigrant languages" (DuBois "HSB" 169). In addition to employing these militant strategies learned overseas, suffragists like Blatch, "were pioneers in the political uses of new media technologies such as movies, commercial radio, and telephones, and in the strategic deployment of public opinion" ("HSB" 169). Both strategies widened considerably the movement's presence, reaching people in all social strata. This push toward modernization invigorated suffrage advocates and diversified the movement's appeal, causing the ranks of supporters to swell in the first decade of the twentieth-century, so that by the second, the suffrage movement was "thoroughly respectable, and in the large cities smart, fashionable" (Schneider and Schneider 169).[2] A testament to suffrage's heightened popularity during these decades is its increasing presence on the literary landscape. Novels and other literary accounts of the movement, such as Robert Herrick's *One Woman's Life* (1913), Mary Johnston's *Hagar*

(1913), and Margaret Deland's *The Rising Tide* (1916), which were published by mainstream presses such as MacMillan Co. and Harper & Brothers, suggest that feminist activism had "come of age" as a topic of interest to the nation at large.

These developments in the suffrage movement in general, and suffrage literature in particular, happened simultaneously with profound changes in the larger social and literary milieu of American culture. Technological advances not only changed suffrage strategies; they also changed the complexion of almost every American's life. The widespread use of automobiles and airplanes exponentially increased the population's mobility, and this mobility was one of many factors contributing to the shift toward urban living. By 1919, almost half the country was concentrated in the twelve largest cities, and the widely agrarian economy of the past had been irrevocably altered through rapid industrialization. This industrialization was part of a worldwide trend, and in European countries as well as in America, people now found themselves working in metropolitan areas, often as factory workers on assembly lines. To help support the infrastructure of this growth in America, immigrants from all over the world were recruited to expand the country's workforce, introducing many elements of their home cultures into an already heterogeneous society. It would be difficult to overestimate the effect these changes had on the artistic and literary scene in America and abroad. One of the most influential writers of this time period, Ezra Pound, summed up his generation's aesthetic response to such a fundamental cultural transformation in his motto, "Make it new." The literary and artistic movement that this response generated has become known as Modernism, and Pound's phrase captures this movement's emphasis on innovative styles and subject matter. These innovations, which include stream-of-consciousness, multiple narrators,

and linear discontinuity, in part seem designed to account for the "new" reality of most Americans' lives, which had become increasingly complex and chaotic. At the same time, these innovations were also supremely liberating, allowing authors to imagine an infinite variety of texts not bound by traditional linearity or narration.

At first glance, a connection between the Modernist movement and the suffrage movement might not be easily discernable. After all, the innovations in the suffrage movement were responsible for creating a large community and solidifying its strength, whereas those of the Modernist movement in some ways foreground society's discontinuities and differences. However, I would maintain that this trend in literary experimentation was fruitful for authors trying to depict the "new," more complicated reality of a growing, increasingly influential, woman suffrage movement. Three fictional works about feminist activism particularly demonstrate this point: Marjorie Shuler's *For Rent – One Pedestal* (1917); *The Sturdy Oak* (1917), written by 14 authors and edited by Elizabeth Jordan; and Oreola Williams Haskell's *Banner Bearers: Tales of the Suffrage Campaigns* (1920). All three are inspired by and set during the New York campaigns of 1915 and 1917, credited by most suffragists with insuring the passage and ratification of the nineteenth amendment just a few years later.[3] Furthermore, each one has an experimental form: Shuler's is an epistolary novel, *The Sturdy Oak* is a composite novel, and Haskell's book can be classified as a short-story cycle.[4] In each case, formal innovations allow the author(s) to express more fully the communal reality of the mature suffrage community. *For Rent*'s epistolary form represents a friendship of two suffrage supporters through one's correspondence to the other; *The Sturdy Oak* was written by a real-world oppositional community of pro-suffrage authors; and *Banner Bearers*, with its

many individual but interrelated stories, accommodates a multitude of activist heroines all united by their feminist agenda. At the same time, these forms give authors the latitude to acknowledge the diverse, sometimes contradictory individual perspectives that are the building blocks of such a large oppositional community. When reading the letters in *For Rent*, for instance, one is constantly reminded that they are only one side of the ongoing dialogue suggested by the epistolary form. *The Sturdy Oak* is literally comprised of fourteen different authorial perspectives on suffrage, and the boundaries that exist between the discrete stories in *Banner Bearers* remind the reader that, even though the many characters work together in an oppositional community, each one has a unique experience within that community.

These experimental forms draw the readers' attention to what Mikhail Bakhtin has called the "polyphony" of the novelistic form, which is characterized by "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" (qtd. in Morson and Emerson 240). According to Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, Bakhtin thought this multiplicity of voices the best literary representation of his belief that "in language, as in the psyche and everywhere else in culture, order is never complete and always requires work. It is a *task*, a *project*, always ongoing and every unfinished; and it is always opposed to the essential messiness of the world" (139). I would argue, then, that formal innovations allow these novels to accomplish a rare feat. They successfully express the notion that those working together for woman suffrage are part of a thriving, expanding oppositional community (to which the reader should belong if she or he does not already), while at the same time acknowledging the ongoing negotiations and dialogues that constantly shape and reshape this massive entity. Thus, without diminishing the

communal power of feminist activists, these books show that their communities are, and will always be, "unfinished" and that, though they seem in many ways fully realized, their existence is an ongoing "task" or "project."

These self-consciously experimental works have another consequence as well. They clearly mark a transition in the tradition of feminist activist literature in America. In some ways, they bespeak the success the movement in general and the literature in particular has had in liberating gender roles somewhat from conventional expectations, by depicting a much richer variety of activist heroines of different ages, occupations and social backgrounds. As a result of this liberation, these fictional texts are able to re-define the importance, even meaning, of "romance" in women's lives. They do so by de-centering the heterosexual romance plot, which is so pervasive in nineteenth-century stories about feminist activist heroines, and in some cases, even posit that "romance" for these later heroines is not necessarily limited to their love and attraction for a man. However, these late suffrage texts also demonstrate how mainstream acceptance of the movement blunted the potential for radical social change championed in some books about feminist activism from the 1890's. Although unwittingly, fiction about twentieth-century suffragists reminds the reader that, even at this late date in its history, the woman's movement could not escape its prejudice privileging of white, middle and upper-class women's rights, even if it did, as noted above, pay more attention to the situations of immigrants and laboring-class women during the Progressive Era. Ultimately, *For Rent*, *The Sturdy Oak* and *Banner Bearers* provide important literary windows into both the success and shortcomings of the woman's movement's attempt to "make it new" in the twentieth century.

Marjorie Shuler's short novel, *For Rent – One Pedestal*, typifies the changes the suffrage heroine and her world undergo during the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In fact, one must look no farther than the book's dedication page to gain some insight into the magnitude of this transition. Shuler, like Elizabeth Boynton Harbert in 1871, dedicates her work to her mother.[5] However, the implications of these seemingly identical inscriptions are profoundly different. If one reads Harbert's novel as in some ways autobiographical (and there is evidence to support this reading), then the author's mother was, although supportive of her daughter and suffrage, self-effacing, domestic, and above all, private. Shuler's mother, on the other hand, was Nettie Rogers Shuler, a prominent suffrage activist and NAWSA officer who co-wrote a well-known history of the movement with Carrie Chapman Catt.[6] As such, this mother is a public figure as well as a private one, and she is both a personal and political role model for her daughter. The younger Shuler, therefore, learned not only to fight against the political injustice to which generations of women have been subjected, but to follow her mother's footsteps in that fight. Thus, the author was a second (or perhaps third) generation suffragist who has been accepted in a community of women reformers her entire life.

This awareness of sympathetic companions shapes the progression of *For Rent – One Pedestal*, which is an epistolary novel. This form, although well established by the beginning of the twentieth-century, is a dramatic break from the third-person, linear narrative found in most earlier novels about feminist activism. As such, it allows for an artistic representation of the affinity for gender reform many young women were finding through their friendships at this time, as well as an outlet for bringing about this reform.

Anne Bower describes the potential within the epistolary novel for this individual and communal sense of agency in her study, *Epistolary Responses*:

> While they write, letter writers are active; their encoding of a message, no matter what the message, is a form of action; they know themselves alive, they know themselves as makers of meaning, and they maintain a sense of their addressees as present. Then they send their letters off and hope for replies. Whether or not they receive return mail, they maintain the sense that response is possible – they are not, therefore, seeing themselves as completely isolated or without at least the possibility of a community of some sort. (xi)

In Shuler's novel, this "possibility of community" is realized in the increasingly committed suffrage work done by the protagonist, Delight Dennison, during the New York Campaign of 1915, and her letters detailing these adventures to her college friend, Barbara Martin. In this way, the epistolary form suggests an oppositional community in not only its depiction of intimate relationships between suffragists, but also in its representation of multiple voices in dialogue about the woman's movement.

As a heroine, Delight Dennison embodies the "new face" of suffrage in the twentieth century, as described by scholars such as Ellen DuBois and Margaret Finnegan.[7] DuBois argues that there was a profound shift in the suffrage movement's emphasis on woman-as-mother to woman-as-worker in the 1910's, and she sees Harriot Stanton Blatch as again pivotal in the movement's re-creation of itself. According to DuBois, "Blatch's focus on self-support in the Equality League replaced the nineteenth-century emphasis on domesticity and motherhood as a basis for women's unity" ("Harriot

Stanton Blatch" 165). Of course, in many ways, Blatch and her contemporaries were merely responding to the changing realities of their society. The number of women working in both the professional and laboring-class arenas increased exponentially at the beginning of the century, due to women's expanding enrollment in college and the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the U.S.[8]

Delight's first letter clearly identifies her as woman-as-worker, even if she has yet to make the connection between this position and her need for suffrage:

> Barbara, My Dear:
>
> Behold me, Delight Dennison of Verner College and nowhere, with a manner befitting the ladies of Cranford. Fortified with a pair of tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles. They make me look heaps older. Swathed in a linen waist with choking collar. "Young ladies, young ladies," shrills the principal of this school, "teachers should never wear low collars in the school room." Perish the thought that once I broke a record at hurdle jumping. (1)

This opening passage reveals many pertinent details about the heroine. She is college-educated, but now finds herself belonging "nowhere," suggesting she is solely responsible for herself. Also, the reader learns she is a teacher, an occupation considered respectable for a "lady." Clearly, Delight is representative of the New Woman ideal increasingly embraced by twentieth-century culture, which allowed middle and upper-class women to enter the public sphere and have a single lifestyle without the stigma of previous generations.[9] That Delight is a self-supporting character is particularly relevant to her development as a suffragist, because, as Harriot Stanton Blatch observes, "The

suffrage will be won by women who are economically independent [ . . . ]The woman who supports herself has a claim upon the state, which legislators are coming to recognize" (qtd. in DuBois, "HSB" 165).

The revelation that Delight is youthful and active, given to hurdle-jumping, even if now she must cloak these attributes in conservative attire, is also crucial to understanding her as a new type of feminist activist heroine. In earlier texts, the traits stressed by writers hoping to gain readers' sympathy include selflessness, purity, and often domesticity and piety. However, in *Selling Suffrage*, Margaret Finnegan makes a convincing case that these qualities are superseded in the public representation of "modern" suffragists, and she relates this change to a larger transformation in American society, which "became increasingly obsessed with individual personality. Writers, physicians and advertisers encouraged men and women to develop winsome, charismatic personas that would supposedly foster intimate relationships, emotional vitality, and personal and business success" (79-80). According to Finnegan, this preference for charm and appeal shaped the way that suffragists and other feminist activists presented themselves in public: "Intent on overcoming disparaging preconceptions of suffrage campaigners [ . . . ] suffragists used physical appearance, dress, and personality to suggest that woman suffragists (and thus potential woman voters) were attractive, stylish, charming, dignified and virtuous" (81).

Finnegan claims that these qualities were the ones stressed in the many suffrage parades, plays, movies, and paraphernalia that furthered the cause in the twentieth-century. However, as I have argued, new forms of literature are included in this effort, and these also foreground the charm and winsome nature of their heroines. One need only

look at Delight Dennison's moniker to realize she is cast in this mold. As a letter writer, Delight often makes puns using her name, as in this closing: "But I promise most solemnly to cram the mail bag full of Delight" (6). She also creatively addresses her friend at times, as in another early letter, which she begins, "Dear Oasis in Time of Trouble" (6). Delight's skill as a lively correspondent includes the clever way she presents even unpleasant or upsetting content. As an explanation for her burgeoning sympathy for woman suffrage, she writes to Barbara:

> It's the result of my daily promenade through the factory section of Canton toward my place of toil. There are some sights to which one may become accustomed, but I do not number among them a dead pig, a very dead pig. Each morning I have talked to myself about that pig. I have spent valuable time assuring myself that I could pass it with my head averted. But my nostrils have defied my most stern commands. (2)

The squalor embodied in a dead, rotting animal in the midst of an urban area is certainly cause for moral outrage; however, Delight's witty style makes the topic more palatable by recasting it as her internal struggle with a pair of mutinous nostrils. It also, by extension, makes her seem more in command of her emotions, more capable of approaching situations with objective distance, qualities that would make her a more "reasonable" political participant.

This slightly amused tone infuses all of Delight's letters, shaping the way suffrage work is portrayed. It is challenging and time-consuming, but also exciting, rewarding, and spectacular. Two letters make this characterization clear. In one, Delight writes: "Dear Babs: I've been in jail. By special invitation of Big Tim. He suggested thirty days.

I only stayed three hours and 5,000 people have been yelling themselves hoarse over my escape. It was more thrilling than any football game I ever saw" (33). Delight has been arrested for organizing a publicity stunt and supposedly violating a traffic law in the process. However, an arrest – a potentially dangerous and certainly indecorous circumstance for a "lady" – is portrayed here as motivational, even invigorating, "more thrilling than any football game." Delight relates to Barbara another sensational stunt later in the book. She writes of a Biscuit-Making Contest at their new headquarters. The suffragists have challenged any "anti" (those women campaigning against suffrage) to make better biscuits than their representative, Delight. However, no one accepts the challenge, and Delight works alone in the window of the headquarters, "smil[ing] and mak[ing] wordless jokes with the crowd" while "each panful [of biscuits] [is] greeted with cheers" (83-4). This bit of propaganda is ostensibly designed to prove the home-making skills of suffragists; however, in Delight's description it becomes domesticity as spectacle, not a private act but a public performance for creating entertained - and thus sympathetic – viewers.

Although much of Shuler's epistolary novel is about performance (the act of letter writing itself is often a performance, a molding of language to entertain one's reader), it also provides a space for Delight's personal epiphanies about the connection between her status as a single, self-supporting New Woman and the suffrage cause. Elizabeth Campbell observes that epistolary writing often leads to self-awareness: "Once the letter is begun, the writers seem to be speaking to themselves, and though the reader is ever-present, the writer becomes immersed in a discovery of herself" (336). Delight's discovery of herself as a suffragist is chronicled through her letters to "Dear Babs." Even

though she considers herself an anti-suffragist, Delight initially takes a job working as a canvasser for the cause because she needs an income after being dismissed from her teaching job. This dismissal happens shortly after Delight speaks out publicly against the town's unsanitary conditions, and the woman who hires her, Mrs. Morton, suggests it has been instigated by "Big Tim," the local political boss. In a moment of self-evaluation, Delight tells Barbara, "[Big Tim] is an avowed enemy of the suffragists. Somehow the thought of him as an ally is not wholly pleasing" (11). Through her own exploitation, Delight realizes that all single, self-supporting women are profoundly vulnerable in a society where they have no political voice.

Once Delight sees the types of people who are against suffrage (lazy men and corrupt politicians in this book), she becomes increasingly uncomfortable being associated with them, although she still is not ready to support the other side. In another moment of introspection, however, she writes to Barbara: "It is strange how combative I feel when I encounter another anti-suffragist like myself" (13). Through her letters Delight articulates the contradictory emotions she feels as she converts to a pro-suffrage stance. This process does not take very long, though. Before she has been working as a canvasser two weeks, Delight admits to her friend, "I rather think my own little bombshell will be the greatest surprise of all. Have you read it yet? If not, do so now and prepare to gloat. There it is in black and white. I am a suffragist. [ . . . ] One morning I woke up to the fact that I didn't need conversion" (17). For the rest of the short book, Delight works tirelessly and spiritedly for the cause. The personal, subjective nature of the epistolary novel lets the external reader experience Delight's self-discovery in a very

intimate way, creating a strong bond of sympathy between the fictional heroine and those who read her letters.

The question of readers is crucial in epistolary novels in general, and *For Rent* in particular, because they signify, as Bower suggests, the "possibility of a community." For a late suffragist like Shuler, the epistolary form allows for a representation of the large, active network of suffragists across the country, by mimicking, even on a small scale, the voluminous correspondence exchanged between women involved in the movement about both personal and business matters. Furthermore, this innovative form is a significant change from that of most nineteenth-century novels about feminist activist heroines, which often portray a single woman, or a handful of women, pitted against a hostile world. By propelling the action of her novel through letter writing, Shuler places her heroine in a sympathetic environment already ripe for "revolutionary love," the philosopher Ann Ferguson's term for affection between people committed to challenging social norms. When Delight tells Barbara of her first time speaking at a street meeting, she warns her friend: "Open not your arms in welcome; lift not your voice in thanksgiving. [ . . .] My anti-principles are as firmly embedded as when you first began to tug at them back in our freshmen days" (2). Thus, the external reader learns Barbara is already a suffragist, and has been working to persuade her friend for years. When Delight admits she is thoroughly transformed, she accuses Barbara of expediting this process with "all those deft little comments in [her] letters" (18). In this epistolary novel, Delight is always thought of in relation to other suffragists, even if she is physically alone. When she begs Barbara, "[F]or goodness sake, write! Remember one can feel the isolation of a mountain top suffrage organizing, as well as sitting in a camp" (16), the external reader is

also reminded that those doing battle with the status quo need the comfort and support of like-minded friends.

Along with Delight's relationship with Barbara, there is one other female who figures prominently in *For Rent*, rounding out the committed oppositional community of suffragists. Mrs. Morton, the woman who recruits Delight and works closely with her, is an important topic in almost all the letters. The external reader learns of Mrs. Morton after Barbara does: "I realized that the other half of my seat was in possession of Mrs. Morton, the Mrs. Morton, main topic of my last epistle to you. Babs, she's just as fascinating as I imagined" (3). From the start, Delight is taken with this interesting woman, and it is their personal affinity for each other that first draws Delight into her suffrage work (along with Mrs. Morton's offer of a place to stay and a job). Delight tells Barbara that Mrs. Morton "said she knew all the time I couldn't work for suffrage and not become a believer in it" (17). Over time, the two become very close as colleagues and roommates. Answering an apparently skeptical inquiry from Barbara about their living arrangements, Delight answers,

> How can you cast asparagus on my beautiful disposition. As if I couldn't live peaceably with a hyena. And Mrs. Morton, I call her Lucia now, is anything but that. She is a reasonable individual. [ . . . ] We have heaps of differences, but both of us make concessions. On one thing we are agreed. We regard the apartment as a haven of refuge. (25)

In some ways, Mrs. Morton, although a widow not much older than Delight, seems a replacement for the mother Delight lost as a child when she was killed doing missionary work abroad. Mrs. Morton introduces Delight to the movement and teaches her how to be

a competent suffragist. While her mother's missionary work suggests Delight's maternal legacy is fortitude and an ability to be zealously committed to her beliefs, the heroine's maternal replacement trains her to channel those attributes specifically for gender reform work. This shift parallels a similar one in the movement at large, in which second and sometimes third generation suffragists are in charge by the 1910's and which is echoed in the different dedications to "Mother" discussed above.

Both Delight's former and current roommates achieve familial status in the heroine's life, and all three are bound together by affection for each other and belief in the suffrage cause. The fact that Delight has an interested and sympathetic friend to whom she can divulge the details her suffrage work, and another who guides and supports her in this work suggests that the suffrage movement has "come of age," that a confident, well-developed oppositional community for gender reform can be imagined as existing already in a book of fiction. The epistolary novel is the perfect vehicle for fictionalizing this world of activist women, and in this way, *For Rent* anticipates some of the later twentieth-century women's novels about revolt Campbell discusses: "While the voices in epistolary literature often seem to be angry revolutionary voices, the revolution has already occurred before the form appears in literature. The oppressed have to be free before they are able to speak, but they also have to be aware of listeners" (335). Admittedly, Delight's voice may be more amused and amusing than angry; however, this difference may be because she is confident of a warm reception by those listeners, both internal and external to the text. The importance of Delight's almost allegorical name should be considered here. Rather than creating a novel (and a heroine) that speaks about

gender reform in an angry, dogmatic way, Shuler chooses to convert her readers to a pro-suffrage stance by "delighting" them with charming letters.

While epistolary novels about female friendship are not unprecedented before the twentieth-century, Elizabeth Campbell reminds her reader that "The most common subjects of epistolary novels in the past has been the love and/or seduction story" (334).[10] Therefore, Shuler's novel is somewhat unusual. Confining the correspondence exclusively to letters between Delight and Barbara lessens the importance of heterosexual romance found in earlier books about feminist activists, making female friendships the most intimate relationships. Delight does develop a romantic attachment to Professor Armstrong, but the reader (both external and internal) is only privy to glimpses of it until the very end of the novel. When Delight first sees him while giving a suffrage speech, she recognizes him as a childhood friend. However, she tells Barbara that he is an "undesirable citizen" and that the two of them "disagreed on every conceivable point" (16). Armstrong is against suffrage, and this position makes him the butt of many of Delight's jokes, such as when she sees him talking to a very feminine teacher at his school. Delight tells Barbara, "I feel that she has the instincts of a woman in the home. Between classes they can exchange anti-suffrage treatises" (58). Although a minor character, Armstrong's presence is consistent, and he performs many kind services for Delight, like seeing her home after meetings and sending her flowers after she has been stranded in a rainstorm. Nevertheless, Delight's suffrage work takes precedence over her talk of Professor Armstrong, until the final letters, in which the two topics come together in "the greatest event of all [her] life" (121).

In the penultimate letter, dated "Election Morning," Delight tells Barbara about the climactic rally of Election eve: "Then happened the most wonderful thing in the world. As a type of the American man who thinks that American women should vote, I introduced Professor William Miller Armstrong" (123). Armstrong claims to have had all his anti-suffrage convictions "swept away only this morning" while listening to Delight's speech. In the second letter, Delight tells Barbara about the emotional reaction of the suffragists when the votes are almost counted and they realize defeat is inevitable: "Lucia was standing on a chair pledging us all to the new fight. We cheered her with tears running down our cheeks. I do not know why we cried, certainly not because we were sad" (125). Immediately thereafter, Delight sends a telegram to the state headquarters that reads, "Ready to start again tomorrow" (125). The reader understands the prophecy of Delight's words; *For Rent* is a fictional account of the New York Campaign of 1915. When the suffragists lost this election they immediately began campaigning for the 1917 referendum, which finally enfranchised the state's women. After Delight's declaration of commitment, she writes, "You heard so much about my professor when I thought we could never establish a friendly foundation for our house of love. I want you to know him for the splendid person he is" (135); Delight ends the book by asking Barbara to be her bridesmaid. In the end, heterosexual romance is re-instated as a central element in a "happy ending " dependent upon the male's conversion. Nevertheless, this romance is inextricably intertwined with the defiant, enthusiastic solidarity of the suffragists, and thus the "greatest thing" to have happened to Delight is not merely her marriage proposal or the culmination of her work during the campaign, but the confluence of the two, uniting her personal and political devotion on this historic night.

For all the liberating possibilities of the epistolary novel and the presentation of reform work and romance in *For Rent*, the letter-writing form also allows Delight to treat issues of race and class uncritically because of the shared assumptions of her internal reader. Barbara, an affluent Verner graduate vacationing at her family's summer home, seems to share Delight's privileged white perspective, or at least Delight assumes she does. Although Delight claims that "the most beautiful part of the suffrage movement is the democracy which it creates among women" (50), she is anything but democratic towards immigrants and African-Americans. When describing her teaching job, Delight glibly laments, "For ten days I have patiently wiped the nose of Little Italy. I have extracted yards of raffia from the blouse of thieving Young Poland. One hundred times have I demanded that Rosalie keep in line. Forty times a day I have showed Yetta which is her right foot" (1). Clearly, Delight is comfortable making stereotypical jokes about the supposed slovenliness, dishonesty and ignorance of the immigrant population. In a different letter, she brags, "Everyone who has come into headquarters today has been chuckling over a joke I played yesterday" (58). The "joke" turns out to be taking an African-American man "with only one leg and one arm, blind, illiterate" to the library because Delight needs a tax-payer to vouch for her borrowing a book and the man owns a "little shack" and thus qualifies. Racism and xenophobia obviously underlie these attempts at humor, highlighting the most problematic aspect of suffrage ideology. White women insisted on their superiority by pointing out the inferiority of males from other classes and races, often blaming the ignorance and backwardness of immigrants for hindering woman suffrage. This epistolary novel exposes this prejudice in its informal,

intimate form, revealing the offensive private jokes of which one is capable when she assumes she and her reader share the same worldview.

Delight Dennison's story takes on more resonance when it is read alongside another novel published the same year, *The Sturdy Oak*. The action in *For Rent* takes place during the 1915 New York campaign, and *The Sturdy Oak* was written to gain publicity for the 1917 one. Both books evoke the modern, spectacle-driven suffrage movement and its emphasis on personality and charm, and both employ innovative forms that give expression to the growing community of feminist activists in the actual world. However, in *The Sturdy Oak,* these two concepts are even more closely wed, because its communal, composite form grows out of a propaganda stunt conceived by the New York State Woman Suffrage Party (NYSWSP). Like the novel's form, its content stresses the importance of both publicity and activist society in the actions of its heroines, who form the rare fictional oppositional community capable of bringing about political change successfully, in addition to the more common literary resolution, a personal conversion through romance.

In late 1915, the Publicity Council of the NYSWSP approached Elizabeth Jordan, editor of *Harper's Bazar*, to organize a composite novel written by 25 of the country's leading authors sympathetic to suffrage.[11] The council saw the purpose of the project as three-fold. First, it would be a lucrative fundraiser; all proceeds from the serial and book publications were to be donated to the Party, as the authors (and Jordan) were asked to contribute their work for the cause. Second, such a gathering of distinguished writers would show that some of the country's best, most creative minds publicly endorse suffrage. Finally, such a literary event was sure to generate a great deal of propaganda for

the movement in the crucial months leading up to the vote in 1917, during which it was to be serialized and then published in book form. Although the extant correspondence among the participants shows the process was sometimes arduous, Jordan was able to find 14 authors (5 male, 9 female) willing to contribute, including well-known contemporary authors such as Mary Austin, Samuel Merwin and Kathleen Norris. Ultimately, the composite novel fulfilled the suffragists' expectations; *Collier's Magazine* paid the NYSWSP $3000.00 to serialize *The Sturdy Oak*, and Henry Holt & Co. published it in book form in November, right before the referendum vote, raising even more money for the cause. It also received national notice, being reviewed favorably in not only the suffrage journal, *Woman Citizen*, but in mainstream periodicals like *The New York Times*, which called it "irresistibly readable" (qtd. in Washington xv) and the *Dial*, which called it "a tour de force" ("Notes on New Fiction" 117).

Without question, this group of authors, along with Jordan, can be classified as an oppositional community, a network of people who bond together "by challenging a social order perceived to be unjust, usually by working on a shared project for social change" (Ferguson "Feminist Communities" 372). Each is committed to suffrage and happy not only to do his or her individual part, but also to work together to produce a narrative to generate sympathy for gender reform. Kathleen Norris's enthusiasm seems typical when she writes to Jordan that it is "it an honor to be given the chance" to write a chapter of the book, and that she will "do [her] best for the sake of the Great Cause."[12] The authors, too, seem willing to subsume their individual writerly egos for the timely production of the whole. William Allen White responds to Jordan's suggestions for revision, "Do anything you want to with my chapter of the suffrage novel. I only wrote it to help. I have no pride

of authorship." Likewise, Marjorie Benton Cooke jokingly replies to a similar request, "By all means make any and all necessary changes in my chapter -- and god bless you for doing it and letting me off!". Of course, not everything went smoothly. Although few specific conflicts are revealed in the extant correspondence about the project, Elizabeth Jordan writes on more than one occasion that it "was not an easy task to get this book together."[13] The writing and editing of *The Sturdy Oak*, then, is an example of how such a community makes the negotiations and sacrifices necessary to affect change in the status quo (or at least work together in the attempt). As Elizabeth Jordan says in the preface to the book, "[The creation of this book] has not been the childish diversion it may have seemed. Splendid team work, however, has made success possible" (xvii). More specific lessons about the national network of suffrage activists can be learned from the novel's production as well. As noted, one third of those involved in creating *The Sturdy Oak* were men, demonstrating the increasingly cross-gender appeal of the movement, and the authors' popularity and the book's appearance in mainstream publications prove that gender reform was a vital topic on the national cultural landscape by 1917.

The composite nature of *The Sturdy Oak* yields a text that embodies both the contradictory perspectives and the necessary compromises inherent to all successful oppositional communities. In her introduction to the recent reprint of the novel, Ida H. Washington observes that "the collection of episodes by skilled writers presents a fascinating study in comparative literary styles. Realism and romanticism, descriptive, dramatic, and narrative passages rub shoulders. Only remarkably skillful editing has brought this diversity into a cohesive whole and smoothed the seams between the parts" (xv). I would add that, just as each writer has a different style, so too does he or she have

a unique perspective on the reasons for and the way to achieve woman suffrage. In William Allen White's chapter, one male character asks why women want to be involved in the "dirty mess" of politics. His companion answers, "they think they want to clean up the mess" (139). This rhetoric seems very like the expediency arguments stemming from the notion of woman suffrage as national housekeeping and which rely on the radically different nature of women as nurturing and domestic. Ethel Watts Mumford's chapter presents a more skeptical view of women's moral compass, showing that some of them, like Aunt Alys, a selfish widow, have no interest in "cleaning up the mess": "Alys lost her temper. It seemed to her she was ruthlessly being forced to shoulder responsibilities [for the well-being of her tenants] she had been taught to shirk as a sacred feminine right" (116). Henry Kitchell Webster's chapter uses E. Eliot, a self-supporting real estate agent, to speak a more egalitarian view of gender relations in the book: "It isn't that women are better than men, or that they could run the world better if they got the chance. It's that men and women have got to work together to do the things that need doing" (71).

In isolation, each of these chapters suggests diverse, sometimes contradictory, reasons for supporting woman suffrage. However, all agree that it is a crucial, pressing reform that will improve the nation. According to Ferguson, one way an oppositional community can effect change is to form "single-sex and mixed-sex alliances around issues of social justice that combine partial visions in a process of struggle without one static end point or vision" ("Feminist Communities" 376). While Ferguson cautions against giving up "utopian thinking," she acknowledges that these pragmatic partial visions are the concrete steps toward achieving that utopia as well as the remedy for preventing stasis when not everyone shares the same utopian thinking. *The Sturdy Oak*

signifies just such a partial vision; Elizabeth Jordan's skillful (and as she claims in the title page, "cautious") editing coalesces each author's idiosyncratic versions of gender reform into a novel that does not do away with these idiosyncrasies as much as it absorbs them into a text unified by its support of a particular issue of social justice, woman suffrage.

The process of its composition is the most overtly innovative part of *The Sturdy Oak*'s form; the novel itself reads like a realist, third-person linear narrative like most nineteenth-century novels, including those about feminist activists. Nevertheless, its content is imbued with the twentieth-century suffrage movement's distinctive characteristics: the emphasis on spectacle, humor and charm; the representation of woman-as-worker; the challenge to conventional notions about romance; and the confidence of an ever-expanding oppositional community. The story is set in Whitewater, a conservative factory town in upstate New York, and it follows the career of a young, newly married lawyer, George Remington, who is running for his first political office, district attorney. In the opening scenes, George issues a statement unequivocally opposing woman suffrage, an action his new wife, Genevieve, supports. Apparently, however, no one else in town supports George's decision to state his position publicly (except a pair of female relatives). The leaders of the Republican political machine think it is an imprudent campaign move (even though they too oppose suffrage) and many of the influential women in town are pro-suffrage, and obviously disagree with his position, although they like George personally. The plot turns on these two groups competing for George's allegiance, and the central question becomes whether he will be complicit with the town's corrupt politics, or speak out, along with the women, for more sanitary, safe

work conditions, and by extension, support woman suffrage. Along the way, Genevieve undergoes a transformation from a naive socialite to an informed community activist, and in the end, George is converted as well.

*The Sturdy Oak*'s tone and plot are designed to amuse and charm readers. Although the authors have different styles, almost all of them write with a droll, sophisticated wit. For example, Harry Leon Wilson's description of George uses pompous, formal language only to deflate it: "It may have been surmised that our sterling young candidate for district attorney had not yet become skilled in dalliance with the equivocal; that he was no adept at ambiguity; in short, George Remington was no trimmer" (14).[14] Written in such a knowing, amused way, the various narrative voices imbue the story with a charm not unlike Delight Dennison's. In action, too, *The Sturdy Oak* seeks to humor its audience into supporting suffrage. One episode depicts George and Genevieve's single female relatives moving in with the newlyweds because a friend encourages them to take George's statement about masculine protection literally. The resulting complications amuse the reader and onlookers, if not the newlyweds themselves. Like its use of humor, *The Sturdy Oak* proves how effective spectacular public displays, another popular twentieth-century suffrage tactic, can be. One of the major tools employed by the feminist activists is a continuous "Voiceless Speech." The suffragists rent a building across the street from George's workplace and post changing placards that have "Questions for Candidate Remington" written on them such as "To conserve the threatened flower of womanhood, the grape canneries of Omega and Omicron Townships are employing children of five and six years in defiance of the Child Labor Law of this State. Are you going to proceed against them?" (77). This public

display garners much attention and pressures George to declare his political intentions. The young politician is initially horrified by the exhibit, claiming it is an "unwomanly" display, but Betty Sheridan, a modern, self-supporting suffragist assures him, "It's antiquated to try and run any sort of a campaign without them nowadays" (75), adding that one of the town's most respected women is currently turning the placards.

While Genevieve seems at first glance to be *The Sturdy Oak*'s central heroine, characters like Betty and also E. Eliot figure so prominently in the book's action that it is impossible to discern which heroine is most important. Betty represents the young, independent "woman-as-worker" ideal of the suffrage movement at this historical moment. She is the stenographer in George's law office, a position she holds even though she has a wealthy family, because she has "pinned [her] flag to the principle of economic independence" (9). E. Eliot, on the other hand, is a more street-wise character, a "big-boned [ . . . ] intelligent, homely" (64) woman who is competent in business and who works, not as a political statement like Betty, but for survival. When the two first meet, Betty asks E. Eliot if she believes in women's economic independence, and the latter replies: "I believe in food and clothes, and money to pay the rent, and the only way I have ever found of having those things is to go out and earn them" (67). E. Eliot goes on to say that having to work to support oneself can often keep one from doing the "real work in the world that won't earn you a living," like political activism (67). From her vantage point as a businesswoman and property manager, E. Eliot has seen the terrible conditions in the factories – the ignored fire codes and the illegal work hours required of women and children – and she tells Betty of her dream of publicly challenging George to state his position on enforcing these laws, even though it could lose him the support of many

influential voters. Betty, confident in George's ultimate morality, even if he is "old fashioned" about woman suffrage, agrees to help E. Eliot and make Whitewater "the hottest place for George Remington that he ever found himself in" (69). The alliance between these two women drives the action for the remainder of the book, and what emerges is a community of politically minded, publicly active, financially independent women bonded together in a reform network, so that instead of having one heroine pitted against a hostile world, there is one man pitted against a committed group of feminist activists.

The one central female character missing from this network in its early stages is Genevieve. As the novel starts, Genevieve is a sheltered young wife who believes it is improper to know about her husband's business or political practices. As she tells one friend, "I would no more think of intruding in George's business affairs than he would think of intruding in my household duties" (4). Genevieve has complete faith in the traditional ideology of separate spheres, and accordingly, she, too, is anti-suffrage. However, once Betty and E. Eliot begin their campaign, they help to enlighten Genevieve, not only to the deplorable conditions stemming from poverty and unfair labor practices, but also to her potential role in changing them. In *The Sturdy Oak*, the ability to improve the conditions for the laboring class is a crucial reason women want the vote, and Genevieve begins internalizing this lesson when E. Eliot speaks at her club, the Woman's Forum, about the connection between woman suffrage and the unsanitary, unsafe lives of the factory workers. Genevieve's interest is piqued by this lecture, and upon returning home, she looks at George, "not in limpid adoration, not in perfect acceptance of all his views, unheard, unweighed; but with a question in [the] blue depths"

of her eyes (82). Genevieve has learned that the current government disregards the laws regulating the factories, and she wants to be sure her husband will enforce them if elected. George's reaction to this questioning look underscores (with some exaggeration for effect) the significance of this initial change: "George felt his universe reel about him. [ . . . ] Genevieve was thinking on her own account" (82). Genevieve's interest in the factory conditions grows, and as it does, her independence of mind does as well. The Woman's Forum decides to suspend its commitment to "discussion only" and take action by organizing an investigative task force called "Seeing Whitewater Sweat" (93). Here, we see the women's club making the crucial step from thinking of factory workers and their families as objects of private charity to bringing their pressure to bear in the public sphere to improve the lives of the laboring class. Genevieve has a corresponding tranformation; as she delves deeper into this issue, she declares her intention to "hereafter to be a live woman and not a parasite" (117).

Genevieve becomes aware of herself as a human being capable of thoughts and emotions independent of her husband's and in so doing, becomes increasingly active in the feminist community with which she is in sympathy. In a pivotal scene, Genevieve shifts from uncritical acquiescence in her husband's opinions to commitment to the ones she shares with her new community. When George, nervous about the political fallout from the Woman's Forum's investigation of the factories, asks Genevieve to help postpone it, she replies, "But this is the only moment when we can find out whether or not you are a candidate who will do what we want" (102). George then asks: "*We*, Genevieve! Who do you mean by 'we'?" (102). This crucial question draws from Genevieve the revelation of her complete conversion:

> "Oh, George," she gasped finally, "I think I meant *women* when I said 'we.' George, I'm afraid I'm a *suffragist*. And oh," she added, with a sort of wail, "I don't want to be, I don't want to be!" (102)

George wants to blame Betty for this change in his wife, but Genevieve assures him that he is the reason for her transformation: "'You made me see why women want to vote for themselves. How can you represent me, when we disagree fundamentally?" (102). Genevieve has taken her first step into the "modern" world, becoming aware of the pitfalls and shortcomings of the nineteenth-century concept of marital relationships and finding her own voice as a twentieth-century suffragist.

Genevieve's transformation is typical of the experience of affluent clubwomen who get their first taste of community activism through the benevolent interest of their organizations. In the nineteenth century, countless women crossed the space between the domestic sphere and public domain through charitable club work, finding a socially acceptable entrance into the world of politics. Many of these women became suffragists as well, often believing in Frances Willard's idea of the vote as "home protection" against societal evils and as a way to help the less fortunate. According to DuBois, this "Lady Bountiful" approach to feminist activism was a dominant mode as late as the turn into the twentieth-century, when many affluent activists "saw their reform efforts as public expressions of their place in the family" which translated into "the first generation of progressives construct[ing] women's class relations on the model of the family, in which poor women were as dependent as children on the loving protection of reformer-mothers" (163). The ironic result of the Lady Bountiful mode of feminism is that a movement devoted to gender equality and independence for women replicates both the

hierarchy and forced dependence of (some) women found in a traditional patriarchal society.

In her book, *Tales of the Working Girl*, Laura Hapke makes clear the insidious effects of a Lady Bountiful mentality. Hapke reports that undercover work by affluent women hoping to expose the injustices of the factory system was "all the rage" in early twentieth-century America. Citing numerous examples of heiresses like Marie Van Vorst who infiltrated factories and mills posing as "working girls" and then publishing their findings, Hapke claims, "Very soon magazine and book publishers were catering to the widespread curiosity about these reverse Cinderellas" (48). While acknowledging that these investigations led to positive material changes, Hapke also comments on the problematic perspectives of these amateur reporters, whose work "pointed sympathetically to the chasm between their lives [ . . . ] and the women who remained behind" but which reveals "the impulses toward sisterhood with, as well as contempt for, the woman worker" (50). This "contempt" stems primarily from privileged women reporters' judgement of laboring class women based on the elite society's standards of sexual and social propriety, as well as their belief that laboring class women aspire to lives that emulates those of the privileged classes.

*The Sturdy Oak* points out the naivete, as well as the elitism, latent in this perspective by placing Genevieve in the role of a "reverse Cinderella." As a woman with influence, Genevieve believes it is her duty to use it for improving conditions for laboring class women and children, and she does so by secretly continuing the investigation of the factories by posing as one of the workers and reporting back to her club and George. While Genevieve is depicted sympathetically in *The Sturdy Oak*, her foray into the

working world is written in a surprisingly critical way, exposing some of the inherent problems with the Lady Bountiful mode of feminist activism. This stance is seen in the indulgently idealistic way Genevieve imagines her plan: "She would make a study of the needs of such people; she would go among them like St. Agatha, scattering alms and wisdom. George might have his work; she had found hers! She would begin with the factory girls. She would waken them to what had so lately dawned on her" (125). Although her enthusiasm is sincere, Genevieve romanticizes the daring nature of her plan for her personal entertainment: "Genevieve acquiesced with a sympathetic murmur [in George's plan to return home late], but she was disappointed. Merely to walk calmly out of the house at eleven o'clock lessened the excitement" (126). Once she reaches the tenements, Genevieve gathers a group of women workers and speaks to them with her naïve zealousness: "What I want to tell you is how beautiful it is for women to stand together and work together to make the world better" (12). The audience, however, is suspicious of the woman dressed as a worker but with a "soft voice and modulated speech" (129). When Genevieve confesses, "I only keep house now. But I intend to begin to do a great deal for the community," the crowd makes fun of her, calling her a "poor little overworked thing!" (129-30).

Still determined, Genevieve tells them that "we" want to tear down the cottages and build new places that are "healthy and beautiful" and prevent the factories from making the women work at night. The women workers ask, "Say, who is 'we'?", just as George has done earlier. Genevieve answers, "Why all of us, the women of Whitewater" (130). The female workers clearly do not consider themselves part of this group and they grow increasingly hostile towards Genevieve, calling her an "uptown reformer" (131). At

this moment, E. Eliot enters as a *deus ex machina* and diffuses the situation. She is apparently known and respected in the tenements, and she and the working women share a laugh when E. Eliot says, "Don't waste your time getting mad at this girl. She's a friend of mine. And you may not believe me, but she means all right [ . . .] Now, this girl has just waked up to the fact that Whitewater isn't heaven, and she thought you'd like to hear the news!" (131).

In a book (and movement) with a predominantly white, educated, privileged perspective, this scene provides a rare fictional glimpse of the antagonism between the classes below the surface of much gender reform. While Genevieve's earlier use of the word "we" shows she has begun to see herself a part of a community of women, her use of it in the tenements shows that she needs to think more critically about that usage. At this moment, she does not see the ways economic hardship and/or racial oppression can complicate any ideal of commonality among women. The "we" of her oppositional community at this moment is an idealized vision of white, middle and upper class women working harmoniously with grateful working women who have the same vision for improvement. E. Eliot, on the other hand, represents the more worldly understanding of the diversity among women because of their class and ethnic backgrounds. This scene demonstrates that "women" are not a monolithic entity and challenges any notion of an inherent femininity from which to build a reform community. Genevieve's revelation about the terrible conditions in Whitewater is applauded in the novel, and her desire to reform them is likewise depicted sympathetically. However, the book shows that this step is only the first of many if Genevieve is to move beyond being, in E. Eliot's words, one of the "misguided, well-meaning enthusiasts" and become an effective feminist activist.[15]

Another arena in which Genevieve grows and changes is her marital life. *The Sturdy Oak*, like most fictional accounts of feminist activism, privileges marriage; however, it shares with other twentieth-century texts a revised notion of the narrative form of the heterosexual romance plot. Whereas *For Rent – One Pedestal* includes the more common courtship-as-conversion trajectory but gives it a less prominent role, *The Sturdy Oak* picks up where most novels about romance leave off: the "happily ever after" ending. When *The Sturdy Oak* opens, George and Genevieve are recently married and still in an idyllic state of newlywed bliss. In this state, both share idealized sentiments about chivalry and the "oneness" of a married couple (and how those things relate to woman suffrage). When George speaks out publicly against suffrage, it is because he imagines "his own Genevieve, fine, flawless, tenderly nourished flower that she was, being dragged from her high place with the most distressing results" (15). Genevieve, too, idealizes the protective role her husband will play in her life, thinking that she "had given herself irrevocably into the hands of this man. She would live only in him. Her life would find expression only through his. His strong, trained mind would be her guide, his sturdy courage her strength. He would build for both of them, for the twain that were one" (2). In some ways, the stakes are higher in a novel about the evolving romance of a married couple; they have already committed to a life together, and in a society in which divorce is rare, they must learn to accommodate each others' changes.

In this more complex rendering of a heterosexual romance, there are not only two, but three, important figures. The third is the exterior community of feminist activists whose actions are catalysts to George's and Genevieve's recognizing each other as autonomous, sometimes flawed, human beings. As we have seen, through Genevieve's

interaction with this community, she has increasingly considered herself as morally and intellectually independent, and this development alters her marital relationship. Once Genevieve becomes interested in politics, George believes he has "married a stranger," and when Genevieve tells him she will always love him, even if she does not agree with him, he is nonplussed, looking at "this strange, new Genevieve, who, promising to love, reserved the right to judge" (84). This community also affects George, both indirectly, through Genevieve's alteration and also directly, through their intervention in his campaign. The feminist activists in *The Sturdy Oak* are motivated at least in part by the frustration they feel because they have no political or legal recourse for cleaning up Whitewater's corrupt government. Thus, their feminism is of a piece with their feelings of social responsibility. After listening to Genevieve and members of this oppositional community, George is forced to admit that he shares their moral outrage, and this admission leads him to support woman suffrage as a potentially positive influence on politics. George's outrage is heightened even further when the politicians handling his campaign arraign to have E. Eliot kidnapped to silence her during the campaign, and Genevieve is taken as well. The two are returned unharmed, but George is forced to admit he is working with unconscionable men involved in politics for purely selfish reasons. Once George realizes that the women are right about Whitewater's politics, he must by extension acknowledge that they are competent, rational beings who should have equal legal rights. This changed attitude is evident in George's newfound respect for his wife's abilities: "He marveled especially at Genevieve because he had never thought of Genevieve as doing such things [as campaigning and organizing parades]. But she had done them – he felt that somehow she was a different Genevieve [ . . . ] he had an

undefined sense of *aliveness*, of a spirited, joyous initiative in her" (171). By the end of the novel, both he and Genevieve have learned valuable lessons about the other's humanity and their more enlightened perspectives promise to make their marriage happier and more substantial. Upon returning to their home after the campaign, George tells Genevieve, "it's a better home than when we first came to it, for now I've got more sense. Now it is a home in which each of us has the right to think and be what we please" (173).

This personal transformation within a heterosexual couple is a consistent theme in feminist activist fiction throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, what makes *The Sturdy Oak*'s vision unique and "modern" is that the transformation does not end there. Earlier books often end with a happy marital union which liberates the domestic sphere, intimating that one day this private liberation will lead to wider reform. In *The Sturdy Oak*, authors are capable of writing beyond this ending, imagining an oppositional community of feminist activists whose work brings about tangible change in the public sphere. The combined political efforts of Betty Sheridan, E. Eliot, Genevieve, and other feminist activists finally force George to expose the corrupt political machine and declare his own convictions. The novel's climactic episode is a rowdy street scene that has turned into an unsafe mob of political henchmen trying to suppress the suffragists and their supporters. Through the fray George makes his way to a window near the Voiceless Speech, from which he sends "forth a speech which had a voice" (166). He first breaks with the Republican party and announces himself an Independent, and then continues with his "Voiceful Speech":

> "I want to tell you that I shall enforce all the factory laws. [ . . . ]

> "I want to tell you that I shall enforce the laws governing child labor and the laws governing the labor of women.
>
> "I want to tell you that I shall enforce every other law, and shall try to secure the passage of further laws, which will make Whitewater a clean, forward-looking city, whose first consideration shall be the welfare of all.
>
> "And, ladies and gentlemen – [ . . . ] I wish I could address you all as fellow-voters! I want to tell you that I take back that foolish statement I made at the opening of the campaign.
>
> "I want to tell you that I stand for, and shall fight for, equal suffrage!
>
> "And I want to tell you that what has brought this change is what some of the women of Whitewater have shown me – and also some of the things our men politicians have done – our Doolittles, our Noonans" (167)[16]

This powerful speech is the culmination of George's conversion. He has been profoundly affected by the efforts of his wife and the feminist oppositional community, and this effort has resulted in his changed political stance. However, the reader learns that the women's efforts are also capable of bringing about a change in Whitewater's society at large. For the rest of an eventful day, George places his campaign in the hands of his new manager, Mrs. Herrington, and she and the other women spread the news of his eleventh-hour conversion so successfully that George is elected in defiance of the incumbent party. By first drawing attention to the campaign and then by disseminating the news of George's declaration, the suffragists have fostered a desire for change in their

townspeople (and in particular, the men who can vote) and have provided them with the opportunity to bring about that change by electing George. Genevieve, Betty, E. Eliot, Mrs. Herrington and others have helped usher in a new, more honest government which will be especially responsive to the needs of its laboring class citizens. At the end of *The Sturdy Oak*, the strength, competence and power of the suffrage movement are embodied in this actual change in Whitewater's political scene. Women are now a political force with which to be reckoned, whether they have the vote yet or not.

*The Sturdy Oak* is one of the last fictional works to be written before the suffrage movement was dissolved by the successful fulfillment of its goal – the passage of the nineteenth amendment and its ratification in 1920. However, one could argue that Oreola Williams Haskell's book, *Banner Bearers: Tales from the Suffrage Campaigns*, written on the heels of ratification, is the culmination of the twentieth-century suffrage fiction's effort to "make it new" as well as the most fully realized picture of the achievements, shortcomings and complexities of the mature suffrage movement. Haskell gives a sense of this ambitious project in her foreword:

> The little world of the suffrage worker was one of hard application and intense living. It had its saints and its sinners, its clear-visioned leaders and its devoted disciples, its silver-tongued orators, its poets and its artists. It had its humor, its pathos and its passion. [ . . . ]
>
> I who have been of this world, who love, understand and admire it, here aim to give some sketches, however, inadequate, of those who have waged its battles and won its victories [ . . . ] To the many who have given themselves to the work of suffrage may these pages seem like the diary

> they have never had time to write, or like the portfolio of old photographs that, though faded, make the once vivid past live again. (3-4)

Although Haskell claims for her book a certain historical authenticity, her professed "love and admiration" for the suffrage movement infuse her work. While Haskell does not need to convert readers to a cause already won, her work reads with the same sense of propaganda as the earlier ones studied in this chapter. Nevertheless, the flexible form that Haskell chooses, as well as the volume and breadth of her work, allows *Banner Bearers* to be a rich, insightful portrait of the twentieth-century movement, sometimes in spite of itself.[17] As a short story cycle, the text's twenty-two discrete yet interrelated stories allow the author to expand upon and complicate previous depictions of feminist activist heroines, oppositional communities, and romance narratives.

Several recent critical studies have enhanced our understanding of what a short story cycle is and what it does. In his work, *The Contemporary Short Story Cycle*, James Nagel defines the genre as "the collection of a group of independent stories that contain continuing elements of character, setting, action, imagery, or theme that enrich each other in intertextual context" (15). *Banner Bearers* without question falls within these parameters. All the stories are set in a very specific time and place, the New York campaigns of 1915 and 1917, and often even more specifically, at the National suffrage headquarters. There are recurring characters in the various stories, including Mrs. Leeds, a Borough leader, Anna Storr (a thinly-veiled allusion to Anna Howard Shaw), Mary Genston Hale and Charlotte Chester Cleeves (both of whom seem to be based on Carrie Chapman Catt in her different roles as New York State President and then the national president of NAWSA).[18] The theme, of course, is the tireless work done for, and the

inherent rightness of, the woman suffrage movement in America. In discussing *Banner Bearers*, J. Gerald Kennedy's observation about the genre's communal element is even more suggestive: "Perhaps insofar as story sequences present collective or composite narratives, they may all be said to construct tenuous fictive communities" (xiv).[19] As a literary construct, *Banner Bearers*'s form mimics the connections and disruptions inherent in any community, especially an oppositional one which consists of a diverse group of people working for political change. Kennedy defines yet another useful term as it relates to the short story cycle, the "collective protagonist," which is "either a group that functions as a central character (a couple, an extended family, a special-interest group) or an implied central character who functions as a metaphor (an aggregate figure who cumulatively may be 'typical' or 'archetypal' or 'the essence of' or 'the developing presence of' or 'the soul of' and so on" (59). The suffrage community is the fictive one constructed in *Banner Bearers*, and the term "collective protagonist" applies in two ways. The community itself is really the central character, but along the way, there are several diverse characters whose actions are "typical" nonetheless of the devotion and liberal-mindedness that embodies Haskell's archetypal feminist activist heroine.

Unlike the other works of twentieth-century suffrage fiction, with their small but representative collection of heroines – Delight Dennison and her friends Barbara and Lucia, or Genevieve, Betty and E. Eliot – and certainly unlike the nineteenth-century novels about feminist activism, with their clearly-identifiable central heroine, *Banner Bearers* has well over twenty feminist activist heroines who have a moment on "center stage" in individual narratives, but none of whom achieves prominence over the rest. This technique allows *Banner Bearers* to diversify the concept of fictional feminists in the

twentieth century by depicting women of varying ages, marital status, regional backgrounds and socioeconomic situations. A juxtaposition of the first two stories in the collection, "The Invader" and "Sizing Up the Boss" makes this point clear. The first has a heroine very similar to the young, witty, college-educated women found in *For Rent* and *The Sturdy Oak*. Leslie Draycote is a Field Organizer for the New York Woman Suffrage Party and she "invades" a small town outside the city. She is described as "very pretty," "unmistakably a lady," and behaving "with a blending of girlish appeal and of dignified deference" (8-10). Her description of herself sounds very much like either Delight or Betty Sheridan: "I was born, as the novelist says, of liberal-minded parents, educated in co-educational institutions and for a while earned my own living – teaching" (18). Leslie organizes a town meeting where many people are convinced to support suffrage, including an affluent young man, Pembroke Clarke, and the story ends with a budding romance between them. This story, then, seems like a miniature of many feminist activist narratives, and Leslie Draycote is typical of the popular heroine in twentieth-century suffrage fiction.

However, the text then moves beyond this oft-told tale, and the second selection describes a completely different type of feminist activist, "The Big Boss." This story is told from the perspective of a reporter, Meta Martin, who is writing a character sketch of the state suffrage organization's president, Mary Genston Hale. Miss Hale is an older woman with "snow white hair, faultless complexion and dark blue eyes" who is known as "the busiest woman in New York." (40). As Miss Martin investigates, she hears diverse, sometimes contradictory reports about the Boss from people who know her well. These include, "slickest politician extant," "easy going -- always ready with a joke and smile,"

"Dangerous," and "a clear thinker, methodical and business like" (33-4) Miss Hale is also portrayed as domestic and warm to her friends. Evident in all these glimpses, however, is recognition of her powerful position and almost celebrity status; "The Boss" is as influential as any male politician in New York. Instead of the woman-as-worker model of Leslie Draycote and others, Miss Hale is the suffragist-as-executive. The heroines of the first two stories, Leslie and Miss Hale, are only two of the many variations of suffragists found throughout *Banner Bearers*. They are depicted as mothers who have lost daughters, young girls just moved to the city from the farm, factory workers, rich widows, trade union representatives, immigrants, young wives on their death beds, nurturing grandmothers, wealthy debutantes and wise-cracking, wage-earning women, just to name a few. In addition to this multitude of heroines, there are many male suffrage heroes in this book (males who do not need converting). In fact, one story, "Sissies" is devoted entirely to male suffragists; in it, the governor of Wyoming teaches a naïve male heckler at a suffrage parade that "real men" support women having the vote.

The aggregate effect of so many different types of feminist activists, each devoted to the Cause, is that of the collective protagonist described by Kennedy, making the oppositional community of feminist activists the central heroine of the book. I do not, however, employ the term "collective protagonist" in a simplistic way. To be sure, these women work collectively toward the goal of woman suffrage, and the representation of so many characters united by a communal bond to bring about this change impresses upon the reader the strength, solidarity and pervasiveness of the woman suffrage movement at this historical moment. Nevertheless, they do not all pursue this work in a homogenous, "collective" fashion; rather, they have diverse methods and motivations for seeking

gender reform through woman suffrage. This diversity is underscored by the formal properties of *Banner Bearers*; although many stories are linked by recurring characters, most of the characters only appear in one story, creating the sense that they are functioning in their own, smaller worlds as well as in the larger one of suffrage. Since these worlds never intersect in the text, one can imagine that many of the female characters have never met and never will. In this way, Haskell's "collective protagonist" is capable of depicting the connections among members of an oppositional community without erasing the differences that could potential undermine that community.

This juxtaposition of heroines is not the only way *Banner Bearers* foregrounds communal activism; several stories in the collection vividly depict the countless daily activities that strengthen the bonds among suffragists. "Tenements and Teacups," for example, is about a committee of suffragists taking a break from their hard work and telling stories. It begins, "Pale and weary, the Squad came, one by one, into Headquarters. It was not only the last canvassing day before the Weekly Meeting, a day of heroic efforts to round out the week's record, but it was also the day for making up reports" (47). The group's nickname, "the Squad" invokes, like the book's title, military terminology (common in suffrage rhetoric) to denote both a sense of purpose and the mutual dependence of its members. The women's tireless effort is signified by their exhausted demeanor and sense of urgency, and the first several paragraphs detail their mundane tasks, such as sorting "intention cards" and typing the results. In its setting and initial action, then, the story portrays an intimate oppositional community; however, as the women finish their reports and take a break, they share stories about their week's

campaigning, and through the act of storytelling, the sense of community is expanded considerably, in both number and richness of experience.

The first woman, Laura Steff, ironically titles her story, "The Fit and the Unfit." She shares with her squadmates how she has underestimated a new recruit, a wealthy, well-traveled novice, Mrs. Loring. She surprises Laura by deviating from the typical suffrage appeals, simply talking, instead, to many of the immigrants about their home countries, which she has visited. By establishing a common ground of experience and appealing to their love of and pride in their native countries, Mrs. Loring creates sympathy for the Cause. Another member of the Squad, Margaret Main, tells Laura, "Your story about someone who took a priceless thing into the tenements, reminds me by contrast of someone who took something out" (54). Margaret counters, then, with her own tale, "The Cure of the Tenements," in which she visits the home of a rich, bitter widow living alone, convincing the older woman to canvass with her. Once in the tenements, the widow realizes how selfish she has been in her misery and how her grief and loss are the same emotions many in the tenements feel. The widow is cured of both her solipsism and bitterness when she determines to help a "little seamstress" who has had no company but the suffragists, either; the widow embraces her and says, "Why, my dear, we're just alike" (58).

The final story is told by Mary Bradley, who has discovered a talented orator, Rea, among the female factory workers organizing a trade union. Rea, initially opposed to woman suffrage, learns more and agrees to speak for them because most speakers "don't see the bigness of the thing" (64). Rea's gift is quickly discovered and she is "snatched up to the pinnacle of suffrage oratory where the Cleeves, the Hales, and the

Storrses speech and spout" (65). After this story, the Squad members, refreshed from their food and discussion, return to work. While clearly idyllic in its presentation of class conditions, this story expresses the collective identity of the suffrage movement. It extends the bonds of affection and political commitment beyond the Squad, and into the homes of the richest and poorest in the city, uniting a diverse body of characters through a revolutionary love that recognizes a common humanity and shares a belief in gender reform. Also, with its communal shape and its independent, though interrelated, stories, "Tenements and Teacups" echoes the form of *Banner Bearers* as a whole. As Kennedy suggests, in its structure the short story cycle "curiously resembles the gathering of a group to exchange the stories that express its collective identity" (194). In fact, one could argue that the story's significance reaches beyond the textual border of *Banner Bearers*, serving as a microcosm of most of the books in this study, which likewise rely on storytelling to increase the number of imagined and actual members of the nation's feminist oppositional community.

Other stories that make the reader aware, in unique ways, of the infinite variety of suffrage work and its far-reaching community of supporters are "A Musical Martyr" and "Switchboard Suffrage." The first is a short, funny story about Esther Marr, a "small town girl who had come to the city to wrest a living from a typewriter" (158) and who becomes enraptured with the suffrage movement. Esther develops a longing to "do something distinctive and special for the cause" (159), and upon seeing a sign advertising "something new in suffrage," "The Girl Bugler," decides she will also learn to play the bugle for outdoor meetings. Esther goes to Headquarters on the weekend to practice (after being thrown out of her apartment) and unwittingly, she helps the Cause in three different

ways. Her terrible playing scares away a young woman auditioning to be a street speaker, thereby saving Mrs. Sylvester, the woman interviewing her, from having to let her go. It also makes the high-strung leader of the French Committee (also meeting at Headquarters) resign her position and go in search of peace and quiet, leaving a space for a more competent person to take over. Finally, the Board of Directors, trying to avoid the media, is also secretly meeting at Headquarters, and Esther's playing interrupts them in the middle of a heated debate, unintentionally averting them from passing a resolution that would have proven detrimental. At the end, Esther is asked to stop playing the bugle at Headquarters, but the narrator says, "it might have consoled Esther Marr somewhat if she had known that already her musical efforts had done three things for the Cause she loved" (171). This story introduces the reader to the many levels of suffrage work, striking in its simultaneity, which impresses upon the reader the diverse activities happening across the city at once, as suffragists work constantly toward their goal. In a comical way, the story also suggests the inevitability of women's enfranchisement, because even a person's mundane, daily behavior inadvertently furthers the Cause.

The other story, "Switchboard Suffrage," is a short, first-person vignette spoken by the switchboard operator at Headquarters. She frantically fields requests for pamphlets, street speakers, official comments, schedules, and other needs, interspersing these calls with asides to a listener who has stopped by her desk. The plethora of calls she answers, as well as her running commentary on a typical suffragist's harried life, gives the reader the impression of a large, well-organized, professional community whose influence reaches across the city. The story is also interesting, however, because of what it reveals about the limitations of community. When a caller asks for "Mrs. Bullmount,"

the operator tersely informs her, "This isn't her organization. You want the Pickets, the National Woman's Party. No, we don't picket. It takes all our time to soothe the feelings of those who are offended by such antics, I mean tactics" (294-5). "Mrs. Bullmount" is clearly a derogatory reference to Alice Paul and her more militant brand of activism, and *Banner Bearers* insists on creating distance between NAWSA and the NWP.[20] While this disapproval of Paul and her tactics is to be expected, the fictional operator's condescension toward more recently converted suffragists is surprising. She tells her friend, "they're rolling in like Jordan's tide. Coming in at last so's they'll get some of the credit if we win. Most of 'em like to be on the bandwagon, but isn't it sickening to think they'll go about blowing how WE WON, and here's the real workers worn to a frazzle and won't have enough strength left to brag" (293). Resentment about the influx of new members is rarely expressed by suffragists, fictional or not, and its appearance in this story provides insight into an ostensibly harmonious community. Perhaps those members sincerely devoted to gender reform see in these "bandwagon suffragists" the vulnerability of their oppositional community to being appropriated by the status quo. Furthermore, this derogatory reference to new members, as well the dismissive one to Mrs. Bullmount, are frank reminders of the divisions and conflicts inevitable within such a diverse oppositional community, even if they are united by a common goal.

An equally interesting story about intra-community friction is "Stallfed," which portrays hostility between two suffragists from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Mrs. Anson Beverly is one of the "bandwagon suffragists," a woman who, like her limousine, "fairly reeked of luxury" (99). The story pits this selfish, condescending woman against Josephine Cassidy, a suffragist and labor organizer, whom Mrs. Beverly

sponsors on the latter's trip to New York to deliver a speech at a trade union meeting. Josephine is the rare laboring-class heroine in suffrage fiction who actually speaks for herself, and her impassioned lecture is likewise unique for its direct appeal to her peers and its acknowledgment of the peculiar bond between male and female workers:

> I am one of you [ . . . ] I come to you out of the circle of your working sisters, the women with rough hands and tired faces who help you do the rude work of the world. [ . . . ] Thank God I don't have to answer the old argument – woman's place is in the home – when I speak to you. You know why the sister and the daughter of the workingman have to go out into the stores and factories. (104)

After delivering the speech, Josephine returns with Mrs. Beverly to her mansion, where tension between the two women grows. When Josephine overhears Mrs. Beverly declare that although she is a suffragist because "she is as up-to-date as anyone," she is "not accustomed to associating with the lower classes," the story depicts another rare moment in suffrage fiction: a working-class woman reprimanding a wealthy one:

> You are stallfed, soft in mind, body and soul, stuffed to repletion with luxuries, dying slowly because the canker of idleness and silliness is eating at your heart. How dare you take a great cause for a fad, to dally with it as you would with a poodle? [ . . . ] How dare you cast a shadow over the rocky path along which the workingwomen of the world are stumbling toward the goal of emancipation? Stallfed – a pampered, worthless animal. [ . . . ] I am one of the lower orders you despise, and you

> despise me because you are stupid. [ . . . ] No one can be a suffragist who is not first a democrat. (111)

As in *The Sturdy Oak*, the reader sees the frustration of a woman worker with an affluent counterpart who ostensibly want to help her. However, instead of Genevieve's naïve, misguided enthusiasm, Mrs. Beverly's insincerity is the culprit here. Being pro-suffrage has become "fashionable," and as a member of the "fashionable set," Mrs. Beverly does not want to be left behind. Josephine (and Haskell) is careful to clarify that Mrs. Beverly's shortcoming is not her wealth *per se*, but rather her particularly selfish, self-indulgent attitude that makes her toy with a cause believed in so passionately by many women, poor and rich. When Josephine berates her for this attitude, one sees an example of how an oppositional community can and should improve through internal criticism and frank dialogue, and the story's ending demonstrates the benefits of this self-critique. Mrs. Beverly learns how arrogant she has been, and when Josephine returns to visit this local organization months later, Mrs. Beverly is a changed woman who insists on doing the most menial jobs on the committee. Nevertheless, Josephine's lengthy tirade reminds the reader that sometimes affluence can cloud a person's self-horizon so that she is unaware of her elitism and selfishness. In a book that often idealizes cross-class relationships, as in "Tenements and Teacups," this story intimates that there are vexed class issues rumbling under the surface in the woman suffrage movement.[21]

If *Banner Bearers*'s form allows the book to give a rich, layered perspective on the suffrage community, it also allows it to alter the idea of "romance" more radically than any other work of feminist activist fiction in this study. In her introduction, Ida Husted Harper describes *Banner Bearers* as having "twenty-two of these sketches, each

embodying one special feature of the many sided effort to win the vote and all expressed in narrative style, a number of them with a love story interwoven" (5-6). In fact, the number of stories with the traditional heterosexual romance plot of courtship is five, and there are three other stories in which heterosexual couples figure prominently. This distribution means that less than half the stories are concerned with romance in its conventional connotation, while the rest depict women (and sometimes men) working together as friends and colleagues, involved in a wide variety of activities, concerns, and plots which having nothing to do with courtship or marriage. This shift in focus de-centers the heterosexual romance plot completely, making it only one of many narratives in the text, instead of a central thread, as in the earlier novels about feminist activist heroines.

Furthermore, the various permutations of the romance plot that are included reiterate the cross-class and cross-cultural appeal of gender reform. In "The Invader," which has already been discussed, the hero and heroine seem to be of the prosperous, predominantly white, middle-class. In "The Nail," a Jewish immigrant, Mirra Volshen, encounters a young man, Mr. Mendel, also Jewish, who serves as a mouthpiece for rather stereotypical "Old World" arguments against woman suffrage.[22] Nevertheless, Mendel, who is liberal in many other ways, is converted to suffrage by his love for Mirra, as well as his first-hand experience with the dangers of factory work. "Silent Forces" and "When Hester Hikes" take place among the very affluent "society set" in New York. The first is a story of negotiation in which Elinor, a suffrage sympathizer although not an active worker, shows Richard, who is pursuing her, that she believes in gender equality and is not like the other debutantes in their circle. Richard reveals to her at the end that he, too,

is a member of the "Silent Forces" of sympathizers because he has seen firsthand the corrupting influence of the narrow sphere in which society women are inscribed. "When Hester Hikes" is the traditional story of a suffragist whose love interest must convert to supporting suffrage before she will accept him. There is a twist, however. While Hester is away on a suffrage hike, a male family friend enlightens her future husband about gender roles by loaning him a book on evolution with a feminist slant. Among other things, the juxtaposition of these various stories with a "love interest intertwined" represents the exponentially growing ranks of men from all classes who would eventually vote to give their counterparts the same right.

More provocative than these multiple heterosexual romance narratives, however, is *Banner Bearers*'s overt attempt to expand the definition of "romance" as it applies to women, loosening it from the narrow connotation of sexual love for a man. Haskell begins this attempt in her foreword, when she describes the cultural changes wrought by the suffrage movement: "It developed a new loyalty – that of woman to woman; a new romance – the love of woman for the woman leader; a new faith – that of the woman in the greatness of her sex and the possibilities of her womanhood" (3). Using the word "romance" to describe a woman-to-woman relationship is certainly radical, infusing a woman's love for her leader with the same passion and ardor normally reserved for her spouse. This new romance is evident in the adulation of many suffragists in the book. The reporter in "Sizing Up a Boss" experiences it when she finally interviews Mary Genston Hale: "Meta  Martin, feeling that she was looking straight into the mind and heart of the woman before her, felt a sense of awe that struggled with a boundless admiration. For a

few moments she tried to express it [ . . . ]" (45). Esther in "A Musical Martyr" has a similar reaction upon meeting Mrs. Tilney, the Borough Chairman:

> Esther, beholding a woman handsome with a wholesome, outdoor beauty, brimming with vitality, full of scintillating ideas, with breezy, democratic manners and a spontaneous and brilliant smile, fell at once under the spell of her charms, as had hundreds before her. Henceforth Esther put herself out to play vassal to this queenly leader. (158)

Alair Dumain is equally overcome by Charlotte Chester Cleeves in "The Heart of a Chief." Alair, a talented public speaker, has been encouraged to solicit Cleeves for help by her recently deceased husband, who has a familial connection to the great leader. However, Alair is too nervous to approach her, only studying her from afar for several months, becoming so consumed that she has dreams "of this wonder woman, leading, leading, on and across the world" (301). Gradually, "her spirit became enkindled, until at length she caught from Charlotte Chester Cleeves some of the passionate devotion, the steady determination [ . . . ] that made her all at once one with the army of workers in the city and akin to their leader in a deep and vital sense" (303). These encounters are striking both for their stirring physical nature and the ensuing attraction, not only for the cause, but also for the person, which enthralls the women. Admittedly, there is a potentially disturbing element in this adulation; after all, any relationship in which one member is so clearly under the influence of the other is problematic. However, Haskell seems to be depicting the almost religious reverence suffragists have for the movement and extending it to its leaders. Thus, the author liberates the term "romance" from its

heterosexual moorings to apply it to this intense revolutionary love that instills unwavering devotion in suffragists for those who lead them.

Haskell's book liberates the term even further in her aptly titled short story, "A Touch of Romance." The narrative follows a traveling suffragist, Mary Norris, whose work is thwarted by both well-meaning friends and her domineering uncle, all who believe she would be happier giving up her political work and finding a husband. What is most revolutionary about this story, however, is not the action but the rhetoric. The centerpiece of the story is a lengthy speech in which Mary addresses those she finds misguided in their intentions. She tells the crowd, "Then, too, there are those who lament over what they choose to call the absence of romance in my life. They say this of one who is in daily touch with the romance of a great cause" (217). Mary begins her re-definition of romance by claiming that passion and fulfillment can come from work and belief in an ideal, as much as it can be found in another human being. She continues by comparing the contradictory ways "romance" is applied to the lives of women and men:

> No one says to boys and young men that there is but one romance in the world for them, the romance of a personal love. Our books are full of men's romances of adventure and high enterprise. We have had the knight, the crusader, the explorer, the inventor, the martyr and the Seeker for the Holy Grail. To-day, woman may enter this larger life of mingled thought, fancy and fact. She may have her pretty hearthfire love just as women did of old, but she may have also the romance of adventure and of big enterprise to fire her imagination, stir her pulses, spur her on to the heroic effort and to touch the spiritual forces of her soul. (217-18)

Mary's speech presages in many ways Northrop Frye's analysis in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. According to Frye, Romance in its broadest sense is intimately associated with imagination, as opposed to Realism, which is grounded in the material world of experience. Frye also argues that Romantic fiction "brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to [ . . . ] man's vision of his own life as a quest" (15). This definition, however, primarily refers to the masculine tradition of Sir Walter Scott and others. Mary's re-definition opens this tradition to women, claiming for them both a creative and a literary prerogative that once exclusively belonged to men. The suffrage movement has made a metaphorical space in which they can imagine a world less constricted by prescribed gender roles, a future with more opportunities and more choices. It has also radically altered the concept of romance in feminist activist fiction. The heroine is no longer confined to the heterosexual romance plot; "she may also have the romance of adventure and of big enterprise." Her life can be written as a quest that is not necessarily destined to end at the altar, and an infinite number of stories are now possible that do not have to include "personal love" with a hero as the central component.

In some ways, *Banner Bearers* is a watershed text in the tradition of feminist activist fiction. Works that come before are primarily concerned with influencing readers' ideas about woman's rights, and woman suffrage in particular, and the works that come after are written from a more distanced perspective, providing a retrospective analysis. *Banner Bearers*, however, is positioned at the one historical moment when suffragists are celebrating their victory and anticipating their future with excitement. As such, it provides a unique opportunity to ponder what the movement gained and lost during its 72-year existence. Three stories at the end of the collection are especially fruitful for this

analysis. The first, "Methods," shows the way perceptions about feminist activists have shifted over time. In it, a family has scheduled a conference to decide how to spend a recent inheritance. The three female members, Mrs. Arbuckle, her daughter, Eloise, and an Aunt Essie, use this family conference as an opportunity to test the "methods" of their various affiliations, NAWSA, the National Woman's Party (NWP) and an anti-suffrage organization, respectively. The males in the family discern the plan from the way each woman is dressed. Stephen Arbuckle, the son, observes, "It's as plain as a drop of ink in a pan of snow. [. . . ] It's the colors. Mother, yellow, white and blue, the conservative wing; siss, yellow white and purple, the militants; Aunt, pink with roses, the antis" (272).

The story distinguishes between the women, not only by their clothing, but also in the charities they recommend and the tactics they use. Aunt Essie, in a "cooing voice," suggests using the money to build a homeless dogs' shelter, and she ends her appeal by "bursting into tears" (278). On the other end of the spectrum, Eloise, "with youthful disdain," demands that the money be given to subsidize the work of female artists, because they have "mighty little" chance of success otherwise (277). In fact, Eloise feels so impassioned, she threatens to "organize these struggling geniuses and have them besiege the guardians of this fund night and day to apply it to their needs" (277). Mrs. Arbuckle, meanwhile, is calm and reasonable in demeanor, telling the group, "Most people [ . . . ] are influenced by reason and common sense, and can be brought to a conclusion by the patient insistence on good points, presented calmly pleasantly and continuously" (276). With this method, Mrs. Arbuckle argues for her proposed charity, Eugenics, which she calls "the science that will teach the race how to bring into the world

children that are well born, fitted to cope with disease, adversity and world conditions" (274).

Although the story makes very plain with whom the reader should sympathize, the grandmother's commentary at the end expresses the point overtly: "Not only is suffrage to be decided, but also the methods that must obtain between men and women. Will they decide for reason, and the pleasantness of equality, or for threats and force, or for the tears and the foolish sentimentality?" (280). This triptych of women, and by extension, methods, is significant for feminist activist fiction. A certain type of heroine, the lady-like, respectable suffragist, has now become central instead of oppositional to her society, and those opposed to woman suffrage like Aunt Essie have been pushed to the side as anachronistic. At the same time, more militant activists like Eloise remain on the fringe of society. However, the acceptance of a "certain type of suffragist" has not come without a price. Much of the woman's rights movement's sweeping vision for gender reform, stated in the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848, has been watered down to narrow, expedient goals like woman suffrage. Without question, the "conservative" branch of feminist activists has achieved important advancements for women, but the fundamental challenge to gender oppression that is the legacy passed down from Stanton and her magazine, *The Revolution*, survives in the more militant feminists, who would continue to lobby for equal rights legislation after ratification of the nineteenth amendment. It is telling, too, that Mrs. Arbuckle promotes Eugenics, a science some believed would optimize human evolution, but which is now regarded as a dangerous pseudo-science promulgating racist notions of white superiority. This detail reminds the twenty-first

century reader that for all its accomplishments, the woman suffrage movement never escaped its racist tunnel vision about which Anna Cooper complained thirty years before.

The final two stories in *Banner Bearers* complement each other nicely, because each, in very different ways, remembers the past and points to the future with optimism. "Four Generations" is about the last days of a suffrage pioneer, Phoebe Caldwell, who was a feminist activist "when it took real courage, real strength of character to fight for suffrage" (320). She lives with her daughter and granddaughter, Ina Blake, second and third generation suffragists, who are driven (especially Ina) by a fervent desire for Phoebe to live to see the suffrage amendment pass. Phoebe, unbeknownst to her daughter and granddaughter, makes plans to attend the great "Pageant of Protest," a spectacular suffrage show to be staged at the largest opera house in New York. Once there, Phoebe is pressed into service to represent the pioneers on stage, and the adulation and gratitude she receives from the other suffragists is a highlight of her life. However, Phoebe is injured after the show and dies a few days later. Before she does, she tells her granddaughter, "I have my reward already. [ . . . ] Do not feel sorry, Ina, that the pioneers cannot stay to the end. We blazed the trail. We did a glorious thing. To make possible the rest. That is our reward. The victory – I'll – I'll know it wherever I am" (333). While this story portrays the new, spectacle-driven suffrage movement of the twentieth-century, it is also a poignant reminder of the legacy of feminist activism that has developed in the United States. In its portrayal of three generations, the story depicts an oppositional community that spans time as well as space and that is bound by a revolutionary love, not only for each other, but for those not yet born. The title, "Four Generations," underscores this

sense of continuity and points to the next generation that will reap the benefits of the suffrage movement.

"The Great Shortcut" depicts a very different inter-generational relationship. The title refers to the passage and ratification of the federal amendment, a more direct route to gaining the vote than state-by-state referendums, and the story takes place after passage but before ratification. Parker Flint is an important politician in the New York Democratic Party, and in his cynical political ideas and his corrupt methods for achieving power, he typifies members of Tammany Hall, the actual political machine in New York City. Flint, however, can feel his control of the party slipping. Already, he is being challenged by younger, more progressive men also advising the governor, a job which heretofore belonged to Flint exclusively. These younger men urge the governor to facilitate ratification, but Flint opposes it. Flint's opposition, however, is worn away, first, by a visit from the daughter of his first love, both devoted suffragists, and then by his own daughter, Alice, who is a recent, enthusiastic convert. She appeals to her father to support "The Great Shortcut" and the age to which it leads,

> a wonderful age when Woman the Passive Spectator will be no more and Woman the Creator will come, to be a powerful lever to control mighty forces. [ . . .] It will not be your age, Dad, but mine. Yes, mine. A age when men will not sorrow that their daughters are not sons, since both sexes will have equal opportunities, equal rights, equal incentives, equal hopes, ambitions and rewards. (346)

The "Old Boss," as Flint is known, is finally persuaded, "in the two strongest ways, through his love of Alice, through his love for power" (348). Only by embracing the

progressive future can Flint remain influential, at least for the time being. Flint's conversion has a historical precedent in Tammany Hall's reversal of positions between the 1915 and 1917 campaigns. During the second, its members decided not to intervene in the election and woman suffrage passed. Historians like Flexner attribute this change of heart to their wives and daughters, many of whom were suffragists. The story of Flint's conversion has broader implications as well. When ratification happens, he tells Alice, "It has been a great fight, as great a one as the world has ever seen. It will be a fine thing to look back upon" (350). Alice replies to this concession, "I will leave the looking back to you, Dad. As for me, I am content to look ahead" (350). *Banner Bearers* ends with this exchange, suggesting a utopian changing-of-the-guard in the political world, the dissolution of the old, corrupt order and the beginning of a new age when women will have the voice in government for which they have fought for over seventy years.

Some critics would take issue with my contention earlier in this chapter that books like *Banner Bearers*, as well as *For Rent* and *The Sturdy Oak*, should be situated within the context of Modernism, given their overt political agendas for bringing about "a utopian changing-of-the-guard in the political world" of America. Ann Heilmann, for example, argues that it is wrong to compare feminist fiction from this time period with Modernist texts, because their purposes seem so different. The books with feminist appeal do not, according to Heilmann, "wish to invite complex techniques of interpretation and deconstruction" (9). Instead, New Woman fiction, a genre very similar to feminist activist fiction, "constitutes a direct, immediate and unequivocal appeal: for empathy with women, for gender solidarity, for political activism – for feminism" (Heilmann 9). I would suggest, however, that Heilmann is not only oversimplifying the

Modernist project, but also drawing a rigid, arbitrary distinction between Modernist "form" and feminist "content."

Although she does so in reverse, Heilmann is replicating a common hierarchical distinction between the "high art" of the Modernists and more "low-brow" literary traditions from the same time period.[23] Robert Scholes has recently made the case that this hierarchy is a legacy of the New Critical approach to literature, embodied in the analysis of men like Allen Tate and Cleanth Brooks, who intimate that "emotions should not be aroused but brought into formal order" (4). This led them to posit a "powerful opposition between the rhetorical and the poetical" (Scholes 14). The poetical, best exemplified in the works of writers such as Pound and T. S. Eliot, is "contemplative, disinterested, [ . . . ] hover[ing] among possible directions" and is often marked by sophisticated innovations designed to create "irony, paradox or ambiguity" (14). In contrast, the rhetorical is "writing that is persuasive, interested, seeking to move the reader in a particular direction" (14). Scholes argues that, for the New Critics, writers such as Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote these "inferior" rhetorical texts that employed "mass language" in an attempt to produce an "affective state" (19). Because of the institutional perpetuation of this binary, generations of readers have been taught to dissociate formal innovation and experimentation from persuasive, sometimes overtly ideological works, privileging experimentation.

However, in the three late suffrage texts I have discussed, this binary unequivocally collapses. By appropriating the formal experimentation of the Moderns, the authors of *For Rent – One Pedestal*, *The Sturdy Oak* and *Banner Bearers* are able to use these innovations to affect readers emotionally and ideologically, creating even more

sympathy for the increasingly popular movement. Furthermore, I would suggest that fictionally depicting the modern suffrage movement presented these authors with a uniquely "modernist" task. The line from *The Waste Land*, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins," is often quoted as emblematic of this Modernist challenge to create cohesion out of disparate things while still exposing the fractures. As I have argued earlier, the formal innovations of the three texts in this chapter allow them to engage in a similar balancing act between unity and disparity. In each case, the work foregrounds a sense of communal solidarity while it simultaneously problematizes this notion through its unwillingness (or in some cases, inability) to conceal the dramatic contradictions and fissures just below the surface of the twentieth-century suffrage movement.

In her book, *The History of the Woman's Party*, Inez Irwin presents the historical correlative to this literary balancing act by describing the tenuous nature of the twentieth-century American suffrage community:

> It was an all woman movement. Indeed, often women who on every other possible opinion were as far apart as the two poles, worked together for the furtherance of the Federal Amendment. [ . . . ] It was as though, among an archipelago of differing intellectual interests and social convictions, they had found one little island on which they could stand in an absolute unanimity. (468)

On that island of shared interests, though, stood members of the National Association of Colored Women alongside women like Belle Kearney who argued that giving women the vote would insure white supremacy. Wealthy natural-born suffragists who wanted to "protect" their way of life from the influx of immigrants and the encroachment of rapid

urbanization had very different motives for standing on this suffrage island than the female immigrants and factory workers who wanted the vote to protect their lives and livelihoods from the insensitivity and greediness of capitalist moguls. Unfortunately, the American feminist movement that was founded in the nineteenth century and flourished in the first two decades of the twentieth was not nearly as successful at "shoring up its fragments" as it fictional counterparts. After ratification, NAWSA declined into a much smaller, politically toothless League of Women Voters, and although Alice Paul kept the members of the National Woman's Party politically active, theirs were small, ineffectual voices. Most women voted along the same party lines as their husbands, fathers and brothers, and it would be decades before women once again joined together to become a powerful political force for gender reform.

## Notes

[1] The years 1896-1910 are widely known as the "doldrums" for the suffrage movement, a time during which no new states voted for woman suffrage and when the matter was not discussed on the floor of either house in Congress. Many factors contributed to this malaise, including the narrow but dispiriting defeat of woman suffrage in California in 1896, and the new system of national conventions under a unified NAWSA (NWSA and AWSA reconciled in 1890) which took the meeting out of Washington, D. C. every other year, thus lessening the pressure on the federal government. See Flexner 241-54.

[2] It should also be remembered that reform was a major concern of Americans in general during the first two decades of the twentieth century, hence the name, the "Progressive Era."

[3] In 1915, after a widely-publicized and hard-fought campaign, the suffragist referendum was defeated, largely by the influence of Tammany Hall, the massive political machine that controlled New York City politics. In 1917, after an equally arduous campaign, woman suffrage finally passed in the state when Tammany Hall decided at the last minute not to oppose it. This decision partially resulted from many of its members having wives and daughters who worked for, and sometimes lead, the various state suffrage organizations. Not only did this personal pressure prove effective; it also insured that those candidates supported by Tammany Hall would have the support of many new women voters. The victory in New York cannot be over emphasized, as it

was the most populous state in the union, and the two campaigns the most nationally publicized.

[4] While the epistolary novel was a conventional early form, its use is unprecedented in the tradition of American literature depicting feminist activism.

[5] The text to which I refer is Harbert's novel, *Out of Her Sphere*, which I discuss at length in my first chapter.

[6] The book is *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (1923). Marjorie Shuler was also an officer in NAWSA, serving as Corresponding Secretary during the final years of the campaigns. She, too, wrote a well-known suffrage book (besides *For Rent*) entitled *The Woman Voter's Manual*, for which Catt wrote the introduction.

[7] As my earlier discussions, reveal, however, Delight's "face" is not wholly "new" among feminist activist heroines. One sees her precursor in Laura Stanley in Lillie Devereux Blake's *Fettered for Life*, also a college-educated, self-supporting heroine. However, I would argue that the primary differences between Delight and this predecessor are first, the former's jocularity and lightheartedness and second, her initial unawareness of the precariousness of her situation as a working woman. Both of these traits suggest the relative ease with which women entered the workforce in the twentieth century as compared to their nineteenth-century counterparts.

[8] In this way, Blake's *Fettered for Life* (1874), discussed earlier, is more prophetic in its vision of oppositional community formation than other nineteenth-century books which stress women's domesticity and maternity.

[9] There are countless recent books about the New Woman ideal in history and literature, both in England and America. For further discussion, see for example, Ann Heilmann's *New Woman Fiction* (2000) and *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact* (2000), edited by Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis.

[10] One need only think of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, classic examples of the form, to see the validity of this statement.

[11] Elizabeth Jordan was probably chosen not only because she was pro-suffrage, but also because she had previous experience with this type of collaboration. In 1908, she and William Dean Howells orchestrated the serial publication of another composite novel, *The Whole Family*, which includes chapters by writers such as Henry James and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

[12] Authorial correspondence about *The Sturdy Oak* excerpted here can be found in the E. G. Jordan Collection at the New York Public Library and is quoted with permission.

[13] One conflict that is mentioned specifically is William Allen White's virulent opposition to serializing *The Sturdy Oak* in any of the Hearst publications. He writes to Jordan that, although he understands Jordan's desire for wide circulation, he believes "for the suffrage novel to appear in a Hearst magazine along with the smutty, sex stuff that Hearst puts in his magazines, will hurt the suffrage novel and propaganda and the suffrage cause as a righteous cause infinitely more than the suffrage cause will be helped by appearing in the Hearst papers."

[14] "Trimmer" is an informal term for one who "modifies a policy, position or opinion, especially out of expediency" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online*, February 3, 2003).

[15] One earlier scene in *The Sturdy Oak* also points out the differences in class between the women. George fires Betty Sheridan because she is spearheading the public campaign to make him speak out about factory conditions. For Betty, this is a moral blow, but not a material one. However, she (and the reader) is given a "sudden, sinister illumination upon the relations of working women to their employers," wondering what would have happened if "instead of being a prosperous, protected young woman playing the wage-earner more or less as Marie Antoinette had played the milkmaid, she had been Mamie Riley across the hall, whose work was bitter earnest, whose earnings were not pin money, but bread and meat and brother's schooling and mother's health – would George still have made the stifling of her views the price of her position?" (79-80).

[16] Doolittle and Noonan are some of the Republican "bosses" who want George to adhere to the Party line.

[17] *Banner Bearers* is 350 pages long, almost twice the length of *For Rent – One Pedestal* and *The Sturdy Oak*.

[18] The lines between fictional feminists and their real-life counterparts break down in many ways in this text. For example, the microfilm copy of *Banner Bearers*, available through the *History of Women* microfilm collection, was taken from Carrie Chapman Catt's personal copy housed at the Schlesinger Library and includes the following inscription: "To <u>The Boss</u>: With love and with hope that you will enjoy these little glimpses into the past days of You, Us, and Company. From the Author. Nov 12,

1920." In the text itself, the second story in the collection is entitled, "Sizing Up a Boss" and its theme is the multifaceted personality and tireless work of Mary Genston Hale, the president of the state NAWSA affiliate.

[19] Kennedy is the editor of *Modern American Short Story Sequences*. As such, he contributes both the introduction and the final essay in the collection. Also, "short story sequence" is Kennedy's preferred term for the genre, and he explains his reasons in the introduction. However, it is clear from this introduction that he is discussing the same tradition as Nagel and others, such as Forrest Ingram and Susan Garland Mann, all of whom use the term "short story cycle."

[20] Eleanor Flexner criticizes NAWSA for not speaking out against the inhumane treatment of NWP members when they were mobbed, arrested for picketing outside the White House, and force fed in prison: "No disagreement as to the merits of the picketing and hunger strikes should be allowed to obscure [ . . . ] the fact that, with all too few exceptions, the leaders of the National suffrage association, including Mrs. Catt, tacitly acquiesced by their silence in the injustice done" (279).

[21] It should be noted that while *Banner Bearers*, like *The Sturdy Oak* and to a lesser degree, *For Rent*, is at least somewhat critical about class issues, all three exhibit an unequivocally prejudice perspective regarding African-Americans. Like the story recounted above in which Delight Dennison makes a joke at the expense of a poor, handicap African-American man, the only mention of an African-American character in *Banner Bearers* is an offensive caricature. He is a train porter in the story, "Yellow Button," who speaks in heavy, childish dialect and who prostrates himself at the feet of one suffragist because his son is in World War I and the suffragists have helped finance a

"colored soldier's club" for his unit. While there are no African-American characters in *The Sturdy Oak*, racial slurs are used as jokes on more than one occasion.

[22] Natural-born suffragists often expressed resentment that naturalized male immigrants could vote, because these suffragists believed that the attitudes about gender in many foreign countries were more oppressive than those in America.

[23] In *New Woman Fiction*, Heilmann makes the value judgement to privilege New Woman fiction over Modernist texts.

# CHAPTER 4

# THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL:

# WHAT *THE BOSTONIANS* CAN TEACH FEMINIST ACTIVISTS

Any study about American fiction devoted to feminist activism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries must necessarily consider Henry James's 1886 novel, *The Bostonians*. It is, after all, the only canonical text from the nineteenth century whose central heroines are woman's rights activists, and as such, it has for years seemed anomalous in not only James's oeuvre, but in American literature in general.[1] Nevertheless, at the time James wrote to his editor, J. R. Osgood, to describe his plans for the novel, the author thought his topic exemplary, rather than unique:

> The subject is good and strong, with a large rich interest. The relation of the two girls should be a study of those friendships between women which are so common in New England. [ . . . ] At any rate, the subject is very national, very typical. I wished to write a very *American* tale, a tale very characteristic of our social conditions, and I asked myself what was the most salient and peculiar point in our social life. The answer was: the situation of women, the decline of the sentiment of sex, the agitation on their behalf. (*Complete Notebooks* 19-20)

James's assertion that the debate over gender reform was the "most salient" point in American life was made at a time when the woman's movement was taking its first

tentative steps into the national limelight, making it clear that it was not a "fad" that would soon die out. For example, in 1882 (during which time James was visiting the U.S.) both houses of Congress established standing committees to hear reports on the issue of woman suffrage. To some twenty-first century readers, his related contention that the subject of woman's rights was a "very national, very typical" one for fiction might seem less accurate, given the critical invisibility of most novels written about feminist activism. However, as this study has shown, there were in fact several authors writing fiction about the "agitation on [women's] behalf" throughout the second half of the nineteenth-century. Heretofore I have focused my attention on those novels written expressly to promote this agitation, because I am interested in the dialogic relationship between these literary texts and the actual woman's rights movement, as well as what real-world feminist activists can learn from such a relationship. In contrast, one may have a difficult time seeing the possibility of either dialogue or instruction in *The Bostonians*'s relationship to real-world feminist reformers. Nevertheless, I would maintain that the potential for both exists in James's novel.

Unfortunately, many woman's rights activists who were James's contemporaries did not see this potential. In a review published on March 13, 1886 in the *Woman's Journal*, the official organ of the American Woman Suffrage Association, Lucia T. Ames offers a critique of *The Bostonians* that is representative of the way most of them received his novel.[2] Although Ames claims, "It seems hardly worth while to take the trouble to issue a protest against this caricature," she issues a rather lengthy one. She calls *The Bostonians* "inartistic," claims the two female protagonists, Olive and Verena, "belong neither to Boston nor any other city," and assures her reader that this fictional

"world of abnormal women" will "elicit a universal protest." She ends by suggesting a new name for the novel, "The Cranks." Although there is no evidence of a massive outpouring of disapproval from feminists -- like Ames predicted -- those woman's rights activists not vocally involved in such a "universal protest" most likely kept quiet because of their indifference rather than tacit approval. In her article "Feminist Sources in *The Bostonians*," Sara Davis deSaussure writes, "the feminists who might have raised objections to the novel were busy writing their own history and were uninterested in the unflattering picture of women's rights in *The Bostonians*" (586).[3]

Such a range of reactions, Ames's disavowal of any resemblance to real-world woman's movement and the apathetic silence of many other feminist activists, set a critical precedent for disassociating *The Bostonians* from the actual woman's rights movement.[4] On the rare occasion that the novel has been compared to other fictional portrayals of gender reform societies it is yoked together with those books that oppose woman's rights ideology by depicting feminist activism in a derogatory way.[5] For example, several recent critics have argued that *The Bostonians* was influenced by two of the best known of these anti-feminist activist books: Sarah Josepha Hale's *The Lecturess* (1839), which Nina Baym calls "the earliest anti-feminist novel [she has found] in American literature" (75-6), and Bayard Taylor's *Hannah Thurston* (1863).[6] Both works tell the story of a woman whose commitment to feminist activism is quelled by her love for a man who disapproves. In *The Lecturess*, the heroine attempts to return to the podium, only to be "punished" for her transgression by a painful death. Hannah Thurston, Taylor's eponymous heroine, however, realizes she has been wrong about gender reform and retires happily to private life. Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett situate *The*

*Bostonians* squarely within this tradition, arguing that "James's novel is more angry than Taylor's about the agitation for women's rights" (176). If Bardes and Gossett are right, and *The Bostonians* is an unequivocal, partisan novel against gender reform, then an analysis of its connection to the other novels in this study, which are sympathetic to this reform, would be a rather simplistic affair. However, the complexity and volume of critical essays about James's novel, many of which argue persuasively for an underlying feminist intent, suggest that *The Bostonians*'s relationship to the other books in this study is more complicated than mere opposition.

While it would be impossible in such a short space to summarize adequately *The Bostonians*'s critical reception, a few examples will serve to demonstrate its contradictory, complicated history. Several critics throughout the years have maintained that James's novel is a testament to the author's dislike of gender reform. Mid-twentieth-century critics like Lionel Trilling comment sympathetically on what they see as the novel's endorsement of a traditional world-view. Trilling claims that *The Bostonians* depicts the dissolution of a society under siege by the woman's rights movement, which is creating a world in which "the sacred mothers [are] refusing their commission and the sacred fathers [are] endangered" (117). Alfred Habegger, in his 1989 book, *Henry James and "The Woman Business,"* agrees with Trilling that James's book is anti-feminist, but unlike Trilling, Habegger criticizes this ostensible authorial position, calling *The Bostonians* "James's most reactionary book" (190). Habegger's reading of James is in part biographical; the critic reads James's "reactionary" position as an attempt to champion the conservative views about gender held by his father, Henry James, Sr. As we have seen earlier, Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett, two feminist critics, likewise

see in James's novel an indisputable statement against nineteenth-century changes in gender roles. Most of these critics cite the final scene, in which Basil Ransom prevents Verena from giving a lecture on woman's rights and takes her away to marry her, as proof of James's anti-feminist bias. One recent critic, Thomas F. Bertonneau, has argued that this heterosexual union in is an undeniably happy ending, positing that Basil's actions at the end are "essentially Christian" in that they save Verena from Olive's "coercion" (88, 90). Although Bertonneau claims that his reading does not suggest James is attacking gender reform *per se,* his is clearly a conservative interpretation that seems very like Trilling's approval of the novel's reinstatement of the status quo.

The other side of this debate, those who find approval, or at least sympathy, for "the agitation on [women's] behalf" in *The Bostonians*, begins with Judith Fetterley's unprecedented analysis in *The Resisting Reader*. Fetterley claims a resistant reader will see that, "While the most James can finally do in response to the suffering [of women] he so clearly perceives is to adopt the more subtle sexism of romanticizing it, [ . . . ] there is nevertheless a revolutionary message latent in *The Bostonians*" (152). That no one has noticed this intention before, according to Fetterley, can be attributed to the misogynist assumptions that inform the analysis of previous critics like Trilling, F. W. Dupee, Irving Howe, and others. Thus, Fetterley recoups James's novel for feminist consideration that is not oppositional. In this way, she clears a way for recent generations of scholars to read *The Bostonians* as a subversive text about heterosexual norms. For instance, Terry Castle claims that "the importance of James's literary experiment in *The Bostonians* should not be underestimated. He is the first major modern writer [ . . . ] to open a space for a sympathetic reading of a lesbian character" (177).[7] Kathleen McColley goes a step

further, arguing that James consciously challenges the status quo: "James focuses on female relationships and their implied homoeroticism, suggesting liberating possibilities inherent in female friendship" (151). In fact, McColley argues, the author "privileges these types of relationships by creating a dialogic between conventional, masculine discourse and expansive, feminine language" (151).

Of course, many recent critics (and some earlier ones as well) stress the indeterminacy of the novel's political position, such as Jean Gooder, who concludes, "[at the end of the novel] we are still left with glaringly unreconstructed oppositions" which enact "the 'bewildering modernity' of James's subject" (114). Gooder's contention encapsulates the point I have hoped to make by presenting this critical debate at length, that such a lack of consensus about James's agenda proves the impossibility of claiming for *The Bostonians* any definitive political purpose, feminist, anti-feminist, or otherwise. Therefore, the following analysis is concerned, not with James's intentions, but with his insights. It is, after all, *The Bostonians*'s insightful portrait of feminist activist heroines that connects it to the other novels in the tradition I have developed thus far. The most telling characteristic of a work in this tradition is its impact on its real-world counterpart, the ways it contributes to the formation and continuing viability of actual feminist oppositional communities. In a work overtly sympathetic to the woman's movement, one can first say confidently that it attempts to model a vision of reform for its readers to emulate and then proceed with an analysis of this vision. An ambiguous novel like James's, however, is not so easily categorized. Once again, the author's intentions are impossible to elucidate, although I think it safe to assert that he was not, like the other authors I study, consciously writing to either convince his readership to support the

"agitation on [women's] behalf," or to help feminist activists improve the way they conduct their political work. Nevertheless, I believe the key to opening a productive dialogue, although perhaps a speculative one, between *The Bostonians* and the nineteenth-century woman's rights movement lies in Lucia T. Ames's otherwise scathing commentary.

Ames begins her review by admitting that one often wishes to "see himself [ . . . ] in the light of other people's opinions; [ . . . ] because there is a certain satisfaction in seeing what is familiar through the eyes of another, if that other be a man of insight" (82). She continues by saying she anticipated just such a revelation when James's novel was published, seeing it as an "opportunity to obey the injunction 'Know thyself."[8] Clearly, Ames's subsequent evaluation reveals that she gained no such satisfaction from the Jamesian portrait of the woman's movement, and by extension, she does not, at least in this case, find the author to be a "man of insight." Ames's dissatisfaction stems from two things. First, she charges *The Bostonians* (fairly, I would argue) with a pervasive vagueness about the tenets of feminist reform: "We nowhere find any bill of particulars as to the causes of martyrdom and tyranny under which women are at present suffering, and we do not recollect that any specific demands are made whereby this terrible condition of things shall be ameliorated" (82). As noted above, Ames's other accusation is that the novel is full of "abnormal women" who bear no resemblance to actual feminist reformers; unfortunately, this complete disassociation between the actual and fictional activists prematurely shuts down a potentially useful reading experience.

If James's novel is weak in portraying concrete arguments, it is nonetheless an exhaustive, accomplished study of the psychology of reform movements in general, and

the woman's rights movement in particular. Despite Ames's dismissal, James is unquestionably a "man of insight," and as such, I contend that his perceptive depiction of these particular Bostonians could have been a useful tool for helping a nineteenth-century feminist activist "Know [her]self." I do not mean to suggest that the woman's rights movement was a monolithic entity, or that it was plagued across the board by the shortcomings James identifies. Rather, I would submit that by being so quick to discredit James's vision, Ames and other real-world activists missed an opportunity to improve their oppositional community by gleaning some lessons from a fictional portrayal relevant to all groups working together to bring about social change, and in particular those working to eradicate the power imbalance created by sexism and other types of oppression. When reading *The Bostonians* with Ann Ferguson's model of an ideal oppositional community[9] in mind, one sees that the novel warns its readers of the inherent instability and ineffectualness of a feminist reform community that does not originate from two essential elements, revolutionary love and existential communitarianism. Most of the other novels in this study arguably rely on the feminist notion often expressed in the slogan, "the personal is political," a notion seen in the ways activism evolves in these novels from their characters' individual experiences and affective relationships. However, in *The Bostonians*, both Olive and Verena must learn that to be successful, their political ideals must have relevance to their personal lives, and by extension their ideology must be suffused with sincere passion. Because they do not understand this connection at the outset, their attempt at forming a feminist oppositonal community is doomed to fail, and one could argue that the tragedy of *The Bostonians* lies in this wasted opportunity.

The genesis of this failure is presented in the early pages of *The Bostonians*, which depict the initially flawed nature of Olive's and Verena's activist work. Each heroine's flaw is different, but its origin is the same: a belief in the impersonal nature of feminist ideals. The reader is first aware of Olive's desire to be detached from personal entanglements when she says of her sister, Mrs. Luna, that she could hate her "if she had not forbidden herself this emotion as directed to individuals" (41). Soon thereafter, Olive has a similar thought upon considering how handsome Basil is and how much he probably dislikes feminist reform: "[I]t had already been a comfort to her, on occasions of acute feeling, that she hated men, as a class, anyway" (51). In both instances, Olive consciously detaches her emotional responses from individuals; instead, she thinks of people as abstractions, belonging to a group instead of existing as idiosyncratic humans. Clearly, Olive's feminist zeal is of a piece with this reliance on abstraction. She "regulated her conduct by lofty principles" and she has "a theory she devotedly nursed" about the way she should interact with poorer people (52). While neither "lofty principles" nor a "theory" of correct behavior is inherently flawed, Olive's reliance on them suggests, as does her thinking of people as a "class," that her feminist work is grounded in rigid ideas instead of springing from unmitigated interaction with the actual world. The narrator makes the reader privy to the insidious dark side of Olive's abstract activist impulse, an elitist desire to distance herself from the types of people she finds vulgar or distasteful: "Miss Chancellor would have been much happier if the movements she was interested in could have been carried on only by the people she liked, [ . . . ]. A common end, unfortunately, however fine as regards a special result, does not make community impersonal" (129). What Olive intuits (and dislikes) is that the effort to effect

a fundamental shift in a society's ideology must begin materially, with diverse individuals becoming "personal" with each other, and it is this breaking down of barriers between "types" (at least, barriers between herself and types she dislikes) that Olive disdains. As Nina Auerbach has noted, for Olive "feminism's main drawback is the intrusion of other women" (127). While I would argue that Olive changes her mind about this drawback over the course of the novel, her initial preference for reform ideals over individual reformers is her downfall.

Like Olive's initial vision of reform work, Verena's activist endeavors as a public speaker are described as "impersonal." Before Verena's first speech, her father, Selah Tarrant, intimates to his audience that "any success that he and his daughter might have had was [ . . .] thoroughly impersonal"(79). Selah repeats the term after the performance, reminding his audience that "the affair was so impersonal"(87). Of course, Selah Tarrant's actions and words are presented by the narrator as often suspect or insincere. However, Verena's words echo his sentiments when she repeatedly responds to her admirers, "It isn't *me*." While this protestation might also be taken as judicious self-effacement, the narrator implies that Verena is not in charge of her talent: "She proceeded slowly, cautiously, as if she were listening for the prompter, [ . . . ] Then memory, or inspiration, returned to her, and presently she was in possession of her part" (84). In this context, "impersonal" means something quite different from Olive's usage. Ostensibly, it means that Verena has no interest in personal fame and aggrandizement for her "gift." The underlying suggestion, however, is that Verena is not in control of her words or actions; she is only responding to a "prompter." The narrator provides some insight into Verena's "impersonal" interest in her work when he confides to the reader, "Verena took

life, as yet, very simply; she was not conscious of so many differences of social complexion" (97). Specifically, this passage refers to Verena's ignorance about class hierarchy in Boston, but it can be inferred that she has done little critical thinking on her own about societal inequalities, financial, gendered or otherwise. It is clear from this passage that Verena has not come to her reform work through personal reflection, and it is the absence of this internal process that is Verena's shortcoming. Like Olive's belief in principles and theories, it is not an inherently evil characteristic; after all, Verena is a young girl who lacks experience. However, this shortcoming, like Olive's, is the ultimate reason for her failed attempt at being a feminist activist, by making her vulnerable to pressure from the status quo.

At this stage in her life, Verena has committed herself to gender reform prematurely because she has not experienced the critical self-awareness necessary to be a successful activist. Ferguson calls this transformative experience the "existential moment": "This is the reflexive moment of subjectivity, when the person evaluates and critiques who she is and what she takes as her interests [. . . . ] It is a moment of self-understanding" during which one "can reject, expand and reformulate the prudential and moral codes and norms the person has hitherto been taught to interpret as part of herself" ("Moral Responsibility" 127). Verena's situation seems peculiar because it is a reversal of the majority's maturation experience; instead of being raised in an environment where status quo interests are unquestioningly accepted as natural, Verena has grown up in a world equally complacent about the "naturalness" of defying those normative interests. What Lucia T. Ames calls Verena's "weakness" and Sallie Hall calls her "anemia of selfhood" (214) is only a youthful lack of reflection. However, her subsequent

experiences remind the reader that a successful feminist activist must independently commit herself to defying society's expectations, because it is almost impossible to maintain an oppositional stance unless it is freely chosen.

Although I would argue the nature of Olive and Verena's relationship changes dramatically in the book, the seeds of its dissolution are already present at its inception. Olive's distaste for the vulgarity and shabbiness of the reform world, which underlies her desire for an "impersonal community" is made clear by the narrator when he confides that Olive "mortally disliked" Miss Birdseye's home and she wonders "whether an absence of nice arrangements were a necessary part of the enthusiasm of humanity" (57). For Olive, the reality of reform life is much less appealing than her theories. This knowledge makes one suspicious of Olive's "preoccup[ation] with the romance of the people," and her express desire to "know some *very* poor girl" (62). The word "romance" implies the way Olive idealizes poverty and the "masses;" being intimately involved with someone from this class is one of her cherished theories. Given this context, it is not difficult to understand Olive's immediate attraction to Verena:

> With her bright, vulgar clothes, her salient appearance, she might have been a rope-dancer or a fortune-teller, and this had the immense merit, for Olive, that it appeared to make her belong to the 'people', threw her into the social dusk of that mysterious democracy which Miss Chancellor held that the fortunate classes know so little about, and with which (in a future possibly very near) they will have to count. (101)

The reader has also learned, however, that Verena is "very young and slim and fair" and speaks with "extraordinary simplicity and grace" (76, 84). Olive is drawn to Verena in

part because in the younger, poorer woman she has the opportunity to pursue her "romance of the people" without having to subject herself to the reality of their situation. In Olive's eyes, Verena's beauty, eloquence and charm makes her unlike the people, even if she belongs to them. As Olive believes, "Miss Tarrant might wear gilt buttons from head to foot, her soul could not be vulgar" (101).

At this moment, Olive feels Verena could be "a friend of her own sex with whom she might have a union of soul" (101). While Olive describes this future as dependent upon a "double consent," an ostensibly equal exchange, Olive actually plans to "[take] possession" of Verena, creating an inherently unequal relationship (101, 100). Olive believes that "if she could only rescue the girl from the danger of vulgar exploitation, could only constitute herself as proctectress and devotee, the two, between them, might achieve the great result" (104). Clearly, Olive feels overwhelming sympathy for Verena and what she perceives as the younger woman's vulnerable situation, and it is this sympathy which Olive hopes will bond them together in working for the "great result" (104). However, sympathy can sometimes have hidden costs, as Kristin Boudreau explains:

> Although sympathy presents itself as a mode of resemblance -- often understood as synonymous with agreement -- in fact it more often operates across spaces of unbridgeable difference [ . . . ]. [S]ympathy must begin with difference, which it can transcend only by transforming one side of the exchange into a version of the other. (23)

Olive thinks of Verena romantically as a "flower of the great Democracy" for whom it was "impossible to have an origin less distinguished" (128), both conditions which make

her profoundly different from Olive, who "belonged to the *bourgeoisie* – the oldest and best" (61). Verena's difference is what first attracts Olive; at the same time, however, Olive wants to bridge that difference by "train[ing] and polish[ing]" Verena to be as refined as herself (132).

Sympathy, then, is an inferior motivation for forming an oppositional community, because it is an emotion invested in radical difference, an investment that often leads to an unavoidable hierarchy of power. Ferguson's ideal model of reform community offers an alternative emotional bond between its members, "revolutionary love":

> The best possibility for developing a viable [oppositional community] arises when individuals involved [ . . . ] act out of revolutionary love rather than ego needs, guilt, or *obligations to principles of justice held only as abstract beliefs*. Revolutionary love involves a commitment to a set of ideals connected to social justice, such as the rights of all humans to material and social equality, to be heard, and to democratic participatory decisionmaking and autonomous self-development. It also involves emotional bonding with, and care and concern for, others who are denied these rights, a feeling of social kinship and imagined community with them, and a desire to renounce one's own social and material privileges in order to challenge such existing inequalities. ("Feminist Communities" 382, emphasis added)

Both revolutionary love and sympathy are concerned with bridging difference; however, revolutionary love is distinguished by both its egalitarian nature and its emphasis on reality instead of abstraction. It stems from "autonomous self-development," and ideally

produces an community among reformers in which the more privileged members voluntarily renounce their advantages. At the beginning of her friendship with Verena, however, Olive is motivated primarily by "abstract beliefs" which make her sympathize with, instead of love, her new friend. She theoretically wants to renounce her wealth in order to help less fortunate women, but in fact, she initially uses her money to disassociate Verena from her parents and their unrefined lifestyle. She also tries to re-make the young woman in her more privileged image, thus creating a dynamic of control from which she cannot later escape.

Although Verena is perhaps less accountable for her actions, given her age and inexperience, her role in the new friendship also falls short of Ferguson's ideal participation in an oppositional community. As I have argued earlier, Verena has not experienced the transformative "existential moment" in which a would-be reformer realizes her personal investment in reconstituting the status quo. In Ferguson's model, this individual's private revelatory moment would then prompt her to join with others who share her self-awareness through a process of "existential communitarianism." Ferguson explains, "It is existential as opposed to traditional communitarianism because it does not valorize the status quo norms of communities of birth or residence" ("Moral Responsibility" 131). In other words, one enters an oppositional community because she *chooses* to do so, not because she simply finds herself a part of it. On the contrary, Verena's earliest reform ideas evolve out of the circumstances of her birth, as Olive recognizes during the younger woman's first visit to the elegant home on Charles Street:

> [Verena] had been nursed in darkened rooms, and suckled in the midst of manifestations; she had begun to 'attend lectures', as she said, when she

> was quite an infant, because her mother had no one to leave her with at home. She had sat on the knee of somnambulists, and had been passed from hand to hand by trance-speakers; she was familiar with every kind of 'cure', and had grown up among lady-editors of newspapers advocating new religions, and people who disapproved of the marriage-tie. (105)

Olive thinks some of the doctrines Verena has internalized from this childhood are rather outlandish, such as her casual preference for "free unions" (105). Regardless of their propriety (or ostensible lack thereof), the text makes it clear that Verena's opinions at this point are really those of her parents. In moving from their home to Olive's, then, Verena is given the potential opportunity to begin thinking critically about these doctrines and perhaps determine her own reasons and methods for resisting gender inequality.

This first intimate meeting between the two heroines, however, does not open the space for a new, existential communitarianism for Verena (or Olive). Rather, it draws attention to Verena's tendency to embrace political (and personal) allegiances without much forethought. Olive asks Verena "where she had got her 'intense realization' of the suffering of women," and Verena responds rather enigmatically but "always smiling" by questioning "where Joan of Arc had got her idea of the suffering of France" (105). While Olive thinks this answer "prettily said," she "remembered afterward it had not literally answered the question" (105-6). Verena is unable to answer Olive's question because she has never answered it for herself; Olive is wrong to believe that Verena has ever had such an "intense realization." Olive continues to press, asking Verena "to assure her of this – that it was the only thing in all the world she cared for, the redemption of women, the thing she hoped under Providence to give her life to" (106). Verena's instant, short reply

is an interesting juxtaposition to Olive's earnest appeal: "Oh yes – I want to give my life! [ . . . ] I want to do something great!" (106). Revealed in this exclamation is Verena's enthusiasm, but also the vagueness of what she hopes to accomplish ("something great") as well as the suggestion that her work is perhaps partially motivated by an ambition for success and recognition. Olive ends their interview by asking Verena if she knows what it means to "give her life," to "renounce, refrain, abstain," for the cause of woman's rights: "'Oh, well, I guess I can abstain!' Verena exclaimed, with a laugh" (107). The reader, more so than Verena, realizes with what intense seriousness Olive asks this question, and Verena's flippant, good-natured response seems discordant. Olive, however, takes Verena's commitment seriously and soon thereafter, decides "to take a more complete possession of the girl" (145).

Anthony Scott makes an interesting observation about the progression of this friendship that begins so inauspiciously: "[O]nce Olive possesses [Verena] as an object, she begins to desire her as a person, who will belong to her not by contractual fiat but by choice" (61). Olive begins to think less of Verena as a "gifted being" and a "flower of the great Democracy" and instead sees her as an intimate friend. This change, along with Verena's responsive enthusiasm to Olive's feminist ideas, creates a stronger, more admirable bond between the two women. The ensuing months are the happiest and most promising in the women's friendship, a time described as "the most momentous period of Miss Chancellor's life" (170). Olive, seeing that Verena has "expanded, developed on a most liberal scale [ . . . ] had never known a greater pleasure" (178). Furthermore, the narrator says (although it is unclear whether this is his perspective or Olive's) that Verena "was disinterestedly attached to the previous things they were to do together; she cared

about them for themselves, believed in them ardently, had then constantly in mind" (178). Olive finds happiness in Verena's maturation and, if the narrative perspective is correct, Verena has become more thoughtful and engaged by their plans for feminist reform, developing a "disinterested attach[ment]" to them. The growing intimacy and interdependence of the two women is clear in the description of how they spend their evenings:

> [ . . . ] Olive often sat at the window with her companion before it was time for the lamp. They admired the sunsets, they rejoiced in the ruddy spots projected upon the parlour-wall, [ . . . ]. They watched the stellar points come out at last in a colder heaven, and then, shuddering a little, arm in arm, they turned away, with a sense that the winter night was even more cruel than the tyranny of men -- turned back to drawn curtains and a brighter fire and a glittering tea-tray and more and more talk about the long martyrdom of women, a subject as to which Olive was inexhaustible and really most interesting. (185)

This glimpse of domestic harmony reveals not only their genuine, reciprocal affection but also their mutual interest in the subject of woman's rights. While Olive is still the one more focused on the "long martyrdom of women" in this passage – she seems to be the one doing the talking – the implication is that Verena also, to a certain extent, finds the subject "really most interesting."

As the two women's commitment to each other and their reform work develops, so too does the reader's awareness of their surrounding oppositional community: "This little society was rather suburban and miscellaneous; it was prolific in women who trotted

about, early and late, with books from the Athenaeum nursed behind their muff, or little nosegays of exquisite flowers that they were carrying as presents to each other" (187). However, the dissension and condescension evident in some of this community's interaction suggests that it is a problematic society. Olive and Mrs. Farrinder, the well-known woman's rights leader, towards whom "Olive passed, in three months, from the stage of veneration to that of competition" (174), tacitly battle over who will publicly lead the movement (174). This clash between the two activists supports Auerbach's contention that "the larger community of women in *The Bostonians*" contains no "lovingly personal solicitude" (126). I would argue that Auerbach is too simplistic here; there are moments of personal solicitude in the community, especially regarding Miss Birdseye "of whom Olive saw more this winter than she had ever seen before" (188). As Miss Birdseye becomes integral to this inner circle, however, the reader sees that it is still a community founded more on sympathetic bonds rather than egalitarian, loving ones: "In her own person she appeared to Olive and Verena a representative of suffering humanity; the pity they felt for her was part of their pity for all who were weakest and most hardly used" (189). Miss Birdseye (like Verena previously) represents a class of people, instead of an individual human, and the pity that Verena and Olive feel for her seems almost identical to Olive's sympathy for Verena at the beginning of the novel. Without completely discounting the power of sympathy to unite these women, the tone here once again suggests an underlying condescension that prevents true revolutionary love.

The tensions within the larger community intimate that the feminist reformers, including Olive and Verena, have still not achieved a balance between their political

ideals of equality and their personal affinities for each other. Even though Olive now sees Verena as a unique individual, Scott's use of the words "belongs" and "possess" to describe their relationship reminds the reader of the flaws at its center. The choice to which Scott refers is not Verena's resolution to be a committed feminist activist per se, but it does allude to a pre-condition for this work that Olive thinks necessary, a decision never to marry. In a moment of violent emotion, Olive asks of Verena, "Promise me not to marry! -- ", although she amends this demand in a more calm mood the following day:

> I don't want your signature; I only want your confidence – only what springs from that. [ . . . ] You know what I think – that there is something noble done when one makes a sacrifice for a great good. [ . . .] It seems to me very poor, when friendship and faith and charity and the most interesting occupation in the world – when such a combination as this doesn't seem, by itself, enough to live for. (151)

Olive wants Verena to feel as she does, that it is best to renounce men and the marriage institution and be content with their work and friendship. Olive's ostensible motivation is to save Verena from being limited by marriage in order that she may continue her feminist work. However, the reader recognizes Olive's personal motivation as well. She wants to insure that no other attachments will take Verena away from her; Olive wants to continue "possessing" Verena. While the reader knows that Olive desperately wants this renunciation, she does not know what Verena thinks, other than "the girl was now completely [under] Olive's influence" and that "she wished to please her if only because she had such a dread of displeasing her" (153). Therefore, when Verena "declare[s] she

should like to promise" (153), it is not because she independently rejects heterosexual love, but because she hopes to make her friend happy by embracing her ideals.

The preference for a lifestyle outside the heterosexual norm which this exchange suggests has been given much attention by critics interested in *The Bostonians*'s portrayal of homoerotic (or homosocial) relationships; as with most aspects of James's novel, however, there is no consensus about the nature of this portrayal. Lucia T. Ames's review of James's "abnormal women" anticipates critics such as F. W. Dupee, who finds Olive a case of "perverse sexuality" (131), or Irving Howe, who says Olive's "unnatural" behavior is antithetical to "the rhythms of life" (165, 168). As we have seen, more recent critics have argued for a sympathetic reading of this female relationship. Terry Castle says Olive is "American literature's first lesbian tragic heroine" (171), and McColley argues that "James focuses on female relationships and their implied homoeroticism, suggesting liberating possibilities inherent in female friendships" (151). Regardless of these varying opinions, the scholars all agree that Olive and Verena's friendship is a contrast or alternative to heterosexuality. My reading, however, is closer to Anthony Scott's. He argues that what is "morally questionable about the bond between Olive and Verena is [ . . . ] not the sexuality of the tie as such but its structural resemblance to conventional (married) heterosexuality – that is, its asymmetry of power, its possessiveness, its use of coercion disguised as consent – that subjects it to critique" (60). Olive and Verena's relationship is destined to fail, not because it is so different from the heterosexual norm, but because in its imbalance of power it is too much like it.

It is this continuing dynamic – Olive's domination on one side and Verena's lack of agency on the other – that makes their oppositional community vulnerable to

normative pressure from the outside, a pressure embodied in the character of Basil Ransom. In *The Bostonians*, Basil is the only male character who disapproves of woman's rights, and as such, he seems an anomaly. However, as Habegger observes, Basil's marginal position is misleading: "Basil's solitary opposition to the women's movement reverses the actual power relations of nineteenth-century men and women" (225). While Basil's Southern background and his reactionary politics would mark him as unusual in a cosmopolitan place like Boston and New York, his virulent, condescending disapproval of the "roaring radicals" (37) working toward gender reform would have been a more common reaction in late 1870's America than that of Henry Burrage, an elite young man sympathetic to woman suffrage. Basil believes that there is "no place in public" for women and that "what is most agreeable to women is to be agreeable to men" (329). Although the narrator sometimes suggests that the reader will think Basil's ideas are ridiculous, they are only mildly exaggerated versions of quite typical arguments against woman's rights. Realizing, then, that Basil's ideas about woman's unequivocal domesticity and her subordinate marital role would carry the weight of the majority behind them in the real world (even if he is marginal to the reform world depicted in the novel) provides insight into Verena's eventual capitulation to his advances. One could make the case that "as a representative of his sex," Basil is the "most important personage in [this] narrative" (37) because he embodies the strength and seductiveness of conventional thought, showing its ability to undermine oppositional communities when they are not built on a solid foundation.

During one of Verena's first interviews with Basil, the reader is reminded that one reason Olive and Verena's oppositional community rests on a shaky foundation is

because Verena's rejection of the status quo has not been a fully informed, mature decision. Verena tells Olive that she wants to spend time with Basil because she is "curious" about the "other side" of the argument for gender reform. When Olive dismissively replies, "'Oh, heaven,'" Verena tells her, "'You must remember I have never heard it'" (293). When she does hear it, she is captivated in spite of herself. Although she finds his ideas "crudely profane," she nevertheless is "impressed by his manner and the novelty of a man taking that sort of religious tone about such a cause" (328). Until this point, Verena has only heard pro-woman's rights ideas talked about with such reverence. A few moments later, Basil tells Verena, "You think you care about [woman's rights], but you don't at all. They were imposed upon you by circumstances, by unfortunate associations, and you accepted them as you would have accepted any other burden, on account of the sweetness of your nature" (330). Without addressing the relative merits of woman's rights ideology, Basil has spoken the truth to Verena about the origin of her activist work; in fact, he even echoes her words from the beginning: "It isn't *you*, [. . .] but an inflated little figure" (328). Verena's reaction to his version of her development is chaotic and emotional, consistent with the confusion of one forced to question what she has always believed: "The description of herself as something different from what she was trying to be, the charge of want of reality, made her heart beat with pain; she was sure, at any rate, it was her real self that was there with him now, where she oughtn't to be" (331).

This conversation is one of many during which Basil continues to "press, press, always to press" (377) his ideas and his passion upon Verena until she is convinced she shares them. While one might want to argue that Verena's transformation is a

conservative version of the "existential moment," the epiphany that the traditional notions about heterosexuality and the roles of the sexes are the "truth," I would maintain that ample evidence in the text suggests otherwise. Habegger has argued that James's depiction of Verena is implausible because "it is all wrong that she should completely renounce thought for sentiment" (223). He claims this renunciation would be out of character, since "Verena has enjoyed an unusually unconstrained girlhood, [ . . . ] possesses a lively assertive spirit [ . . .] and loves excitement and activity" (223). However, I do not see that any of those qualities would make Verena an especially contemplative young woman. Rather, I would argue that, given her experience to date, it is perfectly in keeping with her character and her situation. As we have seen, Verena's commitment to feminism has not been fortified by sustained self-analysis or by a sincere, personal investment in this work. To date, she has pursued it primarily to please first her parents and then Olive, all of whom dominate the young woman at different times. Therefore, she is unable to resist a passionate appeal that does move her both emotionally and physically. Certainly, one should not underestimate the persuasive power of physical attraction and passion in this scene. As Jean Gooder remarks, for Verena, this outing with Basil "is the beginning of a growing equation of her 'real self' with her sexual self" (110). In the face of this overwhelming attraction, Verena has neither the strength of her personal convictions nor a truly supportive oppositional community to help her resist such a forceful heterosexual passion or the seductive acceptance of the status quo.

The narrator explains that when Verena finally admits to herself that she has succumbed to Basil's insistent pressing, "it was simply that the truth had changed sides; that radiant image began to look at her from Basil Ransom's expressive eyes" (374).

David Van Leer has argued that in this equation, Verena "admits that there is no qualitative difference between her two allegiances" (101). She has no more chosen a belief in traditional gender roles than she chose her feminist activism; rather, she has traded one dominating companion for another. What makes this "choice" particularly tragic is that it is made at the same time that Olive has an epiphany -- her own "existential moment" -- that opens the potential for a truly alternative relationship between the two women. After Olive has violently resisted and finally resigned herself to Verena's preference for Basil, she goes for a long walk near the water during which she thinks critically about her soon-to-end friendship: "Verena had submitted, she had responded, she had lent herself to Olive's incitement and exhortation [ . . .] but it had been a kind of hothouse loyalty, the mere contagion of an example, and a sentiment springing up from within had easily breathed a chill upon it" (397). Olive sees clearly that she has been the driving force behind Verena's activism. The younger woman has not personally chosen her work, and Olive sees for the first time the fragile nature of this kind of feminism, as well as her own role in Verena's defection from the movement. Nevertheless, when a few moments later, Olive fears that Verena has drowned in a boating accident, she realizes how personal her affection for Verena has become: "Her heart failed her [ . . . ] and she gave a cry, [. . . ] which expressed only a wild personal passion, a desire to take her friend in her arms again on any terms, even the most cruel to herself" (399).

The reader's first thought is that the terms "most cruel" to Olive would be Verena's marriage to Basil. However, the text has admitted that many of the terms of Verena's life have been "most cruel" to Olive. Previously, when Olive visits Verena's familial home, almost every aspect of it disgusts her. Seeing Mrs. Tarrant in her domestic

space lets Olive know "there was no manner of doubt left as to her being vulgar" (129). Olive is likewise horrified by their home, thinking there "was nothing in the house to speak of; nothing to Olive's sense, but a smell of kerosene" (132). This is the moment Olive definitively concludes she must separate Verena from her past and her family because she does not see why "when parents were so trashy this natural law [of filial affection] should not be suspended" (132). I would not argue that, from the narrative perspective anyway, Olive's dislike of the Tarrants is completely unjustified. However, I would suggest that Olive's refusal to accept anything about Verena's life heretofore is of a piece with her general impulse to dominate the young woman through a sympathetic, but not loving, bond. However, at the end, the reader sees how much Olive has grown through her relationship with Verena. She is willing to embrace her friend on any terms, not just her own. She no longer romanticizes Verena but accepts her as a fully autonomous, complete being, and through this realization, Olive registers a purely unselfish affection that opens her to the very personal nature of feminist reform work. The lesson for real-world feminist activists to learn from Olive's example is similar to one that Martha Nussbaum identifies in another novel James wrote during this time period, *The Princess Casamassima*: "the sort of thought [and emotion] we usually call personal promises a politics richer in humanity" than abstract ideology (210).[10] By extension, an oppositional community based on revolutionary love is better than one founded on sympathy alone. Olive's transformation, however, has come too late to save her relationship with Verena. When she returns to the cottage, she finds the younger woman alive, but "crushed and humbled" by Basil's insistence. Olive, however, has

given up her selfish desire to possess Verena by coercion, and simply "[takes] her hand with an irresistible impulse of compassion and reassurance" (399).

There is a gap in the action of *The Bostonians* after this pivotal scene, leading the reader to believe momentarily that their friendship will survive after all. On the contrary, this narrative lapse only creates the conditions necessary for one of the most sensational endings in American literature. As Verena is about to give her first great speech in Boston's Music Hall, Basil determines to "[wrest] her from the mighty multitude" (413) and make her his wife. With an increasingly disgruntled crowd chanting in the background, Basil goes to Verena backstage, and eventually silences all objections and pleadings from Mrs. Tarrant, Olive, and Verena to let the show continue and takes Verena out of the Hall and presumably to the altar. Like most novels about feminist activists, then, *The Bostonians* ends in the imminent marriage of the heroine. In this case, though, it is not the happy feminist conversion narrative in which the male becomes an enlightened supporter of gender reform. Instead, the promised marriage brings with it the silence of the heroine and the end of her reform work, which seems at first glance a patently anti-feminist activist plot, as in *Hannah Thurston.*[11] However, no one who pays attention to the violent, sinister language with which James describes this scene can argue the novel unequivocally advocates this conservative ending. To Verena's entreaty that she be allowed to speak for a moment to the crowd because she could "soothe them with a word," Basil tells her, "Keep your soothing words for me – you will have need of them all, in our coming time" (430). The ominous nature of this rejoinder underscores the final paragraph in the novel, in which Basil "by muscular force, wrenched her away" (432) from Olive, her parents, and the waiting audience, while Verena shrieks Olive's name.

Once they are outside, Verena claims she is glad now that it is over, but the narrator reveals, "[T]hough she was glad, [Basil presently discovered that, beneath her hood, she was in tears. It is to be feared that with the union, so far from brilliant, into which she was about to enter, these were not the last she was destined to shed" (433).

It is commonplace in Jamesian scholarship to see Olive as the tragic figure in this scene, perhaps because of the final description of her "offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces" (432) by the crowd as she ascends the platform.[12] However, I would argue that Verena's is the more tragic story. It is she who is sacrificed in "perhaps the most subversive ending to a heterosexual romance plot" (Kahane 78) because of Olive's and her own ignorance of the very personal nature of gender reform. Basil's subjugation of her, however, places her in the unenviable position of learning first-hand why women are working for more legal and social equality, although there seems to be little hope for any independence in this marriage. In contrast, Olive's earlier "existential moment" has signaled a change in the heroine's character. Although she has insisted through the book that she cannot publicly speak, it is Olive who "with a sudden inspiration [ . . . ] rushed to the approach to the platform" (431). Although she says she is "going to be hissed and hooted and insulted," she is greeted by a "hush [that] was respectful" as "the great public waited" to hear what she has to say (432-3). Sara Blair interprets this moment as one in which "Olive Chancellor becomes a newly heroic figure of feminist passion," pointing out the "possibilities Olive's performance opens up, for some genuinely democratic but regulated kind of cultural exchange" (165-6). Olive's encyclopedic knowledge of women's history, along with her thoughtful understanding of the tenets of feminist reform -- both of which are reiterated several times in the text --

makes her a potentially brilliant, persuasive orator. As we have seen, however, her ideology has too often been confined to an abstract plane. By the close of the novel, Olive has clearly changed through her relationship with Verena, and therefore is now able to complement her knowledge with the capacity for feeling a consistent, genuine revolutionary love for individuals. Thus, one way in which Olive's "feminist passion" is "newly heroic" is that her recent experiences have potentially altered her preference for an "impersonal community" of feminist activists. If so, she very well may become a truly committed member of a successful oppositional community.

In her essay, "The Other Bostonians: Gender and Literary Study," Elaine Showalter envisions the feminist potential for James's heroines. She takes the title from a letter James wrote to his brother after the novel's completion, in which the author laments, "I shall have to write another. 'The Other Bostonians'" (qtd. in Showalter 179). Showalter uses this declaration to imagine a "feminist *Other Bostonians*": "In this novel, perhaps, Verena would not leave Olive and would not be silenced; she would give her great speech, 'A Woman's Reason,' to cheering crowds at the Boston Music Hall, and Basil would go back to his pathetic dreams of avenging the fallen South" (180). As I have argued, this outcome would not be possible, given the flawed nature of Olive's and Verena's feminist activism throughout most of the book; however, Showalter's impulse to imagine a happy, feminist life for them outside the text suggests that this possibility is latent in their characters, that their shortcomings could be overcome in the future beyond the text. This potential should not be underestimated when considering *The Bostonians's* relevance to its contemporary feminist activist readers. As I have suggested, the majority of those readers ignored this relevance and chose not to learn the lessons of revolutionary

love and existential communitarianism James's novel could teach them. Nevertheless, the possibility that a better oppositional community could emerge from the flawed one in James's novel was not lost on at least one woman's rights activist, Celia B. Whitehead.

In 1887, Celia B. Whitehead, using the pseudonym Henrietta James, published a small 27-page pamphlet entitled "Another Chapter of 'The Bostonians.'" While this text is clearly intended as a parody of James's novel, the way Whitehead develops the characters and plot demonstrates she is a keen reader of the original story. In her brief introduction, Whitehead says she felt compelled to write another chapter because "Mr. James left the hero and heroines of his remarkable story at the most interesting period of their existence" (1). This passage suggests James's characters were on the cusp of a transition, a "most interesting" moment, rather than a resignation to their fates. In her chapter, Whitehead carries them through this transition. She picks up where the novel leaves off, with Olive approaching the podium. In this moment, Olive becomes an eloquent speaker in her own right, giving the speech "A Woman's Reason," which she knew by heart: "Then she went on, with a growing fervor, a new sense of power and responsibility, and a passionate enthusiasm, telling them what Verena would have told them" (4). In this tale of the other Bostonians, Olive has gained a "new sense of power and responsibility" from the ordeal through which she has passed. Whitehead imagines how Olive changes after embracing revolutionary love and recognizing how personal reform work should be:

> In the silence of her chamber that night Olive looked back over the past and saw that in trying to prepare Verena for this work she had been preparing herself. Perhaps it could not have been done in any other way.

> From that night she was a changed woman. If before she had been consecrated to the enfranchisement of woman, how much more now. The memory of the friend who had been so much to her and was now gone out of her life filled her with a pitying sweetness before unknown. Now there was no more hesitation, no more pushing and urging others forward. She went forward herself, and those who had known her before marveled at the change, and all who listened to her thrilled with the words she spoke. (5)

Whitehead recasts the path for Olive's future. Instead of seeing, as Basil had, Olive "offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces" (James 432), the revisionist author imagines her emerging from this horrific experience with a new purpose and commitment. The affection for her friend lingers as "a pitying sweetness" whose revolutionary quality motivates Olive to treat others in an egalitarian way. Instead of "pushing and urging others forward," she now pushes herself to feminist agitation without hiding behind her money or her control of others, and the result is a successful, thrilling impact on those to whom she appeals.

In Whitehead's addition the reader sees the fruitful aftermath of Olive's existential moment, and she also sees the painful yet necessary experience Verena must endure to prompt her chosen participation in a feminist oppositional community. Verena's trial is, not surprisingly, the reality of her marriage to Basil. Whitehead exposes the passionate, sexual nature of their union, as opposed to a preferable companionate marriage founded on shared interests and a free exchange of ideas. Whitehead's narrator wonders, after "[Basil] had taken legal possession of her – what more was to be said or

done?" (7). Their marriage is based on a "dreadful nothingness": "They had no mutual acquaintances, their literary tastes were as divergent as can well be imagined" (7). In this other chapter, Basil, bored with his wife now that she is conquered and still longing for material comfort, once again spends a great deal of time with Mrs. Luna, who rehires him as Newton's tutor. During these lonely, empty months, Verena begins to question her decision, although in a parodic jab at James's narrator, Whitehead's refuses to confirm exactly the nature of these questions:

> Did Verena reflect that as soon as he really "got hold" of her she had ceased to "please him very much"? And as she thought of Olive did she feel that the world was all a great trap or trick of which women were ever the punctual dupes, so that it was the worst of the curse that rested upon them, that they must most humiliate those who had most their cause at heart? [ . . .] Did she ask herself if women must forever be the sport of men's selfishness and avidity? Did she ask why she had consented to be bound to please one individual and failed even to please him thus, when, free, she could be "charming to all the world"?
>
> These are mysteries into which I shall not attempt to enter, speculations with which I have no concern; it is sufficient for us to know that all human effort never seemed to her so barren and thankless. (18)

This litany of questions shows Verena, at the depth of her despair, questioning her previous suppositions and realizing for the first time the reality of a traditional heterosexual union and the concomitant vulnerability of women. These questions prepare her for her "existential moment," her conversion through personal experience to the need

for gender reform. In this passage, Whitehead's mimicry of James is significant; in its form and tone it recalls to the reader the barrage of self-inquiry Olive experiences in the original text before her own existential moment.

Basil leaves Verena for Mrs. Luna soon thereafter, and Verena, along with her baby daughter, returns to Olive, for whom she renames the baby. In their imagined reunion, Olive reiterates her desire to "take her friend in her arms again on any terms," adding "the baby too" to this union (19). At this point, the reader learns that Olive has "taken up active work" and "her compassion had sweetened and mellowed into an exquisite tenderness" (19). Verena senses the change in her friend and finds in their reconciled friendship the true alternative to an unequal, coercive relationship, a friendship founded on revolutionary love: "She felt that all the old intensity and constraint were gone and a sense of freedom, security, and repose, that she had felt the want of ever since the fateful night at Miss Birdseye's when she first met Olive Chancellor and Basil Ransom, came to her" (19). It is important that Whitehead implicate Olive as well as Basil in Verena's former unhappiness; it is not only the shortcomings of her male partner that have made her miserable, but also the previously misguided sympathy of her friend. Their new friendship, however, is source of strength for the recently abused wife. Once Verena heals from the shock of her abandonment, she also returns to her activist work, "all the time with a look of one who sees in reality something dreamed of before" (22). Verena has experienced firsthand the painful reality of gender oppression, but through the supportive, respectful love of her also-changed friend, she determines to oppose it with renewed vigor.

Whitehead imagines how Olive's and Verena's transformative experiences improve their activist community: "There were two to carry on the work instead of one – two, better prepared than either could have been without the help of Basil Ransom and Adeline Luna" (25). After this initial recommitment, their oppositional community is fortified -- as are those of so many fictional feminist activists -- by an equal, loving heterosexual relationship. Verena is revisited by Henry Burrage, who also has changed over the years. His "fondness for music had grown to a passion" (26) and he has become a music teacher. He still loves Verena, and offers her a relationship based on mutual respect and autonomy: "He could live without her and should never urge her to live with him. The man who wants a woman to marry him who has to be urged into it, he could not comprehend. Her work should be held sacred. She should not be *his*, should belong to herself and be free, without command or solicitation from him, to live her own life" (26). Olive is happy about this offer, in contrast to her hatred of Basil's proposal, because she now realizes "a man *could* be found possessing the other generally recognized and essential qualifications who would not interpret marriage to mean ownership" (26-7). Thus, Whitehead ends her revisionist ending to James's novel with a promise of happiness, now that Olive and Verena have learned their lessons about the true nature of an oppositional community: "[T]his time we leave [them] in smiles and not in tears" (27).

Whitehead's response to James's work is atypical of nineteenth-century woman's rights activists like Lucia T. Ames in that it engages the book on its own terms, rather than dismiss it out of hand. Nevertheless, Whitehead's other chapter speaks volumes about *The Bostonians's* potential, if not actualized, impact on real world feminist activists. Whitehead sees clearly that James's heroines are not irredeemable dupes of the

latest fad; rather, they are flawed humans who have the capacity for making great changes in society. However, each must first learn that before she can change the world, she must change herself. In this "other chapter" of *The Bostonians,* the novel's implied message for feminist activists becomes explicit: the political is always personal.

Notes

[1] In his introduction to the Penguin edition of the novel, Charles Anderson notes that "*The Bostonians* is unique among the thirty-six volumes of Henry James's fictions. It is one of the very few to be set in America with an all-American cast of characters, the great majority being set in Europe. It is the only one of his novels, with the single exception of *The Princess Casamassima*, that deals with a sociological subject. One is impressed by James's progressiveness in choosing a subject in the 1880s that is so much in the air today: the problem of equal rights for women" (7).

[2] The review is actually signed "L.T.A."; however, critics who discuss the review, most notably Alfred Habegger, attribute the review to Ames, who was an involved suffragist and contributor to the *Woman's Journal*. See Habegger, *Henry James and the "Woman Business*," pages 228-29.

[3] One notable exception is the creative response of Celia B. Whitehead, which will be discussed at length later in the chapter.

[4] This trend continues to the present date. With the exception of Nan Bauer Maglin's article, "Fictional Feminists in *The Bostonians* and *The Odd Women,*" Sara deSaussure Davis's "Feminist Sources in *The Bostonians*," and (to a lesser degree) Habegger's book, I have found no critical analysis of the novel that pays more than perfunctory attention to its relationship to the historical woman's rights movement.

[5] An exception is Maglin's reading of the novel alongside George Gissing's *The Odd Women*. However, Maglin contrasts the books' perspectives, arguing that Gissing's novel supports feminist reform while James's novel is against it.

[6] See Carol Levander's chapter in *Voices of the Nation*, "Bawdy Talk: The Politics of Women's Public Speech in Henry James's *The Bostonians* and Sarah J. Hale's *The Lecturess*." For readings of *Hannah Thurston* as an inspiration for *The Bostonians*, see Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Gossett's *Declarations of Independence*, pages 171-76 and Andrew Taylor's *Henry James and the Father Question*, pages 152-54.

[7] Castle refers to James's depiction of Olive Chancellor.

[8] While Ames is ostensibly writing about all of Boston, it is not unfair to apply this injunction specifically to the woman's rights movement, given that the review is published in its official journal.

[9] I discuss this idea at length on pages 10-13.

[10] Joyce A. Rowe applies Nussbaum's ideas about *The Princess Casamassima* to *The Bostonians* in her essay, "'Murder, what a lovely voice!': Sex, Speech, and the Public/Private Problem in *The Bostonians*."

[11] The story of a heterosexual romance in which the hero is converted to gender reform by his love interest – a convention in much feminist activist fiction - *is* contained in *The Bostonians*, if only to be parodied. Miss Birdseye's sustained fantasy of Verena's converting Basil imagines just such a relationship.

[12] For discussions of Olive as a tragic heroine, see for example, Terry Castle, Judith Fetterley and Claire Kahane.

# CODA

In considering the role that fiction played in creating and sustaining the first wave of feminist activism in America, it seems appropriate to return to "Tenements and Teacups."[1] The story begins with a group of suffragists, known as the Squad, returning to headquarters "pale and weary" from their hard work canvassing (47). One of the squadmates brings food to her friends, convincing them to pause for a well-deserved break. Despite their tired demeanors, the women are clearly devoted to their cause and reluctant to slow down. As one squadmate observes, "I suppose we suffragists don't realize how fervent and enthusiastic we are compared with the general run of people who aren't doing anything but drifting with the tide" (55). The suffragists are so fervent, in fact, that even as they pause from their actual work, they continue to talk about it, sharing stories about their experiences canvassing that week. In each case, the tale is about another person who has converted to the cause, demonstrating the way enthusiasm for suffrage has spread in both the poorest and richest parts of town, creating new supporters and feminist activists. As I have argued earlier, this act of storytelling increases the Squad's sense of community, linking its members to both the women in the room and the ones they can imagine through these stories. I would also argue that this awareness of community in turn boosts the spirit of the squadmates, helping them see the fruits of their efforts and adding to their own fervor and enthusiasm. At the end of "Tenements and

Teacups," it seems clear that the storytelling, as well as the food, has revived them, as "rested and joyous, [they] went back to work" (65).

In many ways, this story encapsulates the optimism of feminist activist fiction written between the years 1870 and 1920. The squadmates exhibit an unequivocal belief in the rightness of their cause and its potential for changing the world through gender reform, and they gain strength from belonging to a community of like-minded reformers. The author, by extension, firmly believes that storytelling plays a pivotal role in bringing about these changes and contributing to such a community, by attracting new members and sustaining those already involved in the movement. It is appropriate, too, that this story was written in 1920, the year the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified and suffragists were still feeling heady from their success and confident about their future. However, what feminist activists could not realize at that moment was that most of their revolutionary work was behind them, instead of in front of them. It was the process of their activist efforts throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not the end result of the vote, which actually brought about the most advances for women. By entering the public sphere *en masse* and chipping away over the decades at educational and professional barriers, woman's rights activists had exponentially increased opportunities for American women, although many inequalities still existed. Unfortunately, once they achieved their ultimate goal, the enfranchisement of women, most political communities of feminist reformers disbanded, and after a honeymoon period in which both Republicans and Democrats courted new women voters, their voices had a relatively negligible role in actually determining U. S. legal policy.

In some ways, female suffrage came at a particularly inauspicious moment: two years after the end of World War I. American society, rattled by the tumultuous violence and cultural upheaval it had just endured, attempted a forced return to "normalcy," including a preference for traditional gender roles. This conservative backlash is clear in an essay from the June 1919 issue of *Scribner's Magazine* entitled "The Limits of Feminine Independence." The author claims that the recent world war had "served to set once more in high light an old truth [ . . . ] [of] the fundamental differences between the sexes which quasi-feministic propaganda had begun to discredit and confuse" (qtd. in Behling 160). The result, according to the article, is that America has returned "automatically to primitive instincts and the habits of the tribe" (qtd. in Behling 160). Although he probably did not intend this interpretation, the author's use of "primitive instincts" is telling, in that it could describe a visceral, fearful reaction to something considered dangerous. In post-war America, anything perceived as a challenge to patriotism or to the nuclear family -- both conservative mainstays of the culture -- was considered threatening. According to historian Sarah Jane Deutsch, American society's "primitive instincts" thus led it particularly to fear the spread of communism, aptly named the Red Scare, which was ostensibly working to overthrow the democratic government and capitalist economic system. Additionally, it expressed fear of homosexuality (especially that of women), which was perceived as a corrupting influence on conventional family life.

Women's unorthodox feminist activity, especially collectively agitating for reform, was also perceived as threatening, and as such, it was quelled by connecting it to these two sources of anxiety. According to Deutsch, "In an era in which any organizing at

all was suspect, women in the 1920s could either organize together for equality and rights and be labeled 'red' and fired, or they could try to go it alone" (424). Furthermore, during the 1920's and 30's, "Women did not cease [ . . .] to rely on other women for support and intimacy. As with politics, however, the range of tolerated behavior shrank, and what had been acceptable before the war was now questionable" (439). Just as women became reluctant to protest together because they could lose their jobs, America's pervasive homophobia discouraged them from creating large reform communities of women because of potential social ostracism. Thus, the threat of association with communism and homosexuality played a large role in ending widespread, "acceptable" feminist activism like we see in suffrage novels from the 1910's, such as *For Rent – One Pedestal*, *The Sturdy Oak*, and later, Haskell's short story cycle, *Banner Bearers*.

Nevertheless, the feminist activist heroine did not fade from the literary scene; rather, the disillusionment and conservative political backlash she experienced in the wake of women's enfranchisement were incorporated into her story. A brief look at two novels from the 1930's, Sinclair Lewis's *Ann Vickers* and Janet Ayer Fairbank's *Rich Man, Poor Man*, demonstrates this development. Both Lewis and Fairbank supported woman suffrage in the 1910's; Lewis's wife, Dorothy Thompson, was an ardent suffragist, and Fairbank likewise was quite involved in the movement. However, the authors' ambivalent portrayals of their heroines' feminism a little more than a decade after ratification reveal that the writers had become disenchanted with the promise of a better world through woman suffrage, and in some ways, had acquiesced in the reactionary worldview of mainstream America. In each case, the heroine's suffrage work serves as a gateway activity into further social reform work. However, while Lewis's

Ann Vickers ends up a happy, married woman who defines her feminism very differently than she does at the beginning of the novel, Fairbank's Barbara Smith ends up completely on the fringe of American culture, poor, divorced from her husband and child, but still clinging to her initial feminist idealism.

The key to each woman's development is her adjustment to the more conservative social realities in America after suffrage. As the heroine who negotiates this change as mainstream society would prefer, it is appropriate that Ann Vickers becomes disillusioned with organized feminist activism even before women get the vote. She believes she has "stopped being an individual" and has become a "cog" instead; therefore, she decides to quit "and find out what Ann Vickers is now and whether she's become anything besides 'one of those young women at Suffrage Headquarters'" (132-3). While she still believes women should be enfranchised, Ann's rejection of communal feminist activism as a threat to her individuality is in line with the way young women's attitudes changed in the twenties and thirties. According to Deutsch, women "who wanted to succeed in the public world [ . . .] believed the most important thing to leave behind was 'sex-consciousness,' their sense of themselves as women who shared interests with other women. They abandoned any organized quest for general social reform and opted instead for individualism" (424). Nevertheless, Ann's experiences as a suffragist, and specifically, a brief stint she spends in jail, lead her to her future vocation: prison reform. While she does not abandon her goal of improving society, she disengages from both communal activity and a focus on gender reform, charting a more individual, less inflammatory path that proves successful in Lewis's book.

It is perhaps not surprising that Ann's "successful negotiation" of an increasingly conservative America includes her wholesale rejection of both lesbianism and communism. In an introduction to the novel's reprint, Nan Bauer Maglin notes that "During the 1920s, Ann becomes more moderate, gradually replacing her earlier radical views with liberal ones" (xvi). However, Lewis makes it clear that his heroine's early "radicalism" never included homosexuality. Ann is repulsed by what she calls the "cloying hypnotism of involuted sex" during her college days, and she dreads the "treacherous sweetness" of the attention she receives from her roommate, Eula (69). The novel endorses Ann's homophobia, as it does her individualism, as a trait that save her from what post-war America perceived as the excesses of feminist activism. In fact, part of Ann's project as prison superintendent later in the novel is to eradicate homosexual relationships among the inmates to "protect" many of the young women who are incarcerated. Just as the author insists on Ann's heterosexuality, he leaves no doubt that his heroine is patriotic. While she is not completely unsympathetic to socialist and communist views early in the novel, she rejects them later on, and the novel demonstrates how much more effective she is when she works within the system. Ann writes moderate articles about prison reform and publishes them in a mainstream liberal magazine, the *Statesman*. These articles are compared to the vituperative reaction of the *Proletarian Pep*, "the chief Communist journal of America." This journal's editorialist calls the *Statesman* the "wishy-washiest of all milk and water liberal sheets" and says that Ann is a "Social Fascist [ . . . ] [who] under a disguise of so-called Liberalism [is] secretly helping the Capitalists to bring about war with the U. S. S. R." (384-5). By parodying communist rhetoric, Lewis distances his heroine from any potentially threatening connection to

radical social movements, as he distances her from lesbianism through her obvious disgust. In this way, Lewis panders to the reactionary fears of his readers and presents a "milk and water" version of reform that his readers will find palatable.

However, I do not mean to suggest that Ann Vickers is a completely conservative, anti-feminist heroine. In fact, much of her story is incredibly unconventional. She has an affair, an abortion, goes through a divorce, and finally marries a man who is not purely respectable. The novel does not judge Ann for these actions, but depicts her sympathetically as a complex, fully realized character. Furthermore, Ann achieves great personal success; she is known nationally as a leading expert on the penal system and is even given an honorary doctorate for her progressive leadership in this system. In this way, we see the true legacy of earlier feminist activist heroines. It is now possible to imagine such a liberated personal and professional life for a woman who is happily accepted by mainstream society. However, the price for such acceptance in the 1930's was a rejection of the very movement that made women's success possible. In an 1927 *Harper's* article, "Feminist – New Style," Dorothy Dunbar Bromley writes, "The pioneer feminists were hard-hitting individuals, and the modern young woman admires them for their courage, even while she judges them for their zealotry and their inartistic methods . . . They fought her battle, but *she* does not want to wear their mantle" (qtd. in Deutsch 424).

In such a conservative climate, part of this rejection is the affirmation of those "primitive instincts" about the differences between the sexes noted above. Ann Vickers articulates such instinctual thoughts when she says, "How simple we were when we used to talk about something called 'Feminism'! We were going to be just like men, in every

field. We can't. Either we're stronger (say, as rulers, like Queen Elizabeth) or we're weaker, in our subservience to children. For all we said in 1916, we're still women, not embryonic men – thank God!" (409). Thus, the meaning of "feminism" for Ann has changed to accommodate a return to traditional notions about sexuality, and Lewis uses the term, without irony, when he describes Ann as "the Captive Woman, the Free Woman, the Great Woman, the Feminist Woman, the Domestic Woman, the Passionate Woman, the Cosmopolitan Woman, the Village Woman – the Woman" (562). This litany of contradictory adjectives seems an attempt to account for Ann Vickers's more "mature" individualistic definition of feminism, which allows her to be domestic and captive, while still being free. In many ways, though, the list seems more like a veneer for the novel's conservative ending. These words are used to describe Ann as she speaks to her new husband in "meek ecstasy," telling him he has saved her from "the prison of ambition, the prison of desire for praise, the prison of [her]self" (562). Here, the revolutionary potential of the feminist activist heroine has been completely diffused by her retreat to the role of self-effacing wife, even if she has a lucrative career and is allowed to vote.

Written three years later, Barbara Smith's story in *Rich Man, Poor Man* is the reverse image of Ann Vickers's. Instead of the story of a feminist activist who has "successfully" negotiated the reactionary climate of post-war America, Barbara's story seems a cautionary tale about the activist who remains committed to her radical ideas. Like Hamlin Garland's feminist activist heroine, Ida Wilbur, Barbara begins her political career in the Midwest, campaigning to improve farmers' economic conditions through the Progressive Party.[2] Barbara is also an ardent suffragist, and when she marries Hendricks, a wealthy young man she meets through the Progressive Party, she returns to Chicago

with him and continues agitating for both causes. The first indication that Barbara's story will not turn out like Ann's is her immersion in the suffrage movement. Instead of becoming disillusioned with its communal nature and focus on gender equality, Barbara grows increasingly militant in her commitment. She joins the Congressional Union, the historical precursor of Alice Paul's National Woman's Party. Hendricks disapproves of this decision because he thinks it indecorous for a society wife to be affiliated with such an infamous group, as well as imprudent to attack the President by picketing him (a tactic of the Congressional Union) when he supports much of the Progressive platform. However, Barbara insists that there is "only one plank that [she is] interested in, and that is woman suffrage" (268). While Fairbank, like Lewis, portrays suffrage activity in a predominantly sympathetic way, the novel nevertheless shows how Barbara's militancy alienates her from her husband and friends. Hendricks finds her zealotry "unnatural" in a woman and believes that her emotional capacity is limited by her political fervor: "It was strange, considering ardor was what she brought to her crusades, that it should be lacking in her private life, but he was quite certain that when a cause which seemed to her important intervened, softer considerations of a personal nature would fall into second place" (289). The implicit criticism here is that she puts her activist work before her primary roles as wife and mother.

Once World War I is over and woman suffrage is won, Barbara does not, like most feminist activists, retreat from organized political activism; rather, she alienates herself further from both her family and her community by becoming intimate with the radical Bohemian subculture. She and Hendricks are estranged because he was unfaithful during the war, and while everyone believes she should forgive him, she welcomes the

freedom she feels justified in claiming. Thus, she moves to New York to be near Della Masters, a woman she has met during the suffrage campaigns. Once there, Della introduces her to Luke McCarthy, a writer for the *Liberator*, and other Bolshevik sympathizers. Hendricks visits her in New York, and is "amazed to see that she had apparently accepted without question a miscellaneous group of Greenwich Villagers, [ . . . ] and that she excitedly accepted their dictum as a new gospel of freedom" (595). In his opinion, "She was much more combative than she had been before, and she now considered herself an authority on matters about which her husband suspected she knew very little about" (595-6). It should be noted that Hendricks' life has progressed very differently than Barbara's. He has entered the family's banking business and tempered his earlier liberal views considerably, and his development has caused an even deeper rift between himself and his wife. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume his more conservative opinions color this depiction of Barbara's political activity. Regardless of the accuracy of Hendricks's assessment, however, he is right in seeing that Barbara has moved out of mainstream culture. The text does not spend much time with her while she is a part of this subculture; instead, Barbara is increasingly marginalized, while her husband's story becomes central. The reader loses sight of her completely shortly after Hendricks' visit, when she sails to Russia with Della, where they hope to "have an interview with Trotsky" (603).

Near the end of novel, Luke McCarthy comes to Hendricks's office to ask him to divorce Barbara so that she and Luke can be married. The confrontation between these two men reveals a great deal about the cost of Barbara's unrepentant radicalism. In spite of his one act of indiscretion, Hendricks has been portrayed as a loving, well-meaning

husband throughout the novel, and he has been especially devoted to his and Barbara's daughter, Ann. Hendricks agrees to the divorce, but insists on giving Barbara a financial settlement in exchange for custody of Ann. While Luke does not think Barbara will agree, Hendricks has clearly been the more responsible and responsive parent, and there seems little doubt he will end up with the child. Luke, however, promises to be a very different kind of husband. He claims he is better able to handle Barbara because he understands "[t]here are times when a woman needs clubbing" (611). The exchange of a loving husband and daughter for a union with a radical, violent communist does not bode well for Barbara, intimating that one must pay a price for transgressing the boundaries of acceptable feminist activism in post-war America. By depicting Barbara's activism as degenerative, the novel suggests that a woman's commitment to political ideas in the current society is not only futile, but also potentially dangerous. Ultimately, Barbara's story seems a dubious fulfillment of Ida Wilbur's prediction that "One radicalism open[s] the way to the other. Being a radical is like opening the door to the witches" (Garland 42). While Hamlin Garland meant these prophetic words to describe a world of broader sympathies and greater understanding among reformers, in Fairbank's book, they take on a more ominous meaning. Barbara's devotion to feminism has certainly opened her to associations with what the novel implies are wrong-headed, destructive causes, and as the reader learns, in post-war America, it is best for the feminist activist to keep the door closed.

However, her pending marriage is not the ending of Barbara's story. It is a testament to the conflicted nature of Fairbank's book that its most sympathetic portrayal of Barbara comes in the final pages, in an epilogue of sorts. It has been several years

since she and Hendricks have seen each other, and he is now a wealthy, complacent man, remarried to a doting wife. Driving past Union Square in his limousine, he sees Barbara giving a speech, and his driver reminds him that it is "the nuts' big day" in the Square (625). He gets out to see her more clearly, and although she "looked worn" and her figure had "thickened somewhat" (625), Hendricks thinks she seems happy. He, like everyone else, is overcome by the power of her voice, and she is warmly applauded by the other "nuts" who listen to her. As Hendricks walks away, he realizes he is glad that he has seen her, because he has been reminded why he loved her:

> That wholehearted commitment seemed to him a wonderful thing, and as he made his way through the dwindling crowd he found himself envying, as he always had, her power of consecration. It seemed to him a long time since he had known the supreme contentment of unquestioning faith – since he, too, had been free. (626)

In some ways, Hendricks's nostalgia for the "unquestioning faith" that Barbara represents echoes the disillusionment of American society in the 1920's and 30's. Having seen their world destroyed by war, most people found it difficult to maintain an "unquestioning faith" in anything, so they reacted by rebuilding their world along predictable, conservative lines. In this new America, feminist activists -- fictional and real -- were either re-integrated in a non-threatening way or marginalized and rendered powerless. At the end of her novel, however, Fairbank seems to suggest that those few who continued to pursue their activist work in spite of this altered climate, believing it could still make a difference, had perhaps held onto a freedom the rest of the country had lost.

## Notes

[1] This story is in Oreola Williams Haskell's *Banner Bearers: Tales of the Suffrage Campaigns*, which I discuss at length on pages 188-90.

[2] The Progressive Party grew out of the Populist Party, for which Ida lectures.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alsen, Eberhard. "Hamlin Garland's First Novel: *A Spoil of Office.*" *Western American Literature* 4 (1969): 91-105.

A[mes], L[ucia] T. "The Bostonians." *Woman's Journal*. 18 Mar. 1886: 82-3.

Ammons, Elizabeth. *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn into the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London: Verso, 1993.

Anderson, Charles. Introduction. *The Bostonians*. By Henry James. London: Penguin, 1984.

Auerbach, Nina. *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978.

Bardes, Barbara and Suzanne Gossett. *Declarations of Independence: Women and Political Power in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.

Barnes, Elizabeth. *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

Baym, Nina. *Woman's Fiction.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.

Behling, Laura L. *The Masculine Woman in America, 1890-1935.* Urbana: U Illinois P, 2001.

Berlant, Lauren. "The Queen of American Goes to Washington City: Harriet Jacobs, Frances Harper, and Anita Hill." *American Literature* 65.3 (Sept. 1993): 549-74.

Bertonneau, Thomas F. “Like Hypatia Before the Mob: Desire, Resentment, and Sacrifice in *The Bostonians*.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53.1 (June 1998): 56-90.

Blair, Sara. “Realism, Culture and the Place of the Literary: Henry James and *The Bostonians*.” *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*. Ed. Jonathan Freedman. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 151-68.

Blake, Katherine Devereux and Margaret Louise Wallace. *Champion of Women: The Life of Lillie Devereux Blake*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1943.

Blake, Lillie Devereux. *Fettered for Life.* 1874. New York: The Feminist Press, 1996.

Blatch, Harriot Stanton and Alma Lutz. *Challenging Years: The Memoirs of Harriot Stanton Blatch*. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1940.

“Bleak House.” *The Una*. 1 February 1853: 4.

Boudreau, Kristin. “Narrative Sympathy in *The Bostonians*.” *The Henry James Review* 14 (1993): 17-33.

Bower, Anne. *Epistolary Responses: The Letter in 20th-Century American Fiction and Criticism*. Tuscaloosa: U Alabama P, 1997.

Brant, C. “The Epistolary Novel.” *History of European Literature*. Ed. Annick Benoit-Dusausoy and Guy Fontaine. Trans. Michael Woolf. London: Routledge, 2000. 377-80.

Brantlinger, Patrick. “What is ‘Sensational’ about the ‘Sensation Novel’?”. *Wilkie Collins*. Ed. Lyn Pykett. New York: St. Martin’s, 1998. 30-57.

Brown, Bill. "The Popular, the Populist, and the Populace – Locating Hamlin Garland in the Politics of Culture." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture and Theory* 50.3 (1994): 89-110.

Brownstein, Rachel. *Becoming a Heroine: Reading about Women in Novels*. 1982. Rev. Ed. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

Buechler, Steven M. *Women's Movements in the United States: Woman Suffrage, Equal Rights, and Beyond*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.

Campbell, Elizabeth. "Re-visions, Re-flections, Re-creations: Epistolarity in Novels by Contemporary Women." *Twentieth Century Literature* 41.3 (Fall 1995): 332-49.

Campbell, Jennifer. "'The Great Something Else': Women's Search for Meaningful Work in Sarah Orne Jewett's *A Country Doctor* and Frances E. W. Harper's *Trial and Triumph*." *Colby Quarterly* XXXIV.2 (June 1998): 83-98.

Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Vol.I: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric*. Westport: Praeger Publications, 1989.

---. *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Vol. II: Key Texts of the Early Feminists.* Westport: Praeger Publications, 1989.

Carby, Hazel V. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist.* New York.: Oxford UP, 1987.

Carp, Roger E. "Hamlin Garland and the Cult of True Womanhood." *Women, Women Writers and the West*. Eds. L. L. Lee and Merrill Lewis. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1979. 83-99.

Carter, Joseph. "Hamlin Garland's Liberated Woman." *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 6 (1973): 255-8.

Castle, Terry. *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.

Catt, Carrie Chapman. Introduction. *Woman Citizen: A General Handbook of Civics, with Special Consideration of Women's Citizenship*. Ed. Mary Sumner Boyd. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1918. 8-9.

Christian, Barbara. *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976*. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies 52. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Clanton, Gene. *Populism: The Humane Preference in American, 1890-1900*. Boston: Twayne, 1991.

Conrad, Charles. "The Transformation of the 'Old Feminist' Movement." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67.3 (1981): 284-97.

Cott, Nancy. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

Cooke, Marjorie Benton. Letter to Elizabeth Jordan. July 191?. Elizabeth Garver Jordan Papers. Manuscript and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South*. 1892. Introd. Mary Helen Washington. The Schomberg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers. Gen. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

Dalke, Anne French. "The Sensational Fiction of Hawthorne and Melville." *Studies in American Fiction* 16.2 (Autumn 1988): 195-207.

---. "The Shameless Woman is the Worst of Men: Sexual Aggression in Nineteenth-Century Novels." *Studies in the Novel* 18.3 (Fall 1986): 291-303.

Davis, Angela. *Women, Race and Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1983.

Davis, Sara DeSaussure. "Feminist Sources in *The Bostonians*." *American Literature* 50 (1979): 570-87.

Deutsch, Sarah Jane. "From Ballots to Breadlines: 1920-1940." *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*. Ed. Nancy F. Cott. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. 413-472.

Dow, Bonnie. "*The Revolution*, 1868-1870: Expanding the Woman Suffrage Agenda." Solomon 71-86.

DuBois, Ellen Carol. Introduction. *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton – Susan B. Anthony Reader: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*. Ed. Ellen Carol DuBois. Rev. ed. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1992.

---. *Feminism and Suffrage*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.

---. "Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Transformation of Class Relations among Woman Suffragists." *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era*. Ed. Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye. Lexington: UP Kentucky, 1991. 162-79.

Dunn, Maggie and Ann Morris. *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*. Studies in Literary Themes and Genres 6. New York: Twayne, 1995.

Dupee, F. W. *Henry James*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973.

DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985.

"Education of Girls." *The Revolution* 12 March 1868: 151.

Elbert, Monika M., ed. *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930*. Tuscaloosa: U Alabama P, 2000.

Elkins, Marilyn. "Reading beyond the Conventions: A Look at Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted*." *American Literary Realism* 22.2 (Winter 1990): 44-53.

Ernest, John. "From Mysteries to Histories: Cultural Pedagogy in Frances E. Harper's *Iola Leroy*." *American Literature* 64.3 (Sept. 1992): 497-518.

Fabi, M. Giulia. "Taming the Amazon? The Price of Survival in Turn-of-the-Century African American Women's Fiction." In *The Insular Dream: Obsession and Resistance.* Ed.Versluys, Kristiaan. Amsterdam: VU UP, 1995. 228-41.

Fairbank, Janet Ayer. *Rich Man, Poor Man*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936.

Farrell, Grace. Afterword. *Fettered for Life.* By Lillie Devereux Blake. New York: The Feminist Press, 1996. 381-430.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

Ferguson, Ann. “Can I Choose Who I Am? And How Would That Empower Me? Gender, Race, Identities and the Self.” *Women, Knowledge and Reality*. Ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge, 1996. 108-26.

---. “Feminist Communities and Moral Revolution.” *Feminism and Community*. Ed. Penny A. Weiss and Marilyn Friedman. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1995. 367-98.

---. “Moral Responsibility and Social Change: A New Theory of Self.” *Hypatia* 12.3 (1997): 116-141.

“Fettered for Life.” *The Literary World* 5.12 (May 1874): 87.

Fetterley, Judith. *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978.

Finnegan, Margaret. *Selling Suffrage: Consumer Culture and Votes for Women*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

Flexner, Eleanor and Ellen Fitzpatrick. *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*. 1975. Enlarged Ed. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1996.

Flower, B. O. "Review of *A Spoil of Office*." *Arena* 6 (October 1892): xi-xvi. Rpt. in Nagel. 48-52.

Foreman, P. Gabrielle. "'Reading Aright': White Slavery, Black Referents, and The Strategy of Histotextuality in *Iola Leroy*." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 10.2 (1997): 327-354.

Foster, Frances Smith. Introduction. *A Brighter Coming Day: A Frances Ellen Watkins Harper Reader*. New York: Feminist P at City U of New York, 1990. 3-40.

---. Introduction. *Iola Leroy*. By Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. The Schomberg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers. Gen. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. xxvii-xxxix.

---. *Written By Herself : Literary Production By African American Women, 1746-1892.* Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1993.

Frye, Northrop. *Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976.

Fulton, Valerie. "Rewriting the Necessary Woman: Marriage and Professionalism in James, Jewett, and Phelps." *Henry James Review* 15 (Fall 1994): 242-56.

Gaines, Kevin. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 1996.

Garland, Hamlin. *A Spoil of Office.* 1892. Introd. Eberhardt Alsen. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969.

---. "Productive Conditions of American Literature." *Forum* XVII (1894): 690-98.

---. "The Land Question and its Relation to Art and Literature." *Arena* IX (1893):165-75.

Gooder, Jean. "Henry James's *The Bostonians*: The Voices of Democracy." *The Cambridge Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 97-115.

Graham, Sara Hunter. *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in the Reconstruction South." *SAGE* Student Supplement, 1988. 45-47.

Habegger, Alfred. *Henry James and the "Woman Business."* Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture. New York: Cambridge UP, 1989.

Hall, Sallie J. "Henry James and the Bluestockings: Satire and Morality in *The Bostonians*." *Aeolian Harps: Essays in Literature in Honor of Maurice Browning Cramer*. Ed. Donna G. Fricke and Douglas G. Fricke. Bowling Green: Bowling Green UP, 1976.

Hapke, Laura. *Tales of the Working Girl: Wage Earning Women in American Literature, 1890-1925*. New York: Twayne, 1992.

Harbert, Elizabeth Boynton. *Out of Her Sphere*. Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1871.

Harper, Frances E. W. *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted.* 1892. Introd. Frances Smith Foster. The Schomberg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers. Gen. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

Haskell, Oreola Williams. *Banner Bearers: Tales of the Suffrage Campaigns.* Geneva, New York: W. F. Humphrey, 1920.

Heilmann, Ann. *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Hogeland, Lisa Maria. *Feminism and its Fictions: The Consciousness-Raising Novel and the Women's Liberation Movement*. Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1998.

Howe, Irving. "Introduction to *The Bostonians*." In *Critical Essays on Henry James: The Early Novels*. Ed. James W. Gargano. Boston: Hall, 1987. 154-69.

Ingram, Forrest. *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth-Century: Studies in a Literary Genre*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

Irwin, Inez. *The Story of the Woman's Party*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921.

James, Henry. *The Bostonians.* 1886. Introd. Charles R. Anderson. London: Penguin Books, 1984.

---. *The Complete Notebooks*. Ed. Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989.

James, Henrietta [Celia B. Whitehead]. "Another Chapter of 'The Bostonians.'" Bloomfield, N. J.: S. Morris Hulin, 1887.

Jordan, Elizabeth. Letter to Miss Bjorkman. 23 October 1917. Elizabeth Garver Jordan Papers. Manuscript and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

---, ed. *The Sturdy Oak: A Composite Novel of American Politics.* 1917. Introd. Ida H. Washington. Athens: Ohio UP, 1998.

Kahane, Claire. *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative and the Figure of the Speaking Woman, 1850-1915*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins P, 1995.

Kaplan, Amy. "Manifest Domesticity." *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 581-606.

Kaye, Frances W. "Hamlin Garland's Feminism." *Women and Western American Literature.* Ed. Susan Rosowski. Troy, NY: Whitston, 1982. 135-61.

Kennedy, J. Gerald. "The American Short Story Sequence -- Definitions and Implications." Introduction. *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*. Ed. J. Gerald Kennedy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. vii-xv.

---. "From Anderson's *Winesburg* to Carver's *Cathedral*: The Short Story Sequence and the Semblance of Community." *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*. Ed. J. Gerald Kennedy. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. 194-216.

Lang, Amy Schrager. "Slavery and Sentimentalism: The Strange Career of Augustine St. Clare." *Women's Studies* 12 (1986): 31-54.

Lazenby, Walter. "Idealistic Realist on the Platform: Hamlin Garland." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 49 (1963): 138-45.

Leach, William. *True Love and Perfect Union*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980.

Levander, Caroline. *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. 1933. Introd. Nan Bauer Maglin. Bison Book Ed. Lincoln: U Nebraska P, 1994.

Linton, Eliza Lynn. "The Girl of the Period." 1868. *Prose by Victorian Women: An Anthology*. Ed. Andrea Broomfield and Sally Mitchell. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996. 355-60.

Lundén, Rolf. *The United Stories of America: Studies in the Short Story Composite*. Costerus New Series 122. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999.

Maglin, Nan Bauer. "Fictional Feminists in *The Bostonians* and *The Odd Women*." *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives*. Ed. Susan Koppelman Cornillon. Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973. 216-36.

Martin, Quentin E. "'This Spreading Radicalism': Hamlin Garland's *A Spoil of Office* and the Creation of True Populism." *Studies in American Fiction* 26.1 (1998): 29-50.

Maxwell, Joan. "Delighting in a Bite: James's Seduction of His Readers in *The Bostonians*." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 18.1 (Winter 1988): 18-33.

McColley, Kathleen. "Claiming Center Stage: Speaking Out for Homoerotic Empowerment in *The Bostonians*." *The Henry James Review* 21 (2000): 151-69.

McCullough, Joseph B. "Hamlin Garland's Romantic Fiction." *Critical Essays on Hamlin Garland*. Ed. James Nagel. Boston: Hall, 1982. 349-62.

McDowell, Deborah. "'The Changing Same': Generational Connections and Black Women Novelists." *New Literary History* 18.2 (Winter 1987): 281-301.

McMath, Robert C. *American Populism: A Social History, 1877-1898*. New York: Noonday-Hill, 1993.

Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990.

Nagel, James. *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2001.

---, ed. *Critical Essays on Hamlin Garland*. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1982.

"New Figures in Literature and Art: Hamlin Garland." *Atlantic Monthly* LXXVI (December 1895): 840-44.

Newlin, Keith. "Melodramatist of the Middle Border: Hamlin Garland's Early Work Reconsidered." *Studies in American Fiction* 21.2 (Autumn 1993): 153-69.

Newman, Louise Michele. *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

Norris, Kathleen. Letter to Elizabeth Jordan. March 1915. Elizabeth Garver Jordan Papers. Manuscript and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

"Notes on New Fiction." *The Dial*. 31 Jan. 1918: 117.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990.

Parrington, Vernon Louis. "Hamlin Garland and the Middle Border." 1930. Rpt. in Nagel. *Critical Essays on Hamlin Garland*. 152-67.

Peterson, Carla L."'Further Liftings of the Veil': Gender, Class, and Labor in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*." *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism* Ed. Elaine Hedges and Shelley Fisher Fishkin. New York: Oxford UP, 1994. 97-112.

Pizer, Donald. *Hamlin Garland's Early Work and Career*. New York: Russell, 1960.

---. "Hamlin Garland in the *Standard*." *AL* 26 (1954): 412-13.

Pykett, Lyn. *The Sensation Novel: from* The Woman in White *to* The Moonstone. Writers and their Work Series. Plymouth, UK: Northcote House Pub., 1994.

Quebe, Ruth Evelyn. "*The Bostonians*: Some Historical Sources and their Implications." *The Centennial Review* 25.1 (Winter 1981): 80-100.

Reynolds, David. *Beneath the American Renaissance*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

Richardson, Angelique and Chris Willis, eds. *The New Woman in Fact and Fiction: Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Rosenthal, Debra J. "Deracialized Discourse: Temperance and Racial Ambiguity in Harper's 'The Two Offers' and *Sowing and Reaping*." *The Serpent in the Cup: Temperance in American Literature*. Ed. David S. Reynolds and Debra J. Rosenthal. Amherst: U Massachusetts P, 1997. 153-64.

Rowe, Joyce A. "'Murder, what a lovely voice!': Sex, Speech and the Public/Private Problem in *The Bostonians*." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40.2 (Summer 1998): 158-83.

Sale, Maggie. "Critiques from Within: Antebellum Projects of Resistance." *American Literature* 64 (1992): 695-718.

Sánchez-Eppler, Karen. "Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition." *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. Shirley Samuels. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. 92-114.

Saum, Lewis O. “Hamlin Garland and Reform.” *South Dakota Review* 10.4 (1972): 36-62.

Scholes, Robert E. *The Crafty Reader*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001.

Schneider, Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1993.

Scott, Anthony. “Basil, Olive, and Verena: *The Bostonians* and the Problems of Politics.” *Arizona Quarterly* 49.1 (Spring 1993): 49-72.

Showalter, Elaine. “The Other Bostonians: Gender and Literary Study.” *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 1.2 (1988): 179-87.

Shuler, Marjorie. *For Rent--One Pedestal.* New York: National Woman Suffrage Publishing Co., Inc., 1917.

Shulman, Robert. *Social Criticisms and Nineteenth-Century American Fictions*. Columbia: U Missouri P, 1987.

Solomon, Martha, ed. *A Voice of Their Own: The Woman Suffrage Press, 1840-1910.* Tuscaloosa: U Alabama P, 1991

Stanton, Elizabeth Cady. “Marriages and Mistresses.” *The Revolution* 15 October 1868: 233-4.

---. Preface. *Pray You Sir, Whose Daughter?* By Helen H. Gardener. Boston: Arena Publishing Company, 1892.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly.* 1852. Introd. Alfred Kazin. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

Tate, Claudia. *Domestic Allegories Of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century.* New York: Oxford UP, 1992.

Taylor, Andrew. *Henry James and the Father Question*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.

Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn. *African-American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998.

Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.

Tonn, Mari Boor. "The *Una,* 1853-1855: The Premiere of the Woman's Rights Press." Solomon 48-70.

Tracey, Karen. *Plots and Proposals: American Women's Fiction, 1850-90*. Urbana: U Chicago P, 2000.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Opposing Self*. New York: Viking, 1955.

Van Leer, David. "A World of Female Friendship: *The Bostonians*." *Henry James and Homo-Erotic Desire*. Ed. John R. Bradley. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. 93-109.

Wagner, MaryJo. *Farms, Families and Reform: Women in the Farmer's Alliance and Populist Party*. Diss. U of Oregon, 1986. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding.* Berkeley: U California P, 1957.

Welter, Barbara. *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century.* Athens: U Ohio P, 1976.

White, William Allen. Letter to Elizabeth Jordan. Undated. Elizabeth Garver Jordan Papers. Manuscript and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

---. Letter to Elizabeth Jordan. 6 March 1917. Elizabeth Garver Jordan Papers. Manuscript and Archives Division. The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Willard, Frances. “A White Life for Two.” Campbell, Vol. II. 317-338.

---. “Temperance and Home Protection.” *Outspoken Women: Speeches by American Women Reformers, 1635-1935*. Ed. Judith Anderson. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 1984. 221-24.

“Women in Art.” *The Revolution* 19 October 1868: 236.

Young, Elizabeth. "Warring Fictions: *Iola Leroy* and the Color of Gender." *American Literature* 64.2 (June 1992): 273-97.