ALWAYS PAINTING THE FUTURE: UTOPIAN DESIRE AND THE WOMEN’S
MOVEMENT IN SELECTED WORKS BY UNITED STATES FEMALE
WRITERS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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This study explores six utopias by female authors written at the turn of the twentieth century: Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1881), Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant’s *Unveiling Parallel* (1893), Eloise O. Richberg’s *Reinstern* (1900), Lena J. Fry’s *Other Worlds* (1905), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), and Martha Bensley Bruère’s *Mildred Carver, USA* (1919). While the right to vote had become the central, most important point of the movement, women were concerned with many other issues affecting their lives. Positioned within the context of the late nineteenth century women’s rights movement, this study examines these “sideline” concerns of the movement such as home and gender-determined spheres, motherhood, work, marriage, independence, and self-sufficiency and relates them to the transforming character of female identity at the time. The study focuses primarily on analyzing the expression of female historical desire through utopian genre and on explicating the contradictory nature of utopian production.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: UTOPIAN FICTION AS GENDERED GENRE
AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

...the extension of women’s privilege is the general principle for all social progress
Charles Fourier

The interest in utopianism has been traditionally strong in the United States, but the idea was particularly prominent in the nineteenth century, whose first half witnessed the establishment of approximately one hundred utopian communities\(^1\) devoted to political, class, gender, and religious concerns (Fischer 10). The ideological notion of America as a space conquered, tamed, and shaped by the chosen people in an effort to create an ideal society was reflected in the communal attempts, which stressed equal pay, women’s involvement in policy making, their property rights, their right to vote in community affairs, and their right to refuse to have intercourse with husbands (Huckle 119). Having been founded to challenge mainstream society, these communities nevertheless failed to bring about the fundamental changes. Ultimately, women were still largely responsible for domestic work and men retained the traditional male tasks such as management and decision-making (121). Still, as the utopian communities started to disintegrate, the utopian impulse remained compelling and the need for the dissemination of new ideas as crucial as ever. Jean Pfaelzer refers to this period in American

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\(^1\) Among the most famous communities are the Harmonist Society, the Shaker villages, the Owenites at New Harmony, and the Fourierist Phalanx. While there was only one community developed by and for women, several strong female leaders played crucial roles in mixed communities: Ann Lee from a Shaker Village, Jemima Wilkinson from Jerusalem in western New York, Frances Wright from Nashoba Community in Memphis, Tennessee, and Katherine Tingley from a Theosophist community Loma-Land in Point Loma, California (Huckle 119-20).
history as “one long depression” (“The Impact” 117); the so-called Gilded Age was in fact a time of “inequality, poverty, and alienation” (118), during which the unskilled labor force was losing jobs to machines in increasing numbers, city life grew dangerous because of crime, pollution, and unsafe living conditions, and the exploitation of the worker was made easier by the growing number of rural Americans and immigrants coming to cities in hopes of better lives. While the Industrial Revolution brought efficiency, comfort, and ease for some, it brought hardship, sickness, and extreme poverty to many more.

During this time, Jay Martin explains, change was the only certainty (203). With its imaginative power and its capacity to promote change through the expression of discontent, hope, and desire, utopian fiction became a logical outlet for those committed to radical changes in society. The utopian novel has always served the propagation of political and social ideas and was largely approached as such a tool at the turn of the twentieth century; its literary conventions and fictional story line helped popularize these ideas and ponder wider, seemingly fantastic possibilities outside the everyday realm. Consequently, enhanced by the strong belief of the period in literature’s ability to elevate and enlighten, the utopian novel reached the height of its popularity in the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Bartkowski 24). Many of these works, which Pfaelzer calls retrogressive utopias (“The Impact” 128), stress the authors’ anxiety about technology and urbanization by calling for a return to the pre-industrial America.

2 Just between the years 1888 and 1900 more than 150 utopian works were published (Roemer 8) and, as Lyman Tower Sargent points out, the nineteenth century produced almost three times as many utopias as all previous centuries put together (“Themes” 2).

3 Jean Pfaelzer describes progressive utopias as technological, industrial, and urban, lacking any dialectic between the character and the environment. She views retrogressive utopias as escapist but optimistic, for they present nature as a corrective for bad effects of industrialization. Defining the present as evil and the future as dangerous and uncertain, they seek a return to a lost age of simple agrarian arcadia. They refuse science as a necessary condition of material security and equality. The farm and family are the ultimate units of social life.
They usually romanticize the past and view it with nostalgia. Other utopias highlight the positive aspects of the Gilded Age, such as railroad expansion, the growth of industries, and the development of technology, which they see as a solution to America’s problems. Thrilled about industrial development and excited about the possible social progress of the country, writers of such progressive utopias reflected in their works faith in the future. In either case, the authors shed light on the appalling conditions of contemporary society through contrast with their utopian worlds. Their utopian visions “maximize the contrast between the real world and the utopian world for political purposes” (Pfaelzer, “The Impact” 119); they are designed to raise the consciousness of middle class readers, to alter their perspective of current problems in society, and to call them to action.

Historically, the genre of utopian literature has been male dominated, focusing on social conventions and economic and political issues but neglecting the problems of sexism, racism, patriarchy, and gender inequality. When one thinks of popular utopias by male authors, one must agree with Tatiana Teslenko’s claim that “most mainstream utopias…[have] failed to expose the sexist discrimination within the patriarchal status quo and to envision true gender equality” (3). Similarly, Carol Farley Kessler comments: “Much has been said and written about men’s visions of utopias; we know far less about women’s” (Introduction 7). Yet, the utopian genre has proven to be an excellent means of expression for women’s political and social agenda. Numerous female writers and reformers recognized not only the genre’s popularity but also its subversive potential and began to utilize it in addressing their concerns by filling the gaps male

4 Consider, for example, Plato’s Republic, Thomas Moore’s Utopia, Samuel Butler’s Erewhon, Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis, Henry Neville’s The Isle of Pines, William Morris’s News from Nowhere, Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward, or H. G. Wells’s Modern Utopia.
authors neglected or purposely ignored. In her utopian novel, *Mildred Carver, USA* (1919), Martha Bensley Bruère describes the changing nature of women’s position in society while alluding to major prejudices and obstacles women had to overcome in order to improve their lives:

This talk of girls! It has the perpetual freshness of successive springs in that it always paints the future. Back a few thousand years and their future was the man who would take them and if there would be food enough, and not too many beatings. And then the centuries drifting by and the girls find themselves property and the talk is of accomplishments they must acquire to enhance the price. Ages later and the first talk of rights to come, rights in their own bodies primarily and then in the ownership of their children and the spending of money. Another gap, and the talk throws ahead to the desire to know, and the future has something in it besides love and maternity. And then the schools and colleges taken as much for granted as marriage and a home, and the professions beckoning. (184)

The novel, which is sometimes seen as a feminist revision of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888) (Kessler, Preface vii), was published two months before the Nineteenth Amendment was proposed to the legislature, so there certainly was a reason for optimism behind Bruère’s work. And, similar hopefulness about changes in the woman’s position in society is apparent already in some earlier utopian works by female authors.

Since the first utopia by a U.S. female author, Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*, was published in 1836, the production of utopias by United States women has undergone two prolific periods—a smaller one around the turn of the 20th century and a greater one in the 1970s.¹ Utopias written during the latter peak are often considered to be major contributors to the second-wave feminist movement;⁶ indeed, in current scholarship they are thought to re-energize

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¹ I am referring to Carol Farley Kessler’s graph of utopias by U.S. women as it appears in her collection of utopian stories, *Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by United States Women: 1836-1919* on page 236.

⁶ Some of the most often discussed utopias of this period are Dorothy Bryant’s *The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You* (1971), Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man* (1975), Mary Staton’s *From the
and further the feminist agenda of the time by providing “an alternative to patriarchy and [by] articulat[ing] the politics of feminist opposition and change” (Teslenko 11). While numerous critics have established the connection between contemporary utopias by female authors and feminism, this study will focus on selected turn-of-the-twentieth-century utopias and illuminate their contributions to the movement, their subversive and creative powers, and their crucial position in the history of the genre.

While I concur with this evaluation of 1970s utopian works, believe that we should look more closely at the utopias published at the turn of the twentieth century. These utopias are often overlooked despite the fact that they, too, address the faults of the patriarchal societal order and discuss women’s roles and concerns. The reason for this oversight by modern feminist critics might be that these utopias remain fairly conservative in their discussion of feminist issues such as gender and sexuality, which did not become a primary focus of utopias until the 1970s. Another reason, perhaps, is that the earlier utopias do not fully reflect the sophisticated complexity of utopian imagination because they do not consciously employ anti-utopian elements to instill overt tension in the text. Unlike the utopias of the 1970s, which Peter Ruppert calls “self-consciously open” narratives, particularly because they utilize these anti-utopian

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Legend of Biel (1975), Marge Piercy’s Woman on the Edge of Time (1976), and Suzy McKee Charnas’s Motherlines (1978).

7 Among the critics focusing on utopian and science fiction writing by women are Angelika Bammer, Libby Falk Jones, Lee Cullen Khanna, Sally L. Kitch, Ellen Susan Peel, Frances Bartkowski, Natalie M. Rosinsky, and Marleen S. Barr.

8 Examples of such anti-utopian elements include the existence of negative traits in the utopians, problems and conflicts originating from within the utopian society (rather than conventionally coming from the outside), the threat of war, hunger, and/or disease that the utopians must constantly keep in check, and the uncertainty connected with the utopia’s future.
elements in order to engage and involve the reader in the text (130), the earlier utopias are usually straightforward and somewhat static, containing one-dimensional characters, whose sole purpose is to personify the utopic visions. Consequently, utopias written by women in the late nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century may, in comparison with later utopias, seem didactic and stagnant. Although these early utopias might not recognize and make a conscious use of contradictions within their re-invented societies, they still contribute to the critical attitude of the women’s rights movement by examining the principles of social evolution, equality, and economic and political change. In their contemplation of family, motherhood, community, education, work, distribution of wealth, environment, and health, they attempt to envision different circumstances and, subsequently, different outcomes for women’s lives.

Positioned within the context of the late nineteenth century women’s rights movement, this project will examine six utopias selected from the period between 1881 and 1919: Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1881), Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant’s *Unveiling a Parallel* (1893), Eloise O. Richberg’s *Reinstern* (1900), Lena J. Fry’s *Other Worlds* (1905), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), and Martha Bensley Bruère’s *Mildred Carver, USA* (1919). The following utopias were selected based on their dates of publication as well as on the varied characteristics of utopian societies they present. For a brief summary of each work see Appendix.

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9 In such narratives, according to Ruppert, “the task of constructing utopia is left incomplete in the text or is threatened in some significant way so that the cooperation and participation of the reader is required to achieve completion or closure” (130).

10 The following utopias were selected based on their dates of publication as well as on the varied characteristics of utopian societies they present. For a brief summary of each work see Appendix.
the subject of numerous discussions for some time and the assumption of women’s physical, mental, and moral inferiority to men had been explored and challenged actively since the end of the eighteenth century, the movement for women’s rights was officially initiated at a convention at Seneca Falls, New York, on July 19, 1848 (Matthews, *Women’s Struggle*… 3-5). There, the most prominent figures of the movement—Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton11—together with hundreds of other women and some men expressed their demand for full citizenship rights for women, including the right to vote, along with economic opportunities and access to all areas of modern life in equality with men. By the 1880s, however, the vote had become the central, most important point of the movement and the many other controversial concerns of the prewar effort had been slowly pushed aside in favor of the appearance of respectability and conservatism, which would guarantee more suffrage supporters across the social strata (Matthews, *The Rise*… 6-7). With the focus narrowed thus, the other problems were neglected or ignored by the movement, yet they remained on the minds of many.

These utopias herald messages that the movement’s leaders pushed aside in favor of the suffrage battle. This project examines these “sideline” issues of the women’s rights movement as they were pondered and polemized in female utopian fiction of the time. Chapter 1 covers some of the common narrative tools employed in utopian literature and explains how they are modified

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11 Initially also active in the anti-slavery movement, Anthony and Stanton later separated themselves from another activist, Lucy Stone, and her followers, who believed that women should support the passage of the fifteenth amendment without the insistence of their inclusion so that this important amendment would not be endangered. This split resulted in two different organizations and different strategies in their campaigns for suffrage: the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), created by Anthony and Stanton in 1869 and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), founded as retaliation by Stone and her husband Henry Blackwell. More progressive and blatant NWSA called not only for the right to vote but also for the re-examination of sexuality and marriage as well as easier divorce laws while AWSA feared that more conservative and traditional women would be frightened by such requirements, and, for that reason, the organization focused primarily on suffrage and new opportunities for women.
and utilized in the selected utopias. In Chapter 2, I focus on Lane’s *Mizora* and Gilman’s *Herland* as female revisions of patriarchal spatial and social organizations, centering on the benefits of education, science, and technology in women’s lives. Chapter 3 examines Fry’s *Other Worlds* and Bruère’s *Mildred Carver, USA*, as commentaries on the effects of labor and class on women’s lives. And, Chapter 4 discusses Jones and Merchant’s *Unveiling the Parallel* and Richberg’s *Reinstern* as they question the idea of equality in connection with the phenomenon of the New Woman. Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of utopian scholarship relevant to the project's critical approach. The focal point of the study is the works’ criticism of the ideological status quo examined through different aspects of the woman’s existence in society. I focus on the ways in which the authors depart from the narrative forms and conventions of the genre and, through their manipulation of utopic principles, redefine the genre from within while making visible the patriarchal ideologies at work in society. I argue that, through their manipulation of the prevalent ideologies and conventions, the authors successfully utilize utopian genre as both a distancing tool and a means of resistance. Few critical studies focus on utopias written during the first peak; unlike these studies, my project goes beyond a general discussion of trends and patterns in utopian literature. I, too, provide theoretical framework and comment on my approach to classification of utopias and methods of approach; the core of the project, however, focuses neither on categorizing utopias nor on marking the development of utopian thought and its sources. Instead, it presents specific and detailed

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analyses of the utopias’ feminist strategies and demonstrates how they are reflected in their narrative structures, their production of new space, and their re-examination of gender roles. One can certainly object to these six utopias being labeled as feminist; yet, I demonstrate that they employ various feminist strategies in their production of new spatial and social organizations.

Before I begin to discuss these utopias in separate chapters, I feel it necessary to address a few narrative strategies all of these authors use in their creation of subversive literary spaces. Narrative tactics are always extremely revealing, but especially so in the utopian genre because its narrative structures are always controlled by the authors’ political agenda and formulate the authors’ political belief (Pfaelzer, “The Impact” 119). As the selected writers adapt rather than adopt the utopian conventions to their feminist purposes, it is necessary to examine these narrative strategies and the results stemming from them.

One of the utopic conventions that these utopias utilize to reinforce their political agenda is the choice of setting. While the classical utopias usually take place somewhere on a remote island and coexist side-by-side with non-utopian societies, in the late eighteenth century the visions of new worlds began to be projected into the future as a promotion of the progressive nature of industrialism and democracy. Yet, none of the selected utopias follow this (by then well-established) convention. Instead, these texts privilege the previous tradition of spatial discovery of new ways of being that occur in the present as opposed to future visions of

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13 Jean Pfaelzer gives an early example by Sebastien Mercier, L’an 2440 (1771), which provided a vision of Paris in the twenty-first century, embracing the Enlightenment’s faith in progress (“The Impact… 127). Of the nineteenth century utopias, one might consider Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward: 2000-1887 (1888), in which Julian West wakes up in the year 2000 or William Morris’s News from Nowhere (1891), in which William Guest wakes up in the year 2152. H. G. Wells’s When the Sleeper Awakes (1914) presents a society in the year 2100.
betterment. They emphasize geography over temporality by once again placing the new visions alongside or even inside their points of comparison, stressing conflicting attitudes and encouraging contrasts between the current circumstances and their utopian counterparts. Thus, the other-planetary societies of Mars (Unveiling the Parallel), Herschel (Other Worlds), and Reinstern exist alongside the planet Earth. Mizora is located in the interior of the earth somewhere below the northern seas, the community of Herland, while somewhere in our world, is protected from it by a volcanic eruption, which has made for a difficult access, and the utopia of the Universal Service in Mildred Carver, USA, is fighting for its existence right in the midst of the imperialistic United States. Though distant from the original point of reference—the life in the capitalist and patriarchal United States of America—none of the utopian visions diverts our attention into the future nor reduces the present into the already-overcome past. The spatial separation of the utopian from the actual together with their simultaneity of existence calls for immediate restructuring and rethinking, implying the need for immediate steps that would ignite the process of change in people’s minds and, consequently, in the societal structure. The situation must be drastically altered before women can live better lives.

Such space/time positioning of these utopias contributes to readers’ critical approach toward the world around them by drawing their attention to and criticizing the notion of progress often used ideologically to affirm the status quo and to appease the oppressed. These utopian authors do not suggest that everything will work out just right eventually; thus, their goal is not to appease and/or silence the readers’ concerns. They question the basis for the belief of many utopian authors that a change would come automatically in due course and show no patience for
the worlds that might come into being more than a hundred years later. Progress figures here as a concept that enables an oppressive group to defer endlessly the quality sought after by the oppressed. Such rejection of a bright tomorrow based on the current direction of events implies the authors’ skepticism about the positive potentialities of the patriarchal status quo as well as their great dissatisfaction with women’s current roles and positions. The authors’ works display the impatience to alter these circumstances right now by immediate changes in the structure of the society and its laws. Such rejection of future visions denounces the ideological status quo strongly as these utopias, through their physical juxtaposition of the utopian and actual, demand a direct confrontation of the present in the present and focus on the space that would enable change rather than on the time of future possibilities resulting from current ideologies.

Related to the question of the setting is the question of the origin of the utopian community—how the utopia comes into being. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels criticized utopian efforts for their avoidance of this question and for the refusal to deal comprehensively with the historical process of change. Presenting their societies as happening eventually and automatically, many of nineteenth-century utopias privilege peaceful reforms. This neglect of the historical process as a struggle between classes is usually blamed on the compliance with the bourgeois ideologies or on the privileging of the middle class and its intellectual capacities over raw force. And, this assessment is certainly valid, at least partially. After all, the majority of utopian writers were intellectual and middle or upper-middle class male authors who assumed that people (meaning other men) could be simply enlightened to change. One might only think of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* in this context to understand the limitations of his utopian
society as a socialism-from-above. But, we should also consider George Kateb’s explanation that the American common sense was at the time highly aware of the impracticality of revolution and its consequences as America feared violence and equated revolution with destruction. Further, Kateb argues, American moral absolutism preferred the expression of love for all people rather than one class (Pfaelzer, *The Utopian* 126-7), which goes directly against the Marxist notions of class struggle.

It is not difficult to see that women’s perspective is not being considered in these discussions even though the female authors also mostly avoid the physical clash between the two antagonistic sides. Yet, I argue, they do so for reasons different from those mentioned above. First, these works are concerned primarily with gender (not class) differences as reflected in social, political, and economical aspects of the society, which do not lend themselves easily to the class struggle resolution. Besides, the naïveté and ridiculousness of some elaborate male-female battles would undoubtedly distract the readership from the pressing messages the authors strived to convey. Second, many conservative female readers would probably reject such militant literature and openly radical ideas. Consequently, the works’ influence would be greatly diminished. And, third, in their attempt to subvert patriarchy and its gender inequality, the authors must try to avoid the means of patriarchal control in their societies, and violence is certainly one of them. Thus, the violent takeovers we witness in Mizora and Herland are immediately explained away as results of a desperate struggle for survival where no other option is available any longer. Mizora’s bloody history, including slavery and many wars, makes “the extermination of the race…imminent” (99), and the women in their effort “to force the country
into peace” (100) decide to exclude males from “all affairs and privileges” into extinction (101). In Herland, following a slave uprising and a volcanic outburst that isolates the community from the rest of the world, the women rise “in sheer desperation” and slay “their brutal conquerors” (55). To dispel possible undesirable reactions to this violent description, Gilman promptly converts the reader into an accomplice by adding the following commentary on the women’s violent actions: “This sounds like Titus Adronicus, I know, but that is their account. I suppose they were about crazy—can you blame them?” (55).

The rest of the selected texts avoid violence entirely; yet, that does not imply that they promote the notion of change arising slowly and automatically out of the status quo like many male-authored utopias of the time. All of the selected utopian texts reject such anticipatory gaze toward the future; instead, they encourage an alternative way of resistance by offering an immediate alternative that takes place elsewhere in their current world. They present different people on different planets who live in different, possibly better but not perfect, societies. Thus, in Reinstern, we visit a planet “yet undiscovered by…astronomers, who waste lifetimes searching with telescopes for what the inner vision will readily disclose when [we] allow the real self to predominate” (10); it is even suggested that there are more planets (“sister-planets”) like Reinstern, which consider the Earth as part of their communal network. Similarly, the nameless narrator of Unveiling a Parallel lands his “aeroplane” on Mars, where he visits two cities: Thursia, a city of reversed gender roles, and Lunismar, a city whose inhabitants have reached a more perfect state of development. In this work, the reader is provided with even more possibilities and forced into contemplation of her own world within the context of these utopian
worlds. None of these works are greatly invested in describing the actual process of change. They do not investigate how these societies have come into existence; quite to the contrary, their other-planetary existence supports their imaginary status while it also stresses the notion that other possibilities exist (they are “out there” if you will) if only the readers began to realize them.

Out of the selected utopias, *Other Worlds* and *Mildred Carver, USA*, provide the most information about the origins of their utopias. Although they do not promote revolution, they stress the necessity of an immediate change as the only way toward the desired results. The change is implemented gradually but radically, as it goes directly against the status quo and its capitalist ideology. In *Other Worlds*, the Vivians decide to start a cooperative community. The major achievement of this effort is women’s financial independence, which allows them to make their own decisions in life. Consequently, the shared ownership of the community affects positively other aspects of life, enabling women to live independently, free of abuse and constraints. A similar effort is apparent in *Mildred Carver, USA*, which criticizes the upper class for its uselessness and parasitism. Here, the initial gesture comes from the government itself. While still driven by profit and maximum efficiency, thus clearly upholding the capitalist ideal, the government insists on equal involvement of every young person in the public sphere, which causes dramatic changes in the generation’s outlook on marriage, work, and class. The novel’s ideological shortcomings will be addressed later in the project, but it is important to stress at this point the work’s promotion of the women’s active role in society. We must understand that even though none of these works can be read as calls for women to rise, revolt, and participate in a physical struggle against their oppressor, they directly attack the patriarchy by suggesting that in
order to move forward some necessary changes need to be made immediately. The process of
desired change cannot begin without a remarkable shift in our societal arrangements. It will
certainly not come to women automatically. These utopias show women that many rules,
expectations, and provisions that they have taken as given should and, more importantly, could
be reconsidered. For those, who questioned the world around them already, these works served
as reassurance that they were not alone. They inspired, reinforced, and united their readership in
order to question the status quo on a broader level and to instigate change.

Another break from the traditional convention of utopia apparent in the selected utopias
is the portrayal of the female members of literary utopian communities. Often, they are drawn to
promote utopian values passively, merely through their way of being in the utopian society but
without actively displaying any thorough comprehension of the utopian ideals per se. In her
discussion of nineteenth century utopias, Pfaelzer insists that women rarely play the role of
political indoctrinators (“The Impact” 124), which is certainly true for the majority of utopias by
male writers. Their female characters usually serve as romantic interests of the male visitors to
utopia and their actions are largely confined to the home or to the male visitor whom they admire
and assist. The female authors, though, make a point of giving significant agency to their utopian
women, providing them not only with a voice but also brains to serve the novel on a more
sophisticated level than a mere romantic inspiration. Obviously, Mizora and Herland must rely
on female guides in their all-female utopias. The women in both novels are forceful, intelligent,
and highly aware of the advantages that their societies bring to women. A similar approach is
evident in Mildred Carver, USA, where Mildred becomes the mouthpiece for the new ideas, and
it is she who serves as a connection between the new and the old and inspires others to change their ways. In Other Worlds and Unveiling the Parallel, however, the traditional protocol is followed more closely. On Herschel, Tom Vivian is the main speaker for the cooperative community he is establishing, but several of his sisters are deeply involved in the process and just as dedicated and informed. On Mars, the traveler meets Severnius, with whom he converses on different topics, but Severnius’s sister Elodia is also directly involved in many of these conversations, providing her point of view and disclosing her motivations and aspirations.

Although breaking from the tradition of a utopian woman as a passive decoration, the notion of women as active promoters of social and political ideas is often wrapped in the robe of accessibility, entertainment, and propriety as understood by the middle class female readership. Love struggle has been an undeniable point of interest in women’s literature, especially when the writers depend on the genres of romance and sentimental novel as their literary vehicles. The search for one’s partner and the ultimate joining of a male and a female who must overcome numerous obstacles before they can enjoy their communion propel the plot and maintain the readers’ attention. These devices certainly make up the core of the plot line in several of our utopias. Carol A. Kolmerten highlights the dilemma nineteenth-century women writers faced as they tried to challenge the patriarchal ideology through the literary genres deeply imbedded with such ideology (“Texts and Contexts” 108). The death of “bad” women and marriage of “good” women, who produce a male child if especially “good,” together with the establishment of the woman in her true place—the home as envisioned by patriarchy—are some of the conventions of the genres within which the women writers operated (117). Unlike the majority of male utopian
authors, though, who were incapable or unwilling to see women in a light and position different from their typically limited status, the female writers of the selected utopias show their resistance most strongly, I argue, by redefining the most crucial elements of romance and sentimental novel—the notion of love.

Therefore, the final, though in many aspects the most telling, break from the patriarchal literary conventions I will address is the manipulation of the romantic notion of love, which underlines the social and political agendas within literary works. *Mizora* approaches romantic love and its implications quite negatively, never allowing Vera to reunite with her husband and son. As the novel presents no future for Vera as a married woman, her inability to reunite with her family might be seen as a sentimental ending designed merely to evoke emotional response in readers and, possibly, as a punishment for a woman who dared to step outside the norm. But, it should also be read as a suggestion that the future of women’s liberation must be find outside the constrictive realm of the patriarchal family and the demands it places upon women. The status quo cannot provide a positive future for women. Love based on submission and obedience as expected from women might be defined as romantic by some, but Lane does not promote it in her novel. She delivers this message of a radical protest in the sentimental misery of Vera. Similarly, the notion of romantic love is questioned through an eloped couple in *Other Worlds*, who must later deal with adultery and alcoholism. And, finally, the double standard involved in the patriarchal vision of gender roles and partnership is being directly attacked in *Unveiling the Parallel*. 
Love as partnership rather than romantic entanglement is an idea upheld in *Reinstern*; in this work, men and women who express their desire to marry become “applicants” and must undergo a preparatory process to understand their new marital roles. In *Herland*, Gilman is even more forceful, speaking strongly against the tradition of patriarchal marriage, which “relates the woman to the man” (122). Gilman develops the thought thus: “He goes on with his business, and she adapts herself to him and to it” (122). In *Herland*, more often than not, it is Van, who is willing to compromise in order to maintain a relationship with Ellador. Such reversal of attitudes is certainly refreshing in the context of patriarchal mores. Ultimately, Ellador’s idea of marriage as “exquisite interchange” (127) replaces the patriarchal notion of unconditional submission. *Mildred Carver, USA*, follows in the same direction by approaching love as the basis for equality in relationship and the incentive to do good work. Mildred’s and Nick’s simultaneous realization that the traditional notion of marriage would inevitably stifle them is followed by the desire to lead lives of public activity and contribution instead of succumbing to the dullness of the romantic love as prescribed to them not only by their privileged and largely passive status but also by the romantic ideals connected to the notion of love and matrimony as defined by the Victorian norm.

The necessity to re-examine and re-evaluate women’s expectations in life and relationships is clearly traceable not only in these specific texts but also in the women’s movement of the turn of the twentieth century in general. While the women’s movement focused primarily on the right to vote, attempting to secure this privilege for women so that they could share in civic responsibilities and politically participate in their society, many other issues
remained in need of exposing, debating, and resolving. It was apparent that the struggle would be long lasting with the ballot being, in the words of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “not an end” but “a means” (Hill 253) and that it would require many women devoted to the cause of well-being of the female population. The utopian genre served the women’s movement well. Its implied appeal for reform with its garb of the exotic and imaginary allowed the women to present their new ideas in a manner more appealing and less threatening than public lectures and demonstrations. Needless to say, the utopias also reached much wider and varied audience. Since the utopian genre was traditionally male-dominated, its conventions reflect the patriarchal view and approach. While adopting the genre for their purposes, the female authors played with these conventions, questioning the underlying idea of progress, historical process, and romantic views on women. They modified this literary vehicle to their own needs, filling it with their own concerns, hopes, and desires. Literature became their means to change the definition of the female and her capabilities, their way to challenge the social design. And, through their literary renderings of what is and what could be, they pushed humanity a step forward toward even better visions and fulfilled lives. I began the project by demonstrating the ways in which the female authors approach traditional conventions of utopia and romance to highlight their general objections to patriarchy. In the following chapters, I will discuss specific issues related to women at the turn of the twentieth century and the treatment of these political and socioeconomic issues as they appear in the selected utopian works.
CHAPTER 2

AT HOME IN UTOPIA: NON-SEXIST SPACES AND REDEMPTIVE PLACES IN MARY BRADLEY LANE'S MIZORA AND CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S HERLAND

If man is created, as the legends say, in the image of the gods, his buildings are done in the image of his own mind and institutions.

Lewis Mumford

Among the working class the wife makes the home…. The working man’s wife is also his housekeeper, cook and several other single domestics rolled into one; and on her being a managing or mismanaging woman depends whether a dwelling will be a home proper, or a house which is not a home.

Thomas Wright

The rapid growth of the city and city life symbolized the American experience at the turn of the twentieth century and brought many new exciting possibilities for women; yet, the city life had also become one of the major concerns for those who tried to untangle its ambiguous combination of unlimited prospects and struggle for survival. The city not only provided women with formerly unknown urban freedom in its anonymity, opening more opportunities for self-determination and organization, but also concentrated the social problems of the time, most manifestly poverty and health issues, making them more apparent and pressing. Daphne Spain, discussing material conditions in the first large American cities, describes horse-drawn trolleys producing tons of manure every day, unpaved streets, open cesspools, contamination, inadequate water supplies and delivery systems, dark and airless narrow rooms, and fire hazards (27). In Jay Martin’s account, cities meant a finer living characterized by education, literature, science, invention the fine arts, social reform, public hygiene, and leisure. At the same time, however, they quickly became places of struggle for jobs and housing, as they continued to receive African
Americans migrating from the South, young single women from the country, and countless immigrants from the rest of the world (3-4). The same anonymity that meant freedom on the one hand connoted indifference and lack of sympathy on the other.

Recognizing its promise as well as its dangers, many architects and city planners tried to negotiate in their drawings the new phenomenon of the city in an attempt to combine the benefits of the country living with the advantages of the city life. Architectural historians refer to this time as the “American Renaissance” because of the proliferation of great art and architecture while they point to the emerging culture of professionalism that included architects, landscape artists, and urban planners all determined to solve social problems, which the rapid growth of cities made more visible (Spain 27). As Lewis Mumford, a renowned architect and sociologist, pointed out, it was in the 1880s that the problem of architectural comeliness was first considered in relation to workers’ housing (50); a decade later Ebenezer Howard, the author of the utopian project known as Garden City, began to insist that something had to be done about the social problems afflicting the city. Persisting that “town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilization” (qtd. in Wojtowicz 15), Howard articulated two major needs of society, “that all people have ample space to live and abundant opportunities to work” (Paden 90-1). This union, according to Howard, would help eliminate many social and spiritual problems, contribute to equality, and encourage cooperation (91-2). This view is representative of the major architectural principles of the time also called the City Beautiful movement: the idea of urban reform through new designs for new cities, the

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14 According to Martin, as the rural population of the United States doubled between the Civil War and First World War, the amount of urban dwellers became seven times higher (4).
insistence on aesthetics, the belief that beautiful cities produce good citizens, and the preference for interconnected but self-contained village-like neighborhoods (100).

The close relationship between architecture and civilization is often at the core of utopian production. Utopian theorist Peter Fitting describes the relationship between town planning and its effect on the lives of utopians as always playing a crucial role in the genre’s development. Indeed, the spatial organization is seen not as a mere representation of the new ideals but as “a decisive component in the production of the new man or woman…[in] bring[ing] about larger social transformation” (69). Many of the utopian works of the time pay attention to the issue of spatial and social organization. Utopias by female authors are especially attuned to this relationship as they attempt to provide alternative versions to the patriarchal space designed for inequality and, consequently, to highlight restrictive spatial practices that need to be reworked in order for women to advance. Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* exemplify such efforts in their portrayals of all-female utopian communities.

Not much is known about Mary Bradley Lane; even the dates of her birth and death, as Joan Saberhagen points out, are still unknown. In her introduction to the novel, Saberhagen explains that the copyright for the 1890 novel *Mizora: A World of Women* is registered to the author as Mary E. Bradley but that the 1975 Gregg Press edition provides the name of the author as Mary E. Bradley Lane. *Mizora* was first serialized in Murat Halstead’s the *Cincinnati Commercial* in winter of 1880-81, where it generated much public interest. Originally, Lane wished to remain unidentified as an author and tried to hide her work even from her husband; she also resisted Halstead’s suggestion to seek book publication. When the novel was finally
published in the book form in 1890 by G. W. Dillingham, Halstead wrote the introduction, pointing to the work’s “thoughtful care and literary skill” predicting an even greater success for it (v). While Lane as an author remains obscure, the novel certainly enjoys popularity as an early portrayal of an all-female utopian community, which began to appear with more frequency in the feminist literature of the 1970s and 1980s.

Unlike Lane’s, the name of Charlotte Perkins Gilman is well known and usually closely tied with the women’s movement of the turn of the twentieth century even though Gilman viewed suffrage as just one of many issues that needed consideration. In her frequent lectures she addressed various topics that burdened women at the time, such as marriage, motherhood, wage discrimination, the economic disablement of women, factory work, and domestic strain and isolation (Hill 253). While today the name of Charlotte Perkins Gilman first calls to mind her feminist short story, “The Yellow Wall-Paper” (1892), she was best known during her lifetime for her work *Women and Economics* (1899), which was translated into seven languages and used as a college textbook in the 1920s. In this book, Gilman took Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution a step further by arguing that women’s inferior position in society hindered the evolutionary process. Gilman claimed that women’s position in society was unnatural because, as she explained in the book, “we are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex relation is also an economic relation” (3). Gilman was convinced that isolated in their husbands’ homes and confined to household chores and child rearing, women could not develop their potential to the fullest, thus holding back the progress of society as a whole. She did not see the situation as hopeless, though. She believed
that women, under the right conditions, could contribute tremendously to the process of social evolution and help accelerate it. Her utopian novels,\textsuperscript{15} which combine her convictions about socialism and feminism, are crucial to Gilman’s legacy. Although she never viewed herself as a fiction writer, she realized that fiction would provide her with space to develop further and more freely the thoughts she strived to materialize so fervently in her everyday life.

Both authors comment on the relationship between men and women and stress that the development of females and, consequently, society as a whole, has been hindered by spatial and social constraints placed upon women. Through the comparison with utopian spaces that they create, Lane and Gilman point to the regressive nature of the patriarchal society organization and accentuate female potential that is being suppressed in current social situation. Their utopian visions provide new, female-friendly spaces through their innovative approach to the communities’ environmental and architectural layouts, their insistence on the need for education and technology in women’s lives, and their appeal for the revision of the patriarchal notion of home and motherhood. This chapter will focus on the numerous possibilities within these utopian places while also demonstrating that the authors, as they attempt to undo the contradictions of masculine design, produce in turn other contradictions, which ultimately reveal the authors’ inability to escape the invasiveness and stealth of patriarchal ideology.

Both authors write against a capitalist, male-dominated society when they offer their visions of the space more favorable to the progress of the human race. Henri Lefebvre, a Marxist philosopher whose work focuses on the conceptual and material production of social space and

\textsuperscript{15} A Woman’s Utopia (1907; utopian fragment), What Diantha Did (1910), Moving the Mountain (1911), Herland (1915), and With Her in Ourland (1916).
its effects, suggests that “a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences” (52). In other words, and in the context of the two utopias, it strives to break the superstructure of the capitalist society and expose its inhumanities (Fishman 17). Although both utopias place a great importance on social relations and consider them a determining factor in social evolution, they recognize that space and spatial design play an equally important role as shaping tools of human behavior. The considerable agency of the characters in controlling and manipulating their destinies suggests that the right re-design of a lived environment can serve as a corrective for the problems of the past and shape the future positively. The biggest achievement of these societies is the limitation of prohibition in the living spaces—equality of access is crucial. Their space is limited in its size, but it is theirs, and for the first time they have the opportunity to organize it for their purposes. Having been isolated for centuries in their homes, the women know how suffocating to the body and confining to the mind small and enclosed spaces can be, so it comes as no surprise that they see spacious living and openness as their priority, as the main factor in their lives. This desire is, of course, reflective of Howard’s insistence on ample living space as the cities’ overcrowdedness began to stifle their inhabitants.

Gilman’s emphasis on the nature’s openness and accessibility is very pronounced in Herland. No visible barriers (except the mountain range surrounding the community) mar the view. Since Herland is a small country of about 10,000 to 12,000 square miles with the population of three million women, space and its maximum use are always on Herlanders’ minds. The land is perfectly cultivated everywhere: the forests look like parks, there are enormous gardens all over the country, and wide plains, meadows, and open spaces stretch far.
Scattered around the forests are carved stone seats and tables with fountains and bird baths beside them. Even large trees are well tended to provide shade against the sun or shelter from the rain to those sitting underneath on the seats circling the trunk. Because their space is limited, the Herlanders’ approach to the tending of nature is extremely utilitarian, but even in their practicality they do not forget the importance of aesthetics and relaxation in their lives. Gilman takes the contemporary idea of urban parks, which were to serve as a remedy for the pressures of urbanization and industrialization and a source of mental and physical refreshment to the population (Cranz 76) and extends it to the entire utopian community. With their encouragement of assimilation, nature appreciation, and physical activity, parks were designed to provide space where people could be safe, active, and healthy. The aesthetic and the practical merges in this utopias, as its parks are full of life; there are fruit gatherers, foresters, and women “reading, playing games, or busy at some kind of handiwork” everywhere (Gilman 31). Moreover, physical exercise is encouraged through the emphasis on a park-like quality of the utopians’ surroundings and equality promoted through an open access to all. Thus, what Lefebvre calls “formerly a contingent but now a necessary moment” when people demand “a qualitative space” (353) for their time off is met in this utopia, and, what is more, the women do not have to travel long distances to escape the ugliness of an industrial city because they are surrounded by space that completely fulfills them. The land is peaceful, safe, comfortable, and nurturing all at once. Geographical space in Herland does not merge into abstract, undistinguishable, and “offensive mess man made in the face of nature” (Herland 18); the distinction between country and city lies in the density of the population rather than in the qualitative binary oppositions.
While the countryside is designed for enjoyment, it is, at the same time, a space of production. It is important to note that the women maintain balance by tending the nature carefully to utilize but not exploit its good qualities. In his visions of “the idolum of utopia,” (225), Mumford calls for the “familiarity with…local environment” (226) and “direct utilization of local resources” (227), which the utopian cultivation of land must bring. In *Herland*, neither purposeless artificial orderliness nor depleted resources scar the environment. Even though Herlanders feel the pressure of the lack of space, they take measures to resolve it instead of battling and overpowering the nature or occupying and exploiting someone else’s space. To avoid crowding, they practice cremation, plant only harvestable trees and plants, and experiment with cross-breeding. The land has neither regions exhausted for the purpose of and by the means of production as it is common in a capitalist society, nor are there regions exploited by the excessive consumption of space so typical of dictatorial regimes. Indeed, no waste or excess is apparent anywhere. There is “no dirt,” “no smoke,” and “no noise” attacking the visitors’ senses. The women do not strive to battle and beat the nature; instead, through mutual cooperation of biological and social evolution, they are accelerating the progress of humanity. The elimination of the clash between consumption and leisure, needs and desires, is the first step in ensuring quality existence while saving space.

Where Gilman’s focus on the pastoral aspects of her utopia attempts to correct the alienation and desperation of capitalism, the production of environment in Lane’s utopia refutes the notion of female intellectual inferiority and stresses the effect of the surroundings on its inhabitants. Compared to Herland, Mizora is anti-agrarian in character, but the same major
principles prevail: “there is neither smoke, nor soot, nor dust” (59). Trees of a “feathery foliage” provide a welcome shade with their flat tops reminding one of “a Chinese umbrella,” “brilliant-plumaged birds” fly about without fear, and the women are scattered on the lawn, reading, drawing, or sewing (16). The residences are surrounded by the ground “ornamented like a private park” (40) where “cascades, fountains, rustic arbors, rockeries, aquariums, tiny lakes, and every variety of landscape ornamenting” would be the norm (41). The markets are “fastidiously neat and clean” and the produce is “fresh and perfect” (51). Such grooming is believed to influence the inhabitants positively since they are viewed, in accordance with the utopian tradition, as the direct reflection of the living conditions:

Some natures are so undecided in character that they become only what their surroundings make them. Others only partially absorb tastes and sentiments that form the influence about them. They maintain a decided individuality; yet, they are most always noticeably marked with the general character of their surroundings. It is very seldom that a nature is fixed from infancy in one channel. (61)

The grooming is achieved through their mastery of science rather than effort and excessive labor. It is through science that the women become to understand that “Nature herself is a mass of little things,” and they investigate these “union[s] of tiny cells” to defeat diseases and improve their health mainly through proper nutrition (49). The reader is told that, instead of attempting to supersede nature, they pay close attention to it, “adher[ing] to Nature’s laws” and using “Nature’s processes of development” for the benefit of the community (104). While manual labor is viewed quite positively in Herland as long as one does what she is naturally inclined to do, Lane argues that there is a direct relation between the level of manual laborers and the society’s chance for betterment. The smaller the need for “hand labor,” the greater the demand
for “brain labor,” which will lead to the “rise to universal culture” (62). Technology and machinery are revered, which certainly indicates Lane’s distaste for the drudgery women were often subjected to described in the novel as “menial, degrading, and harassing” (21). It also emphasizes her conviction that the environment one lives in has an unavoidable impact on the person’s character as well as on her aspirations, hopes, and desires.

The open space as a vital element of quality living is further reinforced through the freedom of travel; it is not only desired but also encouraged through well-built roads and railroads. In Mizora, the affordability of living is the community’s motto, and it applies not only to food but also to fuel (32). Their roads are covered with cement made from pulverized granite, which ensures their durability and resistance. Often, however, Mizorans use air ships, which are extremely comfortable and fast; goods are transported by railroads on engines powered by compressed air. The reader is told that the system is so perfect that there are almost no accidents. Similarly, in Herland, the cities and villages are connected with “clean, well-built roads” (11), made of hard, manufactured material and “sloped slightly to shed rain, with every curve and grade and gutter” perfectly made (18). Herlanders are very proud of their roads, which allow them a comfortable access everywhere. As Eleador confirms in the sequel, With Her in Ourland, Herlanders consider having good connecting routes as one of the basis of a well-functioning society:

the United States should by now have the best roads on earth, [which]… incidentally go far to solve other “problems,” as you call your neglected work, such as “unemployment,” “the negro question,” “criminality,” “social discontent.” (133)
The road, or travel for that matter, has a greater significance than just its economic merit as the means of distribution. In the American context particularly, the road has been viewed as a symbol of independence and freedom, the means of escape, adventure, a new beginning. While the women in either utopia do not feel the need to escape because they already feel free, the road carries other, just as important significance for them. One of them is mobility, the possibility to travel through the open space, and the other is communication, the possibility to share with and learn from others. In the patriarchal setting of the turn of the twentieth century, mobility and communication as major forces of dissension were largely denied to women, who were in most cases unable to travel alone and unable to discuss their ideas and feelings in their isolating household settings. Consequently, the road and, more importantly, the ability to use it truly represent the basis of a free and open society from the communal and social points of view.

The women’s commitment to the openness of the land and freedom of the movement throughout the community is also stressed in the way in which the three male visitors are “imprisoned” in Herland; this example is especially telling, however, because it also shows Gilman’s partial succumbing to patriarchal ideology. Unlike a regular prison cell, the room in which the men are held offers absolute comfort and reflects women’s standards when it comes to living space. They are not physically restrained, and soon after their arrival they are allowed to tour the whole country. While the men’s clothes are taken from them and are replaced by what all Herlanders wear, it is said to be more for the men’s comfort than humiliation. In every aspect, the women try to provide for the men and, of course, for themselves an absolute access to everything available. Yet, although the chamber where the men are imprisoned provides a great
amount of comfort, it is in a castle that looks more like a fortress on the outskirts of the country. Standing on a steep rock, it is surrounded by high walls, which make escape close to impossible although the blinds in the room open easily and there are no bars on the windows. It is the illusion of no restraint rather than actual freedom that we must note. The castle’s architecture makes it apparent that the building was built long before the women took over. Clearly, the building’s structure goes against their principles of architecture, but the women continue to use it, and they use it for the most confining and space-denying activity—imprisonment. After initial violence on both sides when the visitors’ rebellious behavior is answered by the women’s capturing, stripping, and drugging them in the fashion of their old male masters, the men are given tunics, some food, and notebooks to learn the women’s language and to teach them their own. Certain reciprocity and mutual respect are shown in the fact that soon after their arrival the men are allowed movement and later they are even taken through different cities to get to know the country and to lecture about theirs. They are constantly supervised, however, and even though the men acknowledge that this form of imprisonment is better than physical restriction, the methods of surveillance and brainwashing resemble the tactics of Orwell’s Big Brother. All of the men must continue to learn about the country even when Terry shows signs of fading interest: “I am sick and tired of being educated…I want to Get Out!” (32). And even as the men are finally leaving Herland, the threat of surveillance is upon them. Although it is understandable that the women do not wish them to reveal their location until Ellador returns and reports on the situation in the “Other World,” as the United States is referred to, they threaten Terry with absolute imprisonment and even anesthesia to keep him silent. It can be argued that violent and
resentful behavior on Terry’s part can only reap the same response from the other side, but it also shows that despite all of their re-education and re-design, in certain situations these women readily reach for the tools of patriarchal oppression.

The same radically oppressive approach is evident in the utopias’ attitude toward the unwanted and undesirable. We must certainly concede that the authors’ attempts to create non-sexist places do not produce spaces free of all prohibition, especially when it comes to racial but also other distinctions. Racist assumptions abound in *Mizora*; when Vera, the visitor to this utopia, encounters some of its inhabitants for the first time, she immediately notices the marked contrast between their “highest type of blonde beauty” (15), which makes them look like “the genus of another race” (16) and her own appearance. In the second chapter, the fairness of Misorans is stressed several times, as the dark-haired Vera notices over and over again that all of the inhabitants of this utopia are blonde, and the reader is being further reminded of this physical feature throughout the novel. Thus, we are told that in comparison with these “lovely and noble blond women” Vera’s own people and country evoke “an unnatural reserve” in her (88). Further, the women of Mizora openly assert that, since “the highest excellence of moral and mental character is alone attainable by a fair race,” they eliminated “the elements of evil” that “belong to the dark race” (92). While Vera “secretly” disagrees with the Preceptress who shares this thought with her, she never voices her objections but later starts to yearn “for [her] own; debased as compared with Mizora though they be” (115). Gilman’s racism is equally apparent as the women in Herland are “of Aryan stock, and were once in contact with the best civilization of the old world. They [are] ‘white,’ but somewhat darker than our northern races because of their constant
exposure to sun and air” (54). Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams argues that Gilman (and her argument can be easily extended to Lane) promotes her racist conviction that “all classes of people…were evolving toward a (white) American way of life” (36). Indeed, the authors’ disturbing attitudes toward racial issues are reflective of the inherent racial ideology of the time mostly influenced by Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*, in which he writes:

There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the results of natural selection; the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe having emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country, and having there succeeded best. (179)

In this passage, Darwin mentions only people of European descent constituting the new population of America; at other places in *The Descent of Men*, he makes clear qualitative difference between nations that he considers civilized and barbarous. Christine Mahady discusses also the influence of Herbert Spencer’s racial theories on the American audience and points to his study of the “comparative psychology of man,” which considers human races in relation to their varied orders of intellectual and emotional capabilities (101). Anglo-Saxon cultures were clearly viewed as possessing the capacities for evolution and progress, which notion was further supported by anthropometric measurements of facial angles, brain weight, and other somatic features (95) and the late nineteenth century anxieties about the racial and ethnic other (111). Consequently, we learn that Mizorans’ brains were “of a finer intellectual fiber,” possessing “a wider, grander, more majestic receptivity” (50). The ideas they thrive on Vera cannot comprehend: they pass over her “like a cloud” (50). Not only that the blondes in this novel have brains, they have superior brains which go with their superior appearance. The prohibitive nature
of these utopias becomes especially striking when we begin to realize that it also extends to what Darby Lewes calls “liminal outsiders,” such as the sick and the mentally or physically undesirable (9), who are continuously bred out of the society. Although it is certainly necessary to point out this alarming aspect of both novels,¹⁶ and Ganobscik-Williams addresses the issue in relation to *Herland* in her article, I do believe that we also need to consider Pfaelzer’s suggestion that Lane’s choice of a dark-haired heroine who is accepted among the blonde women but decides to leave them in the end to search for her own happiness might actually oppose the messages of racial purity (Introduction xxxii).

We also cannot overlook both utopias’ suggestions of undesirable traits or even species when it comes to nature and animals. While we are repeatedly being convinced that the women follow nature and learn to live in agreement with it, there are certainly some aspects of their behavior that are more suggestive of patriarchal colonialist practices than of all-embracing tolerance and equality they seem to promote. The use of nature rather than admiration for the natural is always stressed, and the women’s involvement in and molding of nature is the basis on which these two utopias are built. The first time Jeff, Van, and Terry come across the signs of Herland is when the guide points to snow water running down the cliff. While the water is not poisonous to them as they drink it freely, it is “greenish in tint” because of “chemicals of some sort” that the women release to the water stream (4). The chemicals are used for dying, and the guide quickly informs the men that this is by no means a rare occurrence: “One day blue—one day red—one day green…Woman Country—up there” (5). The excessiveness of the women’s

¹⁶ For further discussion of Gilman’s racism and ethnocentrism see also Alys Eve Weinbaum’s “Writing Feminist Genealogy: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Racial Nationalism, and the Reproduction of Maternalist Feminism” and Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s “Reading Gilman in the Twenty-First Century.”
transformation of nature is verbalized when Terry, upon seeing Herland’s forest for the first time, comments that he never saw woods “so petted, even in Germany” (13). And the women’s brutal control over nature is the most apparent in their hierarchical approach to animals. Because they take up space that the women need for themselves, numerous species are slain, the cats, by the process of “careful selection and exclusion” are made physically incapable of producing sounds, and “mothers and fathers” of various species are discussed only in terms of their usefulness (47-49). We can clearly see Gilman’s consideration of the potential of natural selection and crossbreeding for the humankind in the utopia, but it is nevertheless necessary to note the contradiction between the proclaimed notion of harmony that is manifested in nature and, consequently, reflected in this society and the aggressive and exclusive organization discerned in the environment.

A very similar incongruity is traceable in Mizora. Vera immediately notices the passive character of her surroundings as “all nature lay asleep” around her (15). The obvious cause of this stillness is the fact that all animals have been eliminated. Technology “superseded the usefulness of animals in all departments” (54), and this fall on the scale of practicality then brings death. It is not implausible to argue within this context that, contrary to its overt statements, this novel approaches nature as an enemy that needs to be conquered and made to comply with the demands and needs of the ones who take over. Everything natural, savage we might say, must be eliminated for the benefit of the powerful. Thus, the “earthy matter” of the food is considered “deleterious,” and its elimination is the primary goal of the scientific method behind the food preparation (45). In fact, Mizorans’ success at eliminating diseases is really a
result of an absolute elimination of majority of animals and other organisms; their pride in “marketing clean and perfect fruit” (49) and in providing healthy nutrition to all is a result of chemical imitation and close “counterfeiting” of “the processes of nature” (56), which, I must add, in that sense are not processes of nature anymore. The image we get at the end of Chapter VIII paints a vivid picture not only of the elevated status that science holds in this society but also of the hierarchical consideration of the environment and the forces within: “the Laboratory where Science sat throned, the grand, majestic, humane Queen of this thrice happy land” (57). To return to the point I make at the beginning of this paragraph, the silence so prevalent throughout the land makes a puzzling commentary. When Vera first arrives, she is struck by the stillness; later she comments that the silence “impress[es] her painfully” (16) and links it to “death, reigned unbroken” (17). Compared to the noisy and chaotic cities of the late nineteenth century, the idea of some soothing silence, one would expect, must have been appealing, but Lane’s repetition of the phrase “no hum of life” (15, 16) suggests certain apprehension about the silencing and deadening power of the ultimate control over the environment. While Vera eventually grows to like Mizorans’ smooth and quiet ways, which are further complemented by voices “softer and sweeter than the strains of an eolian harp” (17), reading the novel today we cannot ignore the novel’s essentialist implication that loud voice in women is actually undesirable and a quiet, passively calm environment is where women thrive the most. This same idea, although not developed as much in Herland, seems to be promoted by Gilman as well. The notion, however, extends to the racial dimension and further emphasizes Gilman’s xenophobic inclinations when we are told that Herlanders’ voices are soft, their speech “clear musical fluent”
and very much unlike the “sing-son” of savages (15). Jeff, Terry, and Van certainly seem to appreciate this trait as they “doffed” their hats to these frail apparitions (15).

Although we witness in the two utopias middle-class, religious, and xenophobic bias, we must not disregard the positive role these utopias play in positioning their utopian communities as literary spaces for women who have been long marginalized and held back. The attempt to create spaces that would be designed to help outsiders overcome their marginalizing status at the turn of the twentieth century is discussed by Spain, who explains that at this time and for the first time American middle-class women saw their chance to take an active role in alternating the man-created urban spaces they occupied. They did so by organizing themselves and volunteering in producing boarding houses, vocational schools, hotels for transients, playgrounds, and public baths, which Spain calls redemptive places. These places provided a transient space existing somewhere between the margin and the center; this liminal character enabled the places to provide, at least temporarily, some relief through the glimpse of equality, cooperation, and unity.

While male professionals focused for the most parts on the grand and monumental, female volunteers were more concerned with these redemptive spaces where everyday life took place. Spain points at the differences in approach between the two efforts when she says, “Men emphasized economic growth and progress (the City Profitable), while women invoked religiosity and domesticity for the benefit of strangers (the City Livable) (13). Working under the ideological garb of the Social Gospel17 and municipal house-keeping,18 the women justified their

17 The Social Gospel explained poverty as being directly related to social, political, and economic circumstances of an individual rather than his or her personal failings (Spain 7-9).
18 According to the tenets of municipal housekeeping, women were responsible for keeping the city as clean and as well functioning as their own homes. Women’s civic involvement was justified by the comparisons drawn between the maintenance of the home and the city (Spain 9).
public activities by conservative religious and domestic pronouncements to make their actions seem less threatening to the patriarchal system as well as to the less radical or progressive among them (17-18). Certainly, as Marylin Gitell and Teresa Shtob explain (67), these efforts, like the utopias in question, reflect serious bias, but it is equally true that these places played an invaluable role in recognizing the potential of the marginalized, encouraging their confidence, and facilitating their new beginnings. Although the utopias are fictional, I see them, at least in some sense, as having more permanence than the actual redemptive spaces, which virtually disappeared after the World War I (Spain 242). The utopias always encourage us to consider the marginal and the oppressed in the light of the role that spatial and social organizations play in their lives. The redemptive places that these two utopias offer to women are schools, which are accessible to everyone, homes which are no longer places of exhaustion and submission, and communities in which children’s existence is neither limited by obligations to certain groups of people (family) nor tied down by the expectations of any class position or social status.

Lane and Gilman pay great attention to the power of education because they recognize the fundamental effect it has in the qualitative changes of women’s lives. Both *Mizora* and *Herland*, stressing the social influences that can mold and aid humanity in its development, present education as an inseparable part of social evolution. Both authors maintain that changes in thinking bring changes in society, which in turn alter people’s lives and, ultimately, their physical constitutions. Women in Herland understand this notion. They teach not only their children; they begin to educate the three male visitors almost as soon as they arrive. Similarly, in *Mizora* education is free, and anyone who decides to study has the opportunity because in
Mizora “schools and colleges [are] always open” (64). The women in Herland take “the greatest pains to develop two kinds of minds—the critic and inventor” (76), and women in Mizora stress continually that “nothing so ennobles the mind as a broad and thorough education” (132). The narrator in Mizora is impressed by the women’s opportunities for cultivating their minds, and she wonders whether the time will ever come “when [her] own country will…rise to a social, if not intellectual equality” (46), envisioning a Temple of Learning with an inscription: “‘ENTER WHO WILL: NO WARDER STANDS WATCH AT THE GATE’” (68). In the context of redemptive places, schools hold an uppermost position in aiding people to find the right place in society, and the utopias urge for greater and wider accessibility of education, which, as they repeatedly state, would benefit not only the individual but also the society as a whole. In terms of women’s access to education and their capabilities, the utopias challenge the sexist assumptions of the turn of the twentieth-century that women’s “unique physiology…limit[s] their educational capacity” and that too much education threatens women’s reproductive capabilities” (Mahady 95). The greatest emphasis is put on the women’s excellent capabilities in science, which have been historically continuously questioned and undermined. The point is made directly in both utopias. In Herland, the women are best at “a chemistry, a botany, a physics, with all the blends where a science touches an art, or merges into an industry,” and while every woman and girl in Herland specializes in a particular field, she knows “more about everything” than the male visitors (64). In Mizora, the women’s intellectual capabilities are even more pronounced since their sole survivor depends on their scientific accomplishments as they produce food and exterminate diseases through science. The strong message of these utopias lies in the insistence
that women no longer be limited in their intellectual accomplishments but be granted opportunity
to reach the highest intellectual potential, which would allow them to become active participants
in the evolution of human race.

The understandable effort to emphasize the benefits of education in women’s lives
produces an alarming hierarchical organization in Mizora, however. It is a common analogy in
the genre to compare a utopian society to a living organism, whose parts cooperate for the
benefit of everyone or to a well-oiled machine, whose each element accomplishes an invaluable
part of the ultimate task. In Mizora, the State is compared to “the beneficent mother who
furnished everything, and required of her children only their time and application” (23), which
sounds more like a democracy from above than a truly egalitarian and democratic society. While
we are told that there are no class distinctions when it comes to wealth, it is very improbable
since the salary in Mizora varies with teachers being the utopia’s “aristocracy,” whose salaries
exceed those of any other public position (23). Vera tells us that the monetary status of Mizoran
women is hardly ever mentioned and does not qualify them; instead, the women’s occupations
serve as signifiers: “‘she is a fine scholar, or mechanic, or artist, or musician. She excels in
landscape gardening, or domestic work. She is a first-class chemist.’ But never ‘She is rich.’”
This insistence encourages the readers to focus on skills rather than material possessions, and the
italicized pronoun makes the point of women’s capabilities and the importance of
accomplishments other than their usual roles as mothers and wives. Still, it is implied throughout
the novel that the pronouncement “She is a teacher” would stand above all, even above the
highly emphasized role of a scientist. I acknowledge the positive character of the effort behind
Lane’s emphasis on education, but it is problematic nevertheless that the most revered occupation in the land is the one that has been, for the most part, always one of the most accessible professions for women. It is even more frustrating that Lane ennobles education and educators to such extent that, ultimately, the education contributes to the differences rather than erasing them in the novel (23).

The old notions of home are thoroughly rejected in the utopias, for it is recognized as a place of isolation and oppression in its traditional context. Yet, as the women rebuild their societies, not all of the aspects of home are being devalued and discarded. The utopias eliminate the division between the private and the public spheres—the greatest dividers between sexes in a patriarchal society. The assumption that “the family home must be an alternative space to the factory” is definitively rejected (Pfaelzer, Introduction xvii). By melting the strictly imposed boundaries of a male-designed space between the private sphere (usually assigned to women) and the public sphere (usually attributed to men), these utopias offer a positive alternative for women. The patriarchal form of spatial structure, “the division between the inhumane marketplace and the humane hearth” (Pearson 64), is being challenged because of its encouragement of isolation, conspicuous consumption, occupational segregation, and passivity on women’s part (Markusen 26-30). Pfaelzer sees it as paradoxical that the new representation of woman’s space is derived from the image of home and she points to the essentialist tendencies of portraying women as loving, sympathetic, and motherly (“A State” 158). The women’s compliance with the ideology of municipal housekeeping so prevalent at the time is certainly evident in both utopias. Indeed, the positive aspects of the home are extended to the outside,
which gives rise to a public space that reveals some of the qualities of the private space, such as order, cleanliness, and even privacy when one desires it but, we must note, without connoting confinement, isolation, or enslavement. Further, it is helpful to consider the words of Angelika Bammer, who argues that the feminist activists were more likely to achieve success if they tried to “put this ideology of gender polarity to political use” because, “to the extent that the ideology of femininity that declared woman to be the human ideal embodied a fundamentally utopian dimension, it provided them with one of their most powerful arguments” (35). Finally, we must also recognize that the authors move beyond the ideas of the nineteenth century home economics specialists, who saw the increased efficiency and quality of household production as the ultimate goal (Markusen 25). In these utopias, it is the household organization, as well as the fundamental separation between work and home spheres, that is being primarily challenged as the culprit of women’s subjugation.

Neighborly cooperation becomes a vital part of such space, where everything becomes an element of this common effort. Community and communal well-being are absolutely crucial in both utopias. The struggle for existence has not been eradicated, but its terms have changed: it is a collective struggle for better existence. Instead of keeping one half of the population subservient and either uneducated or poorly educated, the female communities work together toward a common goal—progress of the society. The women in Herland do not compete with each other; they are “all moved by precisely the same feelings, to the same end” (22). And, Mizorans live like “one immense family of sisters who knew no distinction of birth or position among themselves” (28). The utopian women are no longer relegated to their individual homes
where they have to spend their days in solitude busy with various chores. Communal cooperation, technology, and science play an extremely positive role in these utopias because they bring hope of reducing if not eliminating the “‘domestic miseries’” (Lane 68), which allows women to spend more time on activities they find interesting and fulfilling. In Mizora, “[t]he whole domestic department [is] a marvel of ingenious mechanical contrivances” (45), and “[t]oil [is] unknown; the toil that we know, menial, degrading and harassing” (21). Even bread comes from the laboratory in Mizora because the women are “all practical chemists” (19). The technology and science contribute to “the extreme cheapness of living” (32), which makes “[f]ood and fuel …items of so small consequence, that poverty ha[s] become unknown” (32). Similarly, the women in Herland are enormously practical, using technology to rid themselves of household drudgery and to make their lives convenient and efficient. These suggestions reflect the ideas of landscape architect and urban planner Frederick Law Olmstead, who envisioned the city itself as “an instrument for household liberation” (Pfaelzer, Introduction xix). The women enjoy public nurseries, communal kitchens, and employment in which they can utilize their talents and interests. The women of Mizora and Herland are not enslaved in their homes while they try to manage different tasks, depending solely on a financial and material support of their spouses. They are independent and prospering, putting their effort into a pleasurable work that they choose freely.

Although living largely communally, the women still have their living quarters, but they differ dramatically from the typical dwellings of the turn of the twentieth century with its bourgeois domesticity. Walter Benjamin defines such dwelling thus:
The nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling’s interior, that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. (qtd. in Heynen 17)

Lane does not reject “the excesses of robber-baron opulence” (Pfaelzer, Introduction xix) and “the exclusive privileges of the rich” (Lane 41) because she believes that to arrive at a higher state of culture people must live surrounded with beauty. Therefore, Mizoran houses are designed “with two special objects in view—beauty and comfort” (40) and are surrounded by cascades, fountains, lakes, and landscape ornaments (41). These “arrangement and adornments” of residences in Mizora are “for the comfort and happiness of its inmates”; no objects are ever being accumulated and flaunted without purpose to merely demonstrate one’s acquisitions (40). Lane follows the influence of John Ruskin and William Morris in her suggestion that artful environment is morally uplifting, as she designs her utopia according such contemporary theories (Pfaelzer, Introdcution xix). Efficiency is never forgotten, though. Mizoran residences are designed for living, not for display. Similarly, the utopian women in Herland show no desire to be “encased” and “embedded,” and their living space reflects what they expect of space conducive to healthy and independent living. It is comfortable, practical, and full of air and light; moreover, it does not involve any accumulation of unnecessary goods, excessive consumption, and exaggerated maintenance. Their living quarters are simple because life takes place elsewhere; it is outside. They are active participants of the community and, therefore, do not spend exaggerated time or energy on excessive decoration and needless maintenance of the interior just to spend time or avoid boredom.
The women’s clothing provides probably the most pronounced example of re-designed personal space. Bustles and wasp waists are unknown in these communities; the roomy and functional clothes allow more movement, which enables Herlanders to live active and satisfying lives and Mizorans to benefit from a greater capacity of lung power. In Mizora, “a tapering waist” is considered “a disgusting deformity” (20) and in Herland the clothes are required to be supportive of free movement. Although Mizorans’ clothes are “rich garments, adorned with rare and costly gems,” they do not prevent athleticism and allow for outdoor exercising (20). Gilman is even more radical in her approach to clothing as she does away with all adornments as well as impractical hats, elaborate hairdos, and long skirts, whose designs conceal the body and keep women paralyzed. Herlanders’ wardrobe consists of a one-piece cotton undergarment that reaches over the knees and shoulders, half-hose with elastic tops, union suits, knee-length tunics, and long robes. The women wear union suits or tunics most of the time, and, because there is no shame associated with their bodies, they feel free to wear only the undergarment for fieldwork and exercise. Because the undergarment is soft and “absolutely free to move in” (31), the women can run and leap like dear, climb trees, and exercise at any time. The large number of pockets further accentuates Gilman’s intention to give women more space. The pockets are in all their garments, freeing women’s hands for work while providing space for personal belongings and necessities. The women’s mobility and self-sufficiency is thus further heightened because they can carry whatever they may need without being hampered by numerous accessories or luggage. Instead of the pale and sickly creatures of Victorian era, in both utopias we encounter women
who are lean, athletic, and healthy because they no longer have to suffocate themselves in clothes designed to confirm to masculine ideas of femininity

Yet, the uniformity of the women’s clothing and their overall appearance brings out the contradictory character of some of the authors’ ideas, thus problematizing these otherwise practical suggestion. Although it is mentioned several times that the women in Herland dye the cloth they manufacture, therefore leading us to the conclusion that the color of the clothing provides at least partial variety, the clothes function as a sort of uniform—an immediate identification tool—and, therefore, also as a tool of exclusion. In Mizora, this uniformity is stressed even further as the women all look alike. As it was mentioned earlier, their lived environments lack overt means of prohibition, but one can argue that it is only because the clothes and overall appearance provide the same service in a more covert way. An intruder in the community, for example, can be spotted immediately because of his or her different outfit and be under constant surveillance because of his or her easy identification. One must immediately think back to dark-haired Vera, who stands apart from the group of Mizoran women, “enveloped in garments of fur” and representing “marked contrast” (16). We also need to consider the men’s imprisonment in Herland and the women’s immediate insistence on the men’s change of clothes. The overall appearance of the utopian women denies spontaneity in personal expression and, consequently, in free formation of their identities. It represents some kind of collective pressure, the need to submit and identify, to be part of the assigned space because the only other option is to be an outsider.
Besides the places of learning and working, the last of redemptive places that these utopias consider at length is the place of reproduction and child-rearing, which is usually tied to the notion of family. The utopias extend the excess to education and blur the boundaries between the private and the public spheres, but family as a nuclear unit is approached entirely negatively as a place confining and stifling in its intimacy and isolation, which needs to be criticized for its amateurish and insufficient methods. As material feminists, both Lane and Gilman do not, however, disparage mothering or nurturing. Instead, they approach it in the general direction of their novels—scientifically. In Mizora, science has helped women to control the development of life, and they believe that “MOTHER is the only important part of life” since “[i]n the lowest organisms no other sex is apparent” (103). Likewise, the women in Herland reproduce parthenogenetically and “working all together at the grandest of tasks—they [are] Making People—and they ma[k]e them well” (69). Children in both countries are considered to be the highest asset, and everything is aimed at them because the women understand that the humanity can be only perfected through its offspring.

Although some might argue that with their elevation of motherhood as the most important effort of any society the authors submit women to the patriarchal standards and expectations, I believe that they emphasize the invaluable role women have played for centuries in reproduction of society. Where socialists such as Lenin and Engels made similar arguments to Lane’s and Gilman’s for socialized daycare and domestic work so that women could become part of industrial production, the implied assumption in their argument was that domestic work was not of much value. Lane and Gilman, on the other hand, highlight the crucial position that
women’s “work,” biologically and socially, has held in the process of social evolution. They portray women as major agents of evolution and point to the significance of their contribution to it. At the same time, however, they also warn that the child rearing should not be considered a matter-of-fact occupation for every woman. Besides the fact that not all women are born good educators, Lane and Gilman argue that many women, who are forced to stay at home and raise their children, do not make good mothers and could contribute more to the development of society in different fields. In fact, the women’s differences are encouraged by the most crucial distinction, that between motherhood as experience and motherhood as institution.\textsuperscript{19} While the values of motherhood are at the center of this culture, not every mother has to function in this role at the expense of other roles she plays, or could play, in society. As Bartkowski points out, with this move, Gilman reflects the interest of many feminists “to disentangle the biological mother from the function of mothering” (33). And, Bammer adds, this distinction is central to the utopia because it demonstrates that “what is oppressive to women is not the fact of motherhood, but rather the political, economic, and social context within which it is institutionalized” (42).

Where Lane resorts to privileging and hierarchy when it comes to women’s occupations, reproduction creates a significant contradiction in Gilman’s work because it continues to function, even though slightly differently than in a capitalist, patriarchal society, as the cause of women’s oppression. Reproduction and space are closely connected, and Gilman is probably the only author of utopia who directly confronts the necessary problem of any utopian society—the lack of space—heads on. The work resonates with the contemporary urban readership, who is increasingly aware of problems that a growing population may bring, but the solution Gilman

\textsuperscript{19} These two terms are usually treated as the same thing in a patriarchal society.
offers to the growing population of Herland in a very limited area foresees the 1979 one-child rule of communist China. Because they procreate parthenogenetically and can control the time of conception with their minds, they do not have to adopt such radical measures as abortion, sterilization, or infanticide. Because they can bear only female babies, they also do not have to fear and deal with the most terrible outcome of the one-child rule, that of male-infant preference and an extreme disdain for female infants. The problematic identification of gratification with fertility is still present, however. While the women enjoy their work and cherish the feeling of contribution to the community, motherhood is considered “the highest social service—a sacrament, really” (69) and absolutely incomparable with any other work that the women do. Maternity is valued above anything else; it is “a crowning honor” (83), and those who are granted the privilege to bear more than one child20 consider it “the very highest reward and honor in the power of the state” (69). As it was previously mentioned, the women value their living space and recognize the value it has for the quality of their lives, but as a consequence they find themselves in a position comparable to the one available to women in a patriarchal society: they are not in control of the means of reproduction because they are told how many children to have. Moreover, they are valued by their ability to bear children because infertility falls only upon “the few worst types” (82), which, in the eyes of the society, makes a woman’s morality and character depend on her reproductive abilities. While some women are infertile, others are prohibited from having children. Such prohibition becomes a very serious limitation especially if we consider the value that motherhood is assigned in Herland. The women who carry from their family past some “bad” or criminal genes are asked to renounce motherhood altogether as their social duty. Since

20 These women are called Over Mothers and their status in society is comparable with aristocracy.
motherhood is raised to a form of religion, “some sort of Maternal Pantheism” (59), the women who are not allowed to become mothers immediately find themselves on the margin of the society (thus clearly indicating a margin where there is not to be any), demoted to the status of social and religious outcasts. Motherhood thus serves as a tool of prohibition that is deeply rooted in the spatial organization of Herland and brings a hierarchical structure to this otherwise egalitarian society.

Although both utopias seem to end in a similar tone, their outcomes are radically different. While Mizorans do not desire men and see them (based on their previous experience) as a force of destruction, the Herlanders, as Bernice Hausman reminds us, “are interested in reintroducing sexual reproduction, because variation and greater complexity represent to them… progressive development” (502). I do not agree with Jean Pfaelzer’s assessment of Mizora that Mary Lane “begrudged women’s ‘demotion’ to equality and designed a utopian society to reclaim [their] superiority, restricted and repressed though it may be” (“A State” 150). As I demonstrate above, I believe that Lane was interested in illustrating how far women could progress in a space free of the negative influences of their male counterparts rather than in promoting women’s superiority. She presents patriarchy as the ultimate evil and a hindrance to humanity’s progress, and she stresses this conviction in the fact that the Mizoran women must entirely eliminate men from society in order to change their path. Mizora’s ending underlines

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21 Pfaelzer addresses the utopia in comparison to Herland, treating it more or less negatively. Ann Lane, in her introduction to Herland, states that Mizora is “an utterly preposterous story” (xix) that is “something less than convincing, even as an imaginative creation” (xx). Pearson discusses Mizora only briefly together with three other utopias (in a seven-page chapter), focusing on its feminist strategies. Duangrudi Suksang’s article is the only substantial treatment of Lane’s utopia that I have been able to locate.

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Lane’s radical condemnation of patriarchy; Wauna dies shortly after she leaves Mizora while Vera remains in the world that “is many ages behind the civilization of Mizora” with a belief that “many, very many, evils could be obliterated were we to follow [Mizorans’] laws” (147). Lane’s skepticism about such a possibility closes the narrative, as Vera, “[c]hildless, homeless and friendless, in poverty and obscurity,” finishes her story of Mizora, saying: “Life is a tragedy even under the most favorable conditions” (147). Gilman’s utopia, on the other hand, presents a more hopeful conclusion. Despite the contradictions that Gilman creates, her novel presents several crucial suggestions, forcing us to reevaluate our surroundings and societal organization.

Gilman’s faith in the power of education and altered spatial conditions suggests a possible rearrangement of relationships between sexes and re-evaluation of their roles in society. Therefore, Gilman’s outlook is more optimistic since her main conviction is based on the idea that cooperation between men and women who are treated as equals will bring “a far greater movement, constant change, with new possibilities of growth” (Gilman 135). Clearly, we must not overlook the problems that the texts pose, namely the covert privileging of uniformity as well as the exaggerated stress on teaching in Mizora and motherhood in Herland. Even these issues, though, help us define more clearly the real conditions of our own lives and living spaces, especially if we do not consider utopia as a final and rigid ideal but rather as a mirror reflecting back at us our own situation. If that is the case, then Lane’s *Mizora* and Gilman’s *Herland* become “old space[s],” ones that are put on the page and, therefore, granted existence. And, since every old space “carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space” (Lefebvre 52), the contradictions propel a continuous movement forward toward better visions and better spaces.
CHAPTER 3

LABORING WOMEN: CLASS AND WORK IDEOLOGIES IN MARTHA BENSLEY BRUÈRE’S MILDRED CARVER, USA, AND LENA JANE FRY’S OTHER WORLDS

…it was firmly and sincerely believed that there was no other way in which Society could get along, except that many pulled the rope and the few rode, and not only this, but that no very radical improvement even was possible, either in the harness, the coach, the roadway, or the distribution of the toil. It was a pity, but it could not be helped, and philosophy forbade wasting compassion on what was beyond remedy.

Edward Bellamy

The feminist…wants to find a man who will share the burden and joy of home-making as she would like to share the burden and joy of earning the living.”

Crystal Eastman

When Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward, 2000-1887 was published in 1888, it sold 10,000 copies its first year and a stunning 300,000 copies the next year (Elliot vii). Following Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, it became the second biggest-selling work of fiction in the United States in the nineteenth century (Beilharz 597). Addressing slavery and industrial capitalism, respectively, these works engaged, with a tremendous effect, in a discussion of momentous socioeconomic and political issues of the time. While the name of Harriet Beecher Stowe resonates with contemporary readers, the influence of Bellamy’s writing often goes unacknowledged despite the fact that, after its publication, Bellamy’s utopia

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22 In its reprints, the novel sold over a million copies and has been translated into twenty languages (Leo Tolstoy translated it into Russian). The novel had a great effect on numerous American socialists and liberals such as Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas, Upton Sinclair, Scott Nearing, Lincoln Steffens, Jack London, Carl Sandburg, and Erich Fromm. Its influence reached also socialist leaders in Europe (Gardner).

23 Bellamy’s influence was quite remarkable. In fact, as Naomi Zauderer points out, when the philosopher John Dewey, the historian Charles Beard, and the editor of the Atlantic Monthly Edward Weeks were asked to list the most influential books from 1885 to 1935, they ranked Looking Backward second only to Karl Marx’s Capital (53). For a thorough discussion of Bellamy’s influence at home and abroad see Carl J. Guarneri’s “An American Utopia and Its Global Audiences: Transnational Perspectives on Looking Backward.”
stimulated the creation of 162 Bellamy clubs nationwide and the formation of Nationalist Party based on Bellamy’s ideas such as civil service reform and government ownership of utilities (Mullin 58). More importantly, Bellamy’s novel significantly influenced literary utopian production, which, whether positively or negatively, continued to respond to Bellamy’s work for a long time to come. Bellamy’s popularity and remarkable political impact lay primarily in the fact that he approached his subject by appealing to the middle-class bourgeois mentality and sense of morality. The mitigation of the radicalism of his propositions through the middle-class ideology proved practical for two reasons: first, the clash between the lower class and the upper class seemed to take on terrifying proportions at the time requiring some middle ground to be forged and, second, the large middle class readership was most inclined to take part in the intellectual reforms of the kind, as they felt that their comfortable, newly-formed position in society was being jeopardized by prevailing unrest and chaos.

Lena Jane Fry’s *Other Worlds* (1905) and Martha Bensley Bruère’s *Mildred Carver, USA*, (1919) are among the works that revisit a number of Bellamy’s suggestions, from the idea of the industrial army to the rejection of money to the re-conceptualization of society as a trust or corporation held in the hands of all people. While Lena Jane Fry remains an obscure writer, who self-published *Other Worlds* in 1905, Martha Bensley Bruère\textsuperscript{25} is somewhat better known as an

\textsuperscript{24} Martin Gardner mentions that about hundred books were published since the novel’s appearance either defending or attacking Bellamy’s vision.

\textsuperscript{25} With her husband, Robert, Bruère published *Increasing Home Efficiency*, in which they tried to establish housework as a matter of intellectual management. Educated at Vassar College, the University of Chicago, and the Art Institute of Chicago, Bruère was not only a writer but also a painter (Kessler, “Mildred…” 193). In 1927, a series of her articles on Prohibition were published in the *Survey*, and she also collaborated with Mary Ritter Beard, a feminist historian, on an anthology of women’s humor—*Laughing Their Way* (1934) ("The Grand…” 75). Her novel *Mildred Carver, USA*, was first serialized in *The Ladies’ Home Journal* between June 1918 and February 1919 ("Mildred Carver…” 194).
advocate of domestic training for both sexes and a proponent of the idea that housework is a matter of intellectual management rather than physical drudgery (Kessler, “The Grand” 75). Bellamy’s influence on these works is undeniable especially when it comes to their appeal to middle class sensibilities, concerns, desires, and expectations. Similar to Bellamy’s work, Fry’s and Bruère’s utopias follow the preference for the middle or upper-middle class lifestyle and cushion their radical, perceivably socialist ideas with a familiar bourgeois creed of consumption, civic involvement, and morals.

Further insight can be gained, however, when we consider the ways in which Fry’s and Bruère’s utopias differ from Looking Backward. The most glaring departure from Bellamy’s work is Fry’s and Bruère’s insistence that women replace passive consumption with involvement and activity. Peter Beilharz proposes that Bellamy views labor as precondition of freedom (601) and the same can be claimed for Fry’s and Bruère’s utopia. The difference in approach is both crucial and instructive, though, especially if we are mindful of Beilharz’s next point—that Bellamy equates freedom with rest (601). In Looking Backward, youthful work in the industrial army is followed by the time of leisure at the age of forty-five (601), and work as such is viewed largely as a burden “to get over with” in order to consume and relax. Bellamy’s notion of the industrial army does not, by any means, take a central place in the utopia. After all, his definition of freedom through work remains quite obscure since it is presented as undesirable in its essence. Daphne Patai calls the image of industrial army “a metaphor designed as a means to an end” (18), which is, we can safely say, peaceful, middle-class leisure in the novel. In other words, freedom for Bellamy means not working. Although not as explicit as Adam Smith, Bellamy
seems to identify with Smith’s attitude of work as an activity that requires one to give up “his tranquility, his freedom, and his happiness” (Magdoff 53). Work, then, is seen as the activity that limits one’s freedom. Wages, instead of being a source of independence, which would be a case for women in a patriarchal society, are considered as some kind of compensation for the worker’s sacrifice. It must be noted that male readers, most of whom had been traditionally expected to work, might have found in Bellamy’s vision of labor as something undesirable certain acknowledgment of their daily struggle in rough working conditions and uncertain marketplace that they faced daily. Both Fry and Bruère acknowledge and are appalled by these dreadful working conditions that men, women, and children encountered, and they draw attention to them in their novels. Unlike Bellamy, however, they also stress the satisfaction and independence that work can provide, which male readers might take as a natural outcome of one’s work but women had not been encouraged to seek.

Bellamy approaches work as a marginal factor in his utopia and does not pay much attention to women’s needs and interests. In fact, his novel proposes some kind of a separate-but-equal approach where “under no circumstances is a woman permitted (italics mine) to follow any employment not perfectly adapted, both as to kind and degree of labor, to her sex (185). Dr. Leete is the main perpetuator of this patronizing attitude when he comments that women’s “unnatural rivalry with men” was resolved since “we have given them (italics mine) a world of their own with its emulations, ambitions and careers, and I assure you they are very happy in it” (186). Readers can certainly guess who we refers to. Readers can also imagine the dreadful little
world designed by men for women to play at self-fulfillment and satisfaction. The clearly differentiated spheres undeniably echo the status quo.

Fry and Bruère view labor in resolutely different terms. Both utopias center on middle class women and make labor a fundamental focus of investigation. Their emphasis is in accord with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who saw human existence and work as intrinsically tied. Where Bellamy shares Smith’s view of work as “external forced labor” (Magdoff 53), Fry and Bruère follow Marx and Engels in their emphasis on work as leading to self-realization, a notion quite new to women everywhere. Although they utilize some of Bellamy’s strategies, they arrive at a quite different point. Fry and Bruère present the concept of labor and its role in women’s lives as a critical aspect of their novels. These authors understand women’s limited access to work and the effect this lack of access has on women’s lives, from the initial identity formation to the roles they adopt (or are forced to adopt) in relationships with others. I have already suggested in the Introduction that the approach of the selected utopias in this project is spatial rather than temporal; the women are looking neither backward in nostalgia nor forward in passive hopes. They focus on the space of change in the current time: as we witness the organizational changes and efforts implemented in the new societies, we come to realize that these novels privilege the space where changes take place over time that might (or might not) bring changes. In the particular instance of the two utopian works that form the focus of this chapter, this notion is accentuated by the fact that the utopian communities are being formed literally in front of our eyes. It is labor itself that lies at the foundation of these two utopias—it creates them, it sustains them, and it fulfills those involved in the process.
Softening the utopias’ socialist overtones by privileging the American ideals of consumption, self-sufficiency, and freedom, the authors emphasize the connection between labor and economic independence that leads to feelings of contribution and fulfillment. The central position of labor in these utopian spaces imaginatively re-conceptualizes, in terms of class and gender, the prevalent approaches to wage work. The authors introduce and utilize different ideological views of labor\textsuperscript{26} to ultimately present it as a critical tool of women’s liberation. Gradually progressing from the view of work as a necessary and temporal activity to the idea that work might cause happiness, satisfaction, and the feeling of self-worth, Fry and Bruère urge women to thoroughly reconsider labor’s role and purpose in society and encourage them to seek fulfillment through the sense of freedom and accomplishment it provides.

The labor situation in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century was addressed repeatedly in the national literature of the time through the fictionalization of the most gruesome instances of exploitation. John Mullin’s historical account describes the overwhelming nature of union agitations, declining wages, financial panics, criminal activities, political corruption, and health problems as well as the feeling of hopelessness these problems caused especially in the lives of working people (57). In his discussion of the turn of the twentieth century, Michael McGerr points to the anthracite coal strike of 1902 as an unsettling example of “work stoppages

\textsuperscript{26} When I use the word labor or work in this chapter, I refer to paid work. This term does not include housework, which, as Marion Harland points out, is \textit{sine qua non} for all women (Schneider 50) but remains invisible in the market economy. We must note that the authors of the utopias attempt to make housework (and reproduction, which we must think of in this context since it is a part of the private sphere as something that is “done” at home) and the women at home more visible, but at the same time they reject the idea that it is the only way a woman may think of herself. The utopias’ ideological insistence that the differentiating quality capitalism imposes on labor be rejected confronts such economic marginalization of women directly. Nellie in \textit{Other Worlds}, for example, clearly articulates the idea when she shows her exasperation over the qualitative judgment of labor. She thinks it “abominable, for labor is labor, in the banking house, store or factory, in the home, or anywhere, and should be respected” (34).
that made the United States the most strike-torn nation in the world” (119). The number of strikes grew each year to reach 3648 in 1903, and while the number dropped to 1204 by 1914 (McGerr 145), it still remained quite high, which demonstrates that the problems and concerns of the working people were far from resolved. The years between 1890 and 1920 were especially grueling for the workers as the economic system of small businesses was undergoing a transformation into monopoly capitalism operated by giant impersonal corporations and ruled by discriminatory hierarchy of employees and a large surplus of labor (Kessler-Harris 107). While many working people had to limit their needs to the bare minimum to save money or, simply, to make ends meet, some had grown to see such self-restraint as irrelevant in the exasperating and hopeless race to “make it” against the overwhelming odds. These individuals, usually men since men were primarily responsible for providing for their families, found release in violent behavior, alcoholism, and adultery (79), which made the strenuous lives of lower class as well as many middle-class women at the time even more taxing.

Ignored or denied but all too apparent at the turn of the twentieth century, class hierarchy of the capitalist United States was further adding to the negative existential experience of many. Bruère denotes the social divide in terms of physical differences, which emphasize the drastically different experiences of the two classes:

There were literally tens of thousands of them, filling the walks in a moving mass, overflowing into the streets when the traffic permitted, tramping steadily south with toes pointed sharply out and feet clinging flatly to the pavement. As a race they were as thoroughly differentiated as the Carver family. But it was a different specialization. Instead of being tall and clear-skinned from generations of full feeding, care and protection, they were undersized, sallow and stooping from generations of poverty that meant low feeding and the grinding indoor toil of the landless. Where the Carver family were direct and slow in thought and speech because their survival did not depend on
quickness or cleverness, the garment workers were verbally subtle and mentally swift because of the long generations when success, even life itself, had depended on quickness and subtlety. (37)

Bruère points here to economic and power inequalities as the markers of class. These are generally thought of as determined by production, market, and occupational systems (Acker 6).

According to Karl Marx, capitalist relations of production thus spawn a very particular class structure (Milner 20). What Bruère terms two “thoroughly differentiated races” (37), Jane Addams called two nations—the working class and the upper class (McGerr 54). Marx labeled the two central social actors of the production process as the bourgeoisie, or the owners of the capital, and the proletariat, or the propertyless wage earners. He saw this binary class structure as the necessary outcome of the capitalist relations of production since these relations are based on separating labor from the means of production and, in turn, “transforming [labor] into wage-[labor] and the means of production into capital” (Milner 21).

Marx insisted that class divisions had existed in all systems that functioned on the basis of “exploitative production,” but Max Weber later redefined class as identical to the market position in a market economy (Milner 66-7). Nevertheless, both thinkers saw class as a concept especially important to capitalism because of the system’s absolute commoditization of labor. Thus, they both approached class less as who its members were than what they did (67). On one side, there were exasperated and exhausted workers struggling and fighting to feed their children and ensure some future for them while on the other there were many of the rich who seemed chronically unhappy, bored, and self-destructive. This dissatisfaction was noticeable especially in the younger generation of the rich, who had, in William K. “Willie” Vanderbilt’s words, “too
much money to spend and too much time to spare” with nothing “to hope for [and]…nothing definite to see or strive for” (qtd. in McGerr 35). The enormity of the divide between the upper ten percent and the working class, which McGerr speaks about as essential to the Victorian experience of industrial capitalism (13), together with the complex issue of women’s positions within the class division, certainly warranted a closer consideration not only in politics but also in literature.

The issue of ending the class conflict and creating a safer society for future generations lay on the minds of many, and socialism seemed to provide the answers to the desire. Clerks, salespeople, managers, and bureaucrats—the white-collared middle class—felt increasingly caught in the “crossfire between rich and poor” best demonstrated in the numerous strikes that burdened directly or indirectly their lives (McGerr 56). Although this was the time when the middle class began to gain influence, the last decades of the nineteenth century were still largely considered in terms of the wage earners on one side and the enormously rich on the other (54), which explains the middle class’s eager involvement in civic activities, reform movements, and the lower-class outreach. As the creed of individualism was more and more often understood in terms of justification of inequality, autonomy, and selfishness of the capitalists rather than in terms of the self-worth, self-transformation, and self-reliance of the pioneers, the middle class sought a different ideology that would provide solution for the social malaise.

Various reforms were suggested as ways to repair the far-from-ideal socioeconomic circumstances. Social reformers and utopian authors understood, however, that the ground had to be tread carefully for their works and ideas to be accepted by the reading public. Because
Bellamy perceived the disconnect between the socialist ideology and the American character, he vehemently refused to use the word *socialism* in the context of his novel:

> I may seem to outsocialize the socialists, yet the word socialist is one I could never stomach. It smells to the average American of petroleum, suggests the red flag and all manner of sexual novelties, and an abusive tone about God and religion. Whatever German and French reformers may choose to call themselves, socialist is not a good name for a party to succeed with in America. (qtd. in Lipow 22)

Although Bellamy was critical of laissez faire economic approach and supported collectivist reforms, he was careful to present, in the words of Arthur Lipow, “a conservative anti-capitalism: a socialism for the middle classes,” which was certainly to be viewed as different from the working class socialism connoting the Paris Commune and the International (17). As Jean Pfaelzer points out, Bellamy, appealing to “the sober and morally-minded masses of American people,” resisted the discussion of the issue in the context of the immigrants, workers, and un-American “blatant [and] blasphemous demagogues” (qtd. 43-44). And, Sylvia Strauss adds, while sharing the goals of Marx’s international—economic equality and abundance for all—Bellamy expects the ethos and leadership to come from the middle class much as the Founding Fathers, who were themselves firmly middle class, established the values and stewardship of the American republic (71).

Following Bellamy’s method, Fry and Bruère adopt a decidedly middle class preference in their attempt to reconcile the overtly socialist suggestions with the American ethos of individual choice and personal responsibility. Mindful of the tastes and ideas of the middle class reading public, neither author lets the word *socialism* appear in the novel. In *Looking Backward*, we read of nationalism and industrial army; in *Mildred Carver, USA*, it is industrial democracy,
and in *Other Worlds* we encounter a wealth-producing and wealth-distributing society. Bruère distinguishes between her utopia and socialism blatantly when Henry Van Arsdale, the father of Mildred’s fiancé, ponders different reforms of the past. When Van Arsdale thinks of those “who thought the problem of universal happiness would be solved by Socialism…and still other groups who thought it would be solved by Bolshevism” (206), he emphasizes that the idea of Universal Service is to be viewed as a separate ideology.

Fry’s approach distances her utopia from possible socialist accusations even further since she presents the new society as a modification rather than rejection of capitalist Trusts. The utopia transforms the major capitalist threat, the Trusts that rule the market and oppress the workers, into trust in one’s labor and common management. It brings hope of independence and self-sufficiency in particular to women, the old, and the handicapped since anyone can do some useful work in this new community. The highlight of Fry’s utopia is the sovereignty of the marginalized. Fry balances between rejection of capitalism and endorsement of individual prosperity, trying to avoid the negative connotations associated with socialism. At one instance, Tom Vivian, the community’s leader, explains that “the trusts have been great educators [because] the more they crowded us the quicker we have learned to protect ourselves” (53). Tom also points to a new attitude toward wealth when he says that “to become rich…is to…become a gigantic swindler or pirate” (57). Tom desires self-respect and honor but does not see them as necessarily connected to the person’s prosperity. Although the desire to become “a man of means and prosperous” (58) is articulated through another member of the Colony, which still clearly indicates the inclination toward the bourgeois creed, the community also reflects the middle class
thirst for some security and protection as the new society is being built on the basis of protecting
“the people of small means and those who have talent” (58). In such a moment, Fry attempts to
appease just about anyone reading her novel since she still subscribes to the capitalist
terminology presenting the system she envisions as a mere adjustment of the capitalist structure
while, at the same time, decidedly differentiating between the capitalism and the new society’s
economic and political management. We still speak the capitalist language of private ownership
and “interest in the permanent buildings” (41) but with the important distinction—it is not the
capitalist but the worker owning and managing the property. Cooperation is offered as a solution,
but it is American collectivism based on the pioneering sense of individual accruement,
achievement, and accomplishment.

Both authors reflect ideas of utopian socialists such as Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and
Henri Saint-Simon, attempting to apply the experience of religious communities onto the society
as a whole. While they acknowledge differences between classes, they urge the cooperation of
classes instead of class revolution as predicted by Marx. According to Robert Hine, a common
strategy of many utopian authors of the time was to make the economy into the religion and to
promote the creed of communal ownership of the means of production (419). Fry and Bruère use
this approach as well when they present labor as the religion wrapping their ideas in the
acceptable and familiar notions of the Gospel of Work and the Protestant work ethic. When
Mildred enters the mill, she feels “like the way you expected to feel in church—and mostly
didn’t” (65) and she views her foreman, John Barton, as “a new prophet” announcing “a new
gospel” (65). In this context, the reader is invited to think of hopefulness, rectitude, and useful
living as connected to labor. Later on, Mildred describes the mill as “a sort of religious center from which all sorts of beneficences appeared to emanate” (88) and “a cathedral” that gives her “a sensation of almost religious upliftedness” (69). As Mildred compares John Barton to “the Sun God,” “a godlike prophet, a bringer of light, a Theseus and Sir Lancelot and Joshua rolled into one” (69), the reader clearly understands that these girlish exaggerations are a result of Mildred’s infatuation with the foreman. Still, the metaphor has its desired effect since John Barton, though presented in a highly idealized manner, is never shown as a revolutionary. He is the common man, a hard-working American doing good works. Being one of the main representatives of the Universal Service, John, emphasizing its non-violent, pro-American nature, shows the benefits the new, socialist system has to offer in comparison with the current “uncontrolled world of industry” (65).27

In a preamble to the novel, Fry writes in more explicit terms, introducing her novel as the answer to “the cry that is going out to those who are able to work out the problem” (5). She cites a recent article called “The Right to Work,” which discusses the high number of unemployed and calls for “the good power of united action” that brings “evolution and safety,” not “war and its attending calamities” (7). Thus, while calling capitalism “a black, horrid blemish on the Christian civilization of the Twentieth Century” (5) and demanding change, she, too, urges cooperation and solidarity, not revolution. Fry then follows with a segment called “How I Happened to Write Other Worlds,” in which she embeds the ideas that are to follow into the context American

27 In light of the current economic situation in the United States, this proposition might not seem as naïve or disturbing as one might normally suspect. Similarly, at the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the threat of trusts dictating not only working conditions but also one’s livelihood posed a serious problem. Many blamed the trusts for high unemployment and cut-throat competition that marked the capitalist economy of the time.
readers find familiar and comforting—the divine inspiration. Fry explains to readers that one evening, while “a strike was in full blast and had been for a year,” she decided to pray for the suffering of people to end (8). Not sure whether it was a dream or not, she had a vision of an angel pointing to the skies and telling her of other worlds that were “struggling to the light” and urging Fry to “go write and tell the world about them and how they won” (8). Having received this celestial encouragement, Fry tells her readers of planet Herschel and The Colony, the peaceful and productive response to capitalism. Fry never goes so far as to claim that these ideas were passed onto her from God; instead, it is the inhabitants of planet Venus who serve as missionaries and “perfect [their] instruments so [they] could reach the planets and suggest to them better management” (196). But, when planet Earth remains deaf to these intimations, it is “the Great Ruler of the Universe” who helps Venusians to get through to “those who are awakened on a part of the earth at least” (196). Fry ends her novel by directly addressing the readers to confirm that the ideas the novel contains “are a prophecy” (199) and to urge everyone to do his or her part in the process of reformation. While Fry’s novel is a strange, to the modern reader certainly laughable, concoction of other-planetary existence, divine intervention, and socialist romance, it assures the readers that their middle-class apprehension of strikes and revolutionaries is shared by the author.

To further distance the utopian ideas from the foreign-inspired socialism of immigrants, both authors cleanse their utopias not only of overt socialist pronouncements but also of

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Fry seems to share the fascination of the time with extraterrestrial life and the large scale of possibilities that might be out there for the mankind to either imitate or fear. The paranormal novels of time travel or extraterrestrial travel were quite popular at the time. Consider William Dean Howell’s *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) or H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* (1898) to name just a few.
immigrants themselves. They fill their utopian places of production with native-born Americans in an effort to present the working mass as non-threatening. This is a quite disturbing gesture since, according to Dorothy and Carl Schneider, 75 percent of female factory workers in 1900 were foreign-born women or daughters of foreign-born parents (56). Such manipulation of demographics only confirms the paranoia associated with immigrants and the dangerous ideas they brought with them from overseas. In this sense, it is both the immigrants’ views and the views of native-born Americans that must be “made over” to create an environment more conducive to change. In fact, the token immigrant we encounter in Mildred Carver, USA, a Syrian girl called Winkles, is shown to express nothing but admiration for the American way of life. Indeed, we learn that the Universal Service now makes the country even more of a promised land than it was before. Winkles describes America as a place where her family could “get away from being afraid and poor and dirty and sick” because “in America you do not have to have these things” (127). While talking to the girls in the Universal Service, Winkles describes the family’s plight in Syria—their fear of soldiers, wild animals, and sickness—and proudly adds, “My father is now an American citizen and I am a soldier for the government” (127). Cleary, to be an American is always something to be happy about and proud of, but in Winkles’s eyes it is even more so once one becomes a member of the new work force. This thought is reinforced when we learn that the Universal Service “made the difference between the life [Winkles’s] father had fled from…and the Utopia they thought they had come into” (128). The utopian nature of the United States is never questioned. But, it is repeatedly implied that the potential of this great country is much larger and could be reached through right reforms and changes.
Consequently, at no point is it suggested in either novel that America has lost its promise of opportunity and that we now have to seek it elsewhere. Despite the covert socialist undercurrent that challenges the industrial and material preoccupation of the capitalist United States, a great loyalty to the American way of life and the ability to transform and adjust are traceable in both works. Fry, however, approaches the matter in a more critical manner than Bruère’s overly positive immigrant Winkles. Fry introduces the view of socially-conscious Venussians, who observe planets Herschel and Earth and try to instigate reforms necessary to the betterment of humankind. While Herschel seems to be responsive to the progressive messages, the same success cannot be demonstrated on Earth. Yet, even in this novel, the United States is still presented as the best there can be found on Earth. The Venussians focus on this part of the planet because “it [is] the home of freedom” (189), and it is even acknowledged that something like “an ideal home in the country of America [exists] among [some] working people” (194), but such existence is always threatened by the insecure market and indifferent government. We are to understand that the country seems to be doing at least something right, but the problem is the capitalist system, which causes great uncertainty and unpredictable changes of fortune. It is quite telling that the Venussians do not marvel at the socialist attempts that were taking place in Europe at the time but place their hopes and concentrate their efforts on the United States. The reader remains assured; the change will come the American way—through work not revolution. Even the Venussians can see that.

Developing this notion further, the authors also reinforce the American bourgeois illusion of the right to happiness for anyone willing to work. The American Dream, which relates one's
material prosperity with the individual’s work ethic, forms the basis of these novels. Consumption becomes a mark of democracy because now every member of the industrial army, not only the privileged few, can afford better things. The credibility of this otherwise highly idealistic notion is being continuously emphasized in the novels. A modern reader might reject the idea of the American Dream primarily because of its ideological power to deceive the masses into obedient production while their satisfaction is being endlessly deferred. The utopias, however, reaffirm the idea of the American Dream by arguing that working individuals can actually afford certain pleasures in everyday life if they have access to safe working conditions, earn a decent pay, and are not burdened with the daily tasks of house management and childcare, which could be more efficient if managed, coordinated, and shared by the workers and paid for by the portion of workers’ salaries. These daily indulgences constitute a crucial part of happy living in utopia. The consumerist notion of good life of prosperity and comfort is offered as inspiring and necessary aspect of people’s well-being but only if it is truly understood as a requisite (not just promised or hoped for) product of one’s labor. Thus, while highly propagandistic in their subscription to the prevailing ideology of the American Dream, the utopias use the ideology to bring the readers’ attention to the relationship between the ability to earn one’s income and the self-sufficiency and contentment such ability might bring.

In Mildred Carver, USA, unnecessary things provide a welcome enjoyment, a sweet reward, after a day’s work. We read, for example, that the young members of the Universal Service, when they complete their weekly duties, spend some of their earnings on “delectable imitations of French pastries…, ice cream…, [or] chocolate, very hot, with a summer cloud of
whipped cream on top (74). And, it is implied that it is not only the members of the lower class who find this uplifting. The privileged, who are now also members of the industrial army, consume with a newfound pleasure since at this point the consumption is not motivated by boredom as was traditionally the case. It is approached as a deserved and natural outcome of one’s labor, which allows all of them to have “altogether a most innocent middle-class time” (155-6). The limited incomes do not allow anyone to consume in an exaggerated, perverted way but provide the workers the enjoyment of the delicious and luxurious in small doses, which intensifies the pleasure principle, prevents tedium, and serves as the ultimate motivator. Possibly, this human desire for gratification and delight is being acknowledged and accepted in the utopia mainly to play on female readers’ middle class sensibilities and to affirm their lifestyle choices. Yet, it is also a very practical gesture that reveals the author’s keen perception of human nature, which enhances the validity of her economic and socio-political suggestions in general. As we can now see in hindsight, numerous real-life attempts of the time at communal living driven by utopian ideals failed partly because they focused solely on the basic needs of the people and neglected the need for beauty, private joys, and small indulgences. In such context, Bruère demonstrates an acute insight and common sense in her utopian vision.

This same principle is extended from individuals to the whole society in Other Worlds, when Tom Vivian says that “nothing succeeds like success” (75). With this brief, and admittedly clichéd, pronouncement, Tom makes epigrammatic a more complex idea of the stimulating power of affluence that his new society upholds. He contrasts “the dreary, dirty streets of our large cities” with “the ones that are bright with all that prosperity gives to enhance the general
appearance of both the houses and the people” and points to the motivating influence of the latter (75). While other people’s prosperity might have seemed dispiriting to an overworked, struggling family caught in a capitalist “rat race,” the affluence of the utopia is indeed motivating because, as Tom emphasizes, the new society gives anyone the power to improve his or her surrounding and to achieve the end in view. In this society, “profits and pleasures are combined” (53); labor is seen as the means to happiness, which is at this particular point articulated in decidedly Bellamian terms as ending the class difference through the democratization of consumption.

The difference between the two novels and Bellamy’s work becomes pronounced, however, in light of Phillip Wegner’s commentary on Bellamy’s omission of representation of labor in the novel.29 Wegner quotes R. Jackson Wilson’s observation that the utopia retreats into a “historically regressive vision of preindustrial America” and adds that Bellamy’s celebration of technological advancement remains abstract and in fact masks implied anti-modernism (74). Wegner also reminds us of Milton Cantor’s analysis of Bellamy’s nostalgically pastoral inclinations, which Wegner sees demonstrated primarily through the absence of descriptions of factories and other workplaces in the novel (74). When we consider these points in the context of Mildred Carver, USA, we realize that the novels definitively reject the pastoral and anti-modern glances to the past. Countryside is certainly not looked at as a source of paradisiacal calm and harmony. It is also not a place that encourages gender differences. Both men and women find themselves “confronted with an intricate combination of belts and rods and sliding knives and

29 Zauderer makes a similar point when she points to Bellamy’s privileging of the private sphere. She notes that most of the action in the novel takes place at home with only random glimpses at a public eating hall, a retail store, and a library. We do not get to see schools, businesses, or factories. Zauderer further stresses Bellamy’s fascination with bringing the outside world home through devices that let his Bostonians listen to operas, sermons, and world events in their living rooms (54).
levers” as they work in a flower mill or operate agricultural machinery in the fields (Bruère 236). Similarly, Fry discourages the black-and-white comparison of city vs. country30 as ineffective and unproductive. There are no pastoral traces in Other Worlds, nor does the novel offer the idealized image of the abundant Country House in its description of the country living. Instead, when Tom and his fiancé, Nellie, visit the estate of Tom’s mother, they observe cows that are eating apples fallen on the ground. As they look around and see “the abundance of fruit everywhere on this large estate,” they immediately think of the “unnecessary waste” and “little children in the city who rarely tasted an apple” (16). Separately, the country is seen as wasteful and the city as exploitative, and we are informed repeatedly through Tom’s character that the novel does not promote return to nature as he says, “You must remember I am not starting a farm” (18). Organization and cooperation between the country and the city are crucial in this novel.

In Mildred Carver, USA, we witness the same emphasis on the organization of the countryside. The country is the place that provides but must be manipulated and controlled. The point is made in a quite crude way in this novel. We are no longer dealing with a place that is simply wasteful but with a place where life is slow and limited and not conducive to change. Here is a description of the country folk by a working girl from the city who, as a member of the Universal Service, works temporarily on a farm:

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30 Both works thus directly challenge Jean Pfaelzer’s classification of utopias, which relies on this dilemma. As mentioned before, Pfaelzer divides utopias in two categories: progressive and retrogressive. She describes progressive utopias as technological, industrial, and urban, lacking any dialectic between the character and the environment. She views retrogressive utopias as escapist but optimistic, for they present nature as a corrective for bad effects of industrialization. Defining the present as evil and the future as dangerous and uncertain, they seek a return to a lost age of simple agrarian arcadia. They refuse science as a necessary condition of material security and equality. The farm and family are the ultimate units of social life.

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Not more than a hundred people since they were born have they seen. And land not covered by cities, only in a park, I never seen it till I was in the Service. There ain’t nobody they gotta keep up with. Not since they was born did they ever have to do quick anything—and I ain’t never had time to do anything slow. Different altogether it makes us! (126)

The country is certainly not a place of nostalgic remembering in these novels, which might strike the reader as surprising since female authors are often stereotyped as privileging nature; their maternal instincts and nurturing inclinations are usually cited to be the main reasons. While it is acknowledged throughout both works that people might lead healthier, calmer, and less stressful lives in the country, the authors emphasize how out of touch with times country living is.

This becomes greatly relevant when we focus on women’s issues. The countryside was historically the place where women worked side by side with their male counterparts, but the position of these women in their relationships with men and in society as a whole certainly does not represent the hopeful possibility the authors would like women to return to. In a pre-industrial society, the attitude toward work was quite different from the Victorian norm since work was seen less as an indicator of status or the lack thereof and more as a demonstration of a person’s religious and moral character. All family members would be usually required to work because idleness, according to the Protestant work ethic, was considered sinful. In addition, the participation of the whole family in the work process was largely expected and accepted because household production and economic survival were closely bound (Kessler-Harris 100). Therefore, it is not surprising that before 1900 less than twenty percent of women were wage earners (106) because a large number of women were involved in their families’ farm work which did not yield any wage to them as individuals. It must be noted that the countryside
offered a certain degree of equality in the question of division of labor. The spheres of
generation were not as strictly drawn there, merging the public and private spheres on many
occasions. Yet, the firm patriarchal hierarchies were certainly being upheld on the farms, and
women, while assisting men in their provision for the family, were never presented with a choice
of vocation or type of work they would like to pursue other than through their selection of a
mate. Moreover, although agriculture provided employment for almost half a million women in
1900, the conditions were grueling not only for the women but also for their young children who
often worked alongside their mothers (Schneider 54). There is no looking backward for Fry and
Bruère. The authors are not yearning to return to the rural way of living. They are in search of a
modified environment or at least altered circumstances, which would be more favorable to the
desired changes.

The authors present middle-class women’s access to work in the public sphere as
one of the major changes that would lead to a decisive transformation in women’s lives. In the
middle of the nineteenth century, the industrialization of production and changes in the
organization of work that accompanied it caused a growing number of men to earn wages outside
of the household; consequently, women’s housework and reproductive work, which did not yield
any immediate income to the household, began to be viewed as less and less economic. The
emerging split between the economy and the home further disguised the connections between

31 Middle-class and upper-class women’s lives were in many ways more restricted than the lives of women from the
lower-class. While they did not face financial burden and did not have to worry about their future, they had to follow
a strict set of rules as to the choice of their spouses, proper behavior, and appropriate activities. The enforced leisure
of middle-class women often led to boredom and apathy. Some women developed hysteria as a response to the
passive existence they were prescribed. Because these women did not have to seek employment to earn living, they
would be the ones to select occupations that were interesting to them, thus helping to shift the norm from work as
the necessary evil for poor women to work as the source of satisfaction and self-worth.
reproduction and economy and caused women’s work to be marginalized (Acker 88). As new opportunities began to open, however, more and more single women felt compelled to enter the labor market. To negotiate their need or desire to enter the labor market with the norm of their proper place dictated by patriarchal society, various justifications were used to help resolve this tremendous tension. In the years following the Civil War, women’s work was usually justified as unavoidable for the lack of male support in the household (Kessler-Harris 119). Further, the notions of virtue and service so powerful in the rhetoric of war were now being applied to labor, which was mainly presented in terms of one’s duty. Already in Bellamy’s industrial army we detect the implied pride in one’s fulfilled duty described largely in military terms of ranks and honor. Fry and Bruère use the sense of honor and duty as a justification for women’s participation in the labor force because they recognize that the connection between work and civil engagement—an issue extremely relevant to the women’s movement—would appeal to the middle-class female readership, who was quite accustomed to the idea of contributing to society through work.

Patriotism, therefore, serves as one of the tools that the authors utilize to smooth women’s access to wage work. In Mildred Carver, USA, we observe the new female recruits to the industrial army to “line in the courtyard…, [creating] a new thing in the world, a fresh creation—the Forty-second Unit of the Eleventh Corps of the National Agricultural Service,—and [march] away up the street (62) and the workers who paste labels on bundles in Government Express office are called “conquering heroes” (180). It is “a patriotic service” to help feed the people of the United States (279). Even market competition, which includes paying “higher
wages and work[ing] shorter hours and sell[ing] at lower price than the next factory,” is described in terms of “patriotic duty to turn out more cans of peas per man per day” (249). While the rules of the free market are upheld, they are veiled in the rhetoric of patriotism and service and certainly show more concern for the workers’ working conditions and wages. Fry also uses the concepts of work, duty, and honor when she compares the inhabitants of The Colony to brave and honorable soldiers. Mrs. Vivian, Tom’s mother, goes as far as equating participation in the creation of the utopian community to war: “I asked her if she knew we considered this movement in the light of war? I told her it was a bloodless one, nevertheless a war upon all oppression” (111). By implication, women who participate in this process through their labor become a part of the fight against oppression. Moreover, Fry introduces the titles of “The Honorable” to all those who have proven themselves honest and trustworthy workers. Although Fry introduces a hierarchical system to her utopia with these titles, it does not seem to threaten the democratic nature of utopia since anyone can achieve such a title. Scoris, Tom’s sister, explains the benefit of the titles by highlighting the egalitarian system upon which they are awarded. Members of The Colony are now “honored for their integrity” (181), hard work, and honesty. No one can buy a title and no one is denied a title “no matter what [his or her] employment may be (69). The utopia attempts to dismantle what Weber so succinctly described in his observation of the connection between work and caste; in The Colony, it is not what we do that makes people earn their titles but how they do it. This is a meritocracy that resonates with the American ideal of individual effort and work ethic as these titles are neither transferrable nor hereditary. Further, women are held responsible for and accountable to themselves because these titles cannot be
conferred upon spouses or children. Everyone has the right to earn the title through his or her effort alone. Fry insists on women’s independence when she informs us that “a husband [cannot] confer a title upon his wife” (69); it is amusing to realize, however, that she never seems to consider the possibility that some wives might acquire the title before their husbands.

At the time, of course, the male breadwinner was seen as the ideal while women were expected to act as housewives unless the family’s strained circumstances required that they seek employment. Bruère points out repeatedly in the novel men’s common view of women as “the natural ‘second’ in the game of some man’s career” (257). Unlike men, the women who had to work usually did not seek any sense of self in their outside work; they were to find satisfaction in their homes and in their roles as wives and mothers. Their participation in the workforce was articulated as necessary and determined by the income level of the household, number of children, rural or urban setting of the household, ethnic background, and community approval (Kessler-Harris 117). Work was approached as a transitional, preparatory activity to be followed by marriage and motherhood, which were to demand women’s full attention. This notion went largely unchallenged by the middle class. The lower class women often continued to work after they married and had children but only if they were “unlucky” and were not able to secure a husband who would earn enough for the family. Still,

32 Francis Cabot Lowell was one of the first to exploit the idea of work as preparation for marriage in order to generate profit. In the early 1820s, when weaving industry was being moved from homes to factories because of more complex machinery, it was difficult to secure work force as both men and women were needed to work on the farms. As Alice Kessler-Harris explains, Lowell appealed to the families to let their unmarried daughters work in the mills. He claimed to offer their daughters an opportunity to “fulfill their family responsibility by engaging in hard work,” to “help send a brother through college,” or to save some money “for their trousseaux” (100). He assured that in the boarding house where they would stay, the women would “experience the hard work and discipline that would make them into better wives and mothers” (100). By exploiting the idea of work as preparation for marriage, Lowell was able to find cheap labor in exchange for “a training ground in morality” (100).
marriage was “the most attractive career open to them” (Bruere 192) because, as Mamie Epstein—a lower class New Yorker whom Mildred meets in Universal Service—puts it, it can save women from “working by shirtwaists till [they] gotta die!” (133). Bruère comments right away that Mamie’s pronouncement is “a quick arraignment of the whole feminist movement” (133), but Bruère’s comment is not as much critical of Mamie’s ignorance as it is an acknowledgment of the impossibility of personal choice and ambition when it comes to economic and social obstacles.

The increasing number of women entering the workforce was threatening to men who were trying to provide for their families in the era of frequent economic depressions. Thus, when women began to create a considerable job competition, the debate re-focused from the question of honor and civic duty to the issue of the rightful place for women. A great way to keep women “in their place” was by questioning the morality of women who wanted to work and by warning against dangers to women’s morality in the workplace. The general feeling that the God-given place for a woman was at home and that “a nice girl…is not thinking about spending her life in commercial employment” prevailed (qtd. in Schneider 51), making it a transgression against her morality if a woman were to seek employment for reasons other than pure necessity. Consequently, the distinction was being made between jobs and workplaces that were appropriate for women and those that were morally discreditable. Obviously, jobs that men would not normally seek were being presented as more appropriate and less compromising for women. As the primary goal of women was to be good wives and mothers, suitable employment
was understood largely in the emphasis on the values appropriate for a future homemaker, such as neatness, cleanliness, sex segregation, and morality (Kessler-Harris 123).

The re-definition of marriage as a companionship rather than a state of blind dependence or even servitude is a tool both authors use to further highlight the benefits of wage work for middle-class women. They endorse the assumption that a dependable, independent income will allow women to look for partners in life rather than providers. In *Other Worlds* the notion of romantic love, which implies women’s utter reliance on men, is questioned directly through a description of an eloped couple, who must later deal with adultery and alcoholism. The stress is placed on the helpless situation of one of Tom’s sisters, Mira Vivian, who finds herself and her children dependent on an alcoholic and with no skills to provide for her family. When taking renters, the only way for Mira to make a living, proves insufficient, the only options she can contemplate in a capitalist society are a suicide or the children’s placement in a home. Once she joins the Colony, she becomes able to provide for herself and her children, which presents her with another option — a divorce. At the end of the novel, Mira divorces her philandering husband, returns to her maiden name, and for her hard work is named the Honorable Mira Vivian. The possibility of divorce, an extremely controversial issue at the time, is offered here as another benefit of women’s self-sufficiency. The terms of marriage are being shaken, especially the notion that women must stay married to be financially secure. And, the economic intricacies of the institution of marriage are further exposed in the example of Tom’s mother, who believes that she had a good marriage “both from a financial standpoint and in [their] affection for each other” (156). After her husband dies, she must admit that despite the wealth
she inherited she was left without an income for the past few years and would not have means to provide for herself were it not for the shares in The Colony that her daughters secured for her. Her daughter and Tom’s sister, Scoris, reflects the generational shift when she refuses to be an added burden” (60) and is willing to marry only for “love and companionship” (63) and to share the responsibilities of matrimony. The utopia encourages women to reconsider their expectations and, while it does not reject heterosexual relationships as oppressive per se, it revisions them as partnerships in terms of work in which both partners are involved for their common benefit.

Bruère develops the idea of marriage as partnership even further by showing how dull the romanticized patriarchal union is not only for women but also for men. The novel’s covert socialist inclinations extend the ideas of togetherness and egalitarianism onto marriage but are accompanied by Mildred’s infatuations and doubts, which make these ideas more accessible and appealing to the audience. Mildred comes to the realization in the course of the novel, thus leading the readers through her thought process and involving them in it. Before she is drafted to the Universal Service, Mildred realizes that her childhood friend, Nick Van Arsdale, has fallen in love with her. Pondering the romantic notion of love she has been raised with, she uncovers the dull role such relationship would offer her:

Did she not know from books exactly how she ought to feel? And since she had a well trained imagination she took it for granted that she really did feel as she thought she ought, although when actually with him in the sentimental role of a beloved object, there was nothing to talk of and little to do. (22)

And it is not only Mildred who resents the role prescribed to her. Nick is soon bored with the sentimental predictability of his position as well:

the unexpected monotony of being surreptitiously engaged to the dearest girl in the world
so got on Nick’s nerves that he became daily more attentive and loverlike lest Mildred should suspect his moments of ennui—so very affectionate in fact that she was eaten with self-reproach at being unable to rise to his pitch. (22)

In accord with the romantic convention, Mildred is courted by others (Sam, a fellow workman of a lower class, and John, a foreman at the mill) in order to realize where her heart truly lies. As I mention earlier, Mildred is especially impressed by John since he embodies the socialist ideas she begins to embrace as well. It is the first time in Mildred’s life that she feels important and useful because of what she does, and her affection for John grows as she views him as her potential partner. She is determined to assist him in his work, but Bruère denounces the proclivity of women to follow men when in search of their own identity. Mildred’s willingness to marry because of her socialist ideas is denounced, too, when John insists that marrying for a job is “almost as bad as marrying for a home” and breaks off his relationship with Mildred (275-6). Possibly marked by her own prejudice against intermarriage between social classes, Bruère nevertheless makes an important point questioning the romantic notion of love as well as the romantic notion of work and one’s duty that often tend to be oversimplified in utopian literature. At the end, when Mildred is reunited with Nick, it is their shared unwillingness to give up their new way of life that brings them together. Mildred’s final emotional proclamation, “Nick, if you think we could do it together—” (289), might seem maudlin to us in the twenty-first century, but we cannot deny that even this admittedly overly sentimental ending promotes rather than undermines the underlying progressive notion that two individuals can find happiness only if their goals and efforts are shared.
The shift from work as something women do only if necessary to something women want to do and enjoy is clearly traceable in these utopias. Both novels follow Bellamy’s idea of work as concerted, centralized effort of the society, but they take Bellamy’s concept much further when it comes to women’s involvement in the work force. At the end of *Looking Backward*, we find Edith Leete, “fresh as the morning,” just as she is “gathering flowers in the garden” while Julian is kneeling in the dust in front of his angel, feeling unworthy of and grateful for her affection (231). This scene takes place only a few pages after Julian learns that Edith Leete is actually a direct descendant of Edith Bartlett, whom Julian loved some hundred years before. Julian cannot be happier that his love has been “re-embodied” (212), and as he hugs his loved one, “the two Ediths [are] blended in [his] thought, nor have they ever since been clearly distinguished” (213). Bellamy goes to a great length to make Julian a faithful man of principle by presenting him as being in love with the same woman, in a sense, throughout the adventure. The implication for Edith is much graver, however. Although it’s been more than hundred years, Edith Leete is, as we learn, virtually undistinguishable from her great grand-mother. I am not sure any woman would find this a comforting thought. As Bellamy sees it, nothing needs to change when it comes to women; they remain rigid on their pedestals, lovely and passive, gathering flowers. Fry and Bruère close the garden shut and invite women to enter the outside world as active participants. Both authors begin with the common justifications for women’s work in order to make the readers more receptive to the connection between work and its liberating as well as empowering attributes. Fry’s ultimate appeal to women is to consider work as a source of self-sufficiency. Bruère chooses a privileged heroine free of material obstacles to
present work as a source of self-realization. When Mildred meets Mamie Epstein, who had to earn her living before she was enlisted in Universal Service, she becomes a mouthpiece for the new attitude about paid work. In a conversation with her mother, Mildred objects: “Oh, Mother, I don’t want to work because I want the money—I want to work because I like it—it interests me, and because the government needs me to help” (226). The contemporary reader might more than chuckle when reading such a blatantly ideological pitch, especially since it comes from a social position of privilege. The reader might think immediately of all the women who had no time to ponder their sense of fulfillment while trying to make a living. Given the readership, however, comprised of middle class women who most likely shared in the attitude that women worked only if they needed money and did not have a husband who could provide for them, Mildred’s suggestion provides nonetheless a new way of considering work as accomplishment, a sense of pride. Although the attitude of middle-class women toward wage work was slowly changing already, it was not until the 1920s that women began to express unapologetically personal satisfaction they gained from work (Kessler-Harris 119). This is a crucial point of both novels, one that opens up wide new horizons for many women. They bring a new level of aspiration and a new source of happiness for so many.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the time when the two utopias were first published, the women’s movement was focused primarily on the right to vote. Yet, the authors of the utopia emphasize the women’s right to wage work, which they saw as the direct route to other freedoms women might enjoy in the future. As Schneider and Schneider explain, even as
late as 1919 this right was not yet fully accepted by society as is apparent from the testimony of Dr. Anna Howard Shaw before the National War Labor Board:

The time has come when we women have a right to ask that we shall be free to labor where our labor is needed, that we shall be free to serve in the capacity for which we are fitted. No human being can tell what another human being can do until that human being has had the opportunity to test himself. And so it has been with women. (86)

Even here, however, Shaw returns to the post-Civil-War rhetoric of duty, service, and honor instead of appealing to women’s satisfaction and contentment with a meaningful work well done. Analyzing and utilizing various approaches to labor, the novels invited the reader to consider the idea of independence and self-fulfillment contemplated in relation to women and as defined by work. Certainly, the novels’ ignorance of the interests of lower class women poses a problem that needs to be discussed further. By the same token, at times, the novels resort to exaggerated gestures of civic duty and romanticize work as always elevating. Yet, in terms of their middle-class female readership, they highlighted new possibilities and fresh ways of approaching life, this time in more active and independent terms. Today, the utopias help recognize and trace the ideological underpinning of the complex and ever changing attitude of the society to working women not only in the post-Civil-War era but also during the World War II, in the 1950s, during the second wave of feminism, or the post-feminist era of today. After all, contemporary women are still not done trying to find some comfortable place between the two extreme points—sacrifice and selfishness—by which their options in the public sphere are often defined.
There is much that is immortal in this mediaeval lady. The dragons have gone, and so have the knights, but still she lingers in our midst. She reigned in many an early Victorian castle, and was Queen of much early Victorian song. It is sweet to protect her in the intervals of business, sweet to pay her honour when she has cooked our dinner well. But alas! the creature grows degenerate. In her heart also there are springing up strange desires. … Before the show breaks up she would like to drop the august title of the Eternal Woman, and go there as her transitory self.

E. M. Forster

Who is this New Woman, this epicene creature, this Gorgon set up by the snarly who impute to her the faults of both sexes while denying her the charm of either—where is she to be found if she exists at all? For my own part, until I make her acquaintance I shall believe her to be the finest work of the imagination which the newspapers have yet produced.

Sarah Grand

Underlying this project is the fact that at the turn of the twentieth century gender-determined, separate spheres influenced and shaped lives of both women and men in a decisive way (and, one might argue, continue to do so at least to a certain degree even today). This problem resurfaces again and again in all of the selected utopias. Their authors reach for different strategies in dealing with the issue. Some fill their new space only with women; men in such societies are usually absolutely mistrusted and their male traits considered obsolete, dangerous, and counterproductive. In Mizora and Herland, for example, men are pronouncedly absent. Their space is taken from them and both communities become female spheres as if to compensate for the past actions of men. Because of their violence, usurping tendencies, and general incapability...
of cohabitating peacefully and equally with one another and with women, men are deprived of their place in society altogether. Thus, the female visitor to Mizora, Vera Zarovitch, keeps asking in vain where the men are throughout her stay with Mizoran women, and in Herland the three men allowed to enter the community of women are delegated to the margins of the society as visitors/prisoners who remain under constant surveillance and are being consistently reeducated.

In Other Worlds and Mildred Carver, USA, the authors attempt to move beyond the separate spheres either by granting access to everyone who’s willing to work or by drafting all eighteen-year-olds across the social strata. These texts emphasize class as the root of inequality and attempt to overcome such societal limitations through shared work and governance. Although all members are invested in their community and no limits are imposed on the individual’s achievement, the division of labor still follows quite a traditional pattern in Other Worlds. In Mildred Carver, USA, where some women now ride tractors and operate machinery and everyone in the Universal Service has the right to earn income while contributing to the society, we run into inequalities based not on gender, but on class. Though the Universal Service tries to erase such distinctions, the former lives and attitudes cannot be wiped out so easily during this temporary experiment. Thus, where the upper-middle class women might be able to cross the gender boundaries at least for a while, the lower class women approach their performance in the Universal Service as a temporary retreat from their daily drudgery while they still sew buttons on their richer friends’ uniforms (and they do it without pay because, after all, they are all friends now) and clean the machinery rather than operating it.
The authors’ inability to imagine a society where all members would be equal and free to pursue their dreams in a peaceful, harmonious way is certainly telling, and it brings us to Fredric Jameson’s statement that the true vocation of the utopian narrative filled with its own contradiction as it tries to negate the contradictions of the real world is to confront us with our incapacity to imagine utopia (“Progress” 156). Jameson notes that the dialectic between utopia and ideology is that of a constant slippage if not convergence (Bammer 45); thus, the impossibility of our stepping outside of ideological constrains creates contradictions in the production of utopian spaces and complicates the production to the point of unobtainable. Yet, I believe that the struggle of these authors to create truly gender-equal societies, at least when it comes to utopias covered in this project, is further complicated by the authors’ realization that the solution is not as simple as women being able to do the same things as men. The women’s movement’s focus on the right to vote might have implied that once women obtained the same rights as men, the equality would be inevitable. The utopias present the problem in a broader perspective, grappling with the realization that the changes must go deeper. Where *Mizora* and *Herland* operate in a somewhat essentialist manner by calling for reeducation and reformation of men in terms of their masculine traits, *Other Worlds* and *Mildred Carver, USA*, suggest that the solution lies largely in reeducation and reformation of upper classes in terms of social consciousness. Yet, by creating these opportunities for equality, they produce areas of inequality be it in terms of gender, class, or race. In this chapter I shall argue that Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant’s *Unveiling a Parallel: A Romance* (1893) and Eloise O. Richberg’s *Reinstern* (1900) provide commentaries that are more probing and encompassing. Instead of analyzing
specific examples of the social environment and access to work or the lack thereof as representing equality, these authors are entertaining broader questions of who women are, can be, and should be by trying to reach the core of the notion of equality through the popular character of the New Woman. Although they, too, are unable to envision utopia without creating contradictions of their own, these two works are different because they acknowledge and emphasize such inability by transforming it into a strong critique of society drowning in its patriarchal ideology that continually stifles any such attempts.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the relations between the sexes were still governed by the ideology of domesticity, which deceivingly elevated the female to the ruler of the household while maintaining her dependence and subordination in her relationship with the male. Keeping in mind that the idea of separate spheres did not apply to all women, for example slaves and the poor who could not afford to follow such lifestyle, it is necessary to understand that, because of the ever increasing middle class, the notion of separate spheres as an ideological tool grew ever more powerful and influential at the time (Matthews, *Women’s Struggle* 7). Further, women’s expected moral superiority and passivity made for a double standard where social and sexual behavior was concerned, which was especially true for the middle class’s restrictive code of etiquette that governed the conduct of “the lady” in the house. Strangely and alarmingly, as Jean Matthews points out, instead of being rejected for its oppressive and limiting nature, the status of “the lady” as a moral and social designation was becoming the “main claim to consideration” also for an increasing number of working class and African-American women (10) for whom the status connoted prestige and respectability.
Although some middle class women attempted to leave the confinement of their homes to venture into the public sphere, the proper place for a woman was still largely considered to be at home. Women’s dependence and isolation was reinforced by the institution of marriage, which promoted maternity and housework as women’s true vocation and figured as their most prominent means of economic subsistence. Many inventions, such as gas lighting, canning, the commercial production of ice, the improvement of furnaces, stoves, washtubs, and the popularization of a sewing machine, enabled women’s participation in the paid labor outside of the home, and the number of working women was increasing\(^\text{33}\); yet, the women were usually holding the least skilled, lowest paying jobs and their economic lot was not improved much by working outside the home. While separate colleges for women\(^\text{34}\) were being founded at the time, providing an alternative to the marginalizing space of coeducational, yet overwhelmingly male, institutions, female undergraduates still represented only a small percentage of American women and professional opportunities beyond nursing and teaching were scarce. Where some women worked as stenographers, clerks, typists, and salespersons, more than one fourth of them worked in factories and almost one half of them were domestic servants (Hill 180). As Pfaelzer explains, women’s confinement to service work and the production of nondurable goods made their work appear less economically productive and, therefore, with little value and long-term consequence (\textit{Utopian Novel} 142). The only truly effective expansion of the women’s sphere beyond its domestic connotation was achieved by various volunteer activities and social work since unpaid

\(^{33}\) According to Mary Hill, there were four million working women in 1890 and five million in 1900 (180).

\(^{34}\) For example, Vassar (1865), Wellesley and Smith (1875), and Bryn Mawr (1884).
charity work was the only means through which women could enforce significant changes by organizing themselves and working together.\textsuperscript{35}

The image of a new type of female personality, the New Woman, had brought fresh possibilities and eventually began to replace the old-fashioned stereotype of True Woman as a model to emulate. The True Woman, as described in Caroline Ticknor’s fictional interview “The Steel Engraving Lady and the Gibson Girl,” is usually portrayed seated at her window, passive, idle, modest, and absorbed in her province—the home. Observing from her window the world outside and possibly being curious about it, she always remains inside her realm (Pfaelzer, \textit{Utopian Novel} 143-4). The New Woman was christened in 1894 during a debate between Sarah Grand and Ouida in the \textit{North American Review}, and, as Martha Patterson explains, the character stimulated both applause and outrage on both sides of the Atlantic. Some called her “unattractive, browbeating usurper of traditionally masculine roles” while others considered her to be an independent, progressive reformer (2). Prior to 1894, the New Woman was also referred to as Novissima, the Odd Woman, the Wild Woman, and the Superfluous or Redundant Woman (Ardis 10). She was often portrayed as smoking cigarettes, bicycling, or playing golf (Richardson 12), but the New Woman was also well educated, self-sufficient, competent, and physically fit. Eventually, the New Woman became known as Gibson Girl, named for her creator, Charles Dana Gibson, whose drawings began to appear in \textit{Life} magazine in 1890s.\textsuperscript{36} Although seen by

\textsuperscript{35} The most successful organization of the period was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874. Initially focusing on promoting temperance on individual basis, this organization’s large membership spread rapidly across the country in the 1880s and changed its main agenda to agitating for state prohibition of the sale of liquor as alcoholism and drunkenness began increasingly to affect women and children’s lives and to cause marital violence (Matthews, \textit{Rise} 19).

\textsuperscript{36} Woody Gelman’s compilation of Gibson’s drawings, \textit{Best of Charles Dana Gibson}, provides a useful overview of Gibson’s work.
some as arrogant and selfish, she became to represent the woman of the future (Matthews, *Rise* 13). Sally Ledger describes the New Woman of the *fin de siècle* as having “a multiple identity.”

She views the character as a “discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women’s movement” (1) and cultural historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg defines her as “a second generation champion of women’s rights able to challenge fundamentally naturalized gender relations and notions of female sexuality (245). Smith-Rosenberg summarizes, “Repudiating the Cult of True Womanhood in ways her mother—the new bourgeois matron—never could, [the New Woman] threatened men in ways her mother never did” (245).

More than a hundred novels about the New Woman were written between 1883 and 1900 (Ardis 4). And, as Patterson points out, because there was only a small number of women at the turn of the twentieth century who were single, white, affluent, politically and socially progressive, highly educated, and athletic (27), this conception did not reflect the true experience of the majority of women at the time (16). Therefore, the character of the New Woman ignited tremendous controversy (27). The New Woman became to be considered as “one of the foremost symbols of feminist ambition” (2) by some and as “the child of the devil and National Woman Suffrage Association Leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton” by many others (4). The popular press used the term pejoratively and many insisted, such as M. Eastwood, the author of “The New Woman in Fiction and Fact,” did in the *Humanitarian* in 1894 that “like a riderless horse on the battle-field, [the New Woman in fiction] charges about with reckless abandon, unmindful of

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37 Martha Patterson lists some of the New Woman’s “incarnations”: “degenerate, evolved type; race leader or race traitor; brow-beating suffragette, prohibitionist, mannish lesbian, college girl; savvy professional woman, barren spinster, club woman, lady drummer, restless woman, wheelwoman, or insatiable shopper” (16).
whom or what it may trample under foot” (qtd. in Richardson 10). Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis explain the distinction between the right and wrong New Woman where the factual one is seen as, in Eastwood’s terms, “abiding” (10): a woman who would not cause social “disruption” but would inspire social—and sexual—reform without “sacrificing feminine charm and moral purity” (11). The fictional New Woman was seen as “a journalistic phenomenon” (Ledger 3) that provoked “fear and loathing” (41) because it challenged the traditional values connected with femininity and embodied anxiety about the changing status of women (Richardson and Willis 13). Sally Ledger argues, this insistence that such a woman does not resemble the reality and does not provide a viable option for women’s future because she is “a threat to the human race, …probably an infanticidal mother and at the very least sexually ‘abnormal’… [was] anti-feminist in design and may well have had the effect of undermining and controlling feminist women” (10). This distinction between the New Woman as a “figment of the journalistic imagination” and the “genuine New Woman” (Ardis 13) certainly became a form of denial about advancing social and sexual changes.

While at the turn of the twentieth century the character of the New Woman was mostly attacked, contemporary critics such as Ann Ardis praise New Woman novels for challenging the “inevitability of the marriage plot” and for replacing the pure woman, or as she is also known the Victorian angel in the house, with a sexually active heroine or a heroine who abstains from sex for political instead of moral reasons. She also credits the New Woman for distinguishing her voice from the voice of the male narrator (3), which I find especially relevant when it comes to my discussion of utopias. Juliet Gardiner argues that New Woman novels “testified to the power
of fiction as an alternative means of exploration” and Elaine Showalter commends them for their “popularization of feminist ideology” (qtd. in Richardson and Willis 24). Building on David Rubinstein’s argument and Michel Foucault’s theory of a “reverse discourse,” Ledger adds that these attacks inadvertently opened a discursive space for those sympathetic to the phenomenon who began to form the New Woman’s defense, thus enabling her to speak as if “on her own behalf.” For that reason, Ledger argues that “now famous—and then infamous” labeling of the New Woman was “feminism’s triumph, not its Armageddon” (10).

Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant’s Unveiling a Parallel: A Romance was published before the coining of the term; yet, they mirror the debate by using as foils both views of the New Woman—one as an independent, sexually free woman and the other as sexually and morally superior being. These two authors, or the “Women of the West” as they were called, lived a typical upper-middle class lifestyle in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and remain virtually unknown to anyone but a few utopian scholars although Ilgenfritz Jones was a somewhat known novelist and a travel writer in her lifetime. Their novel was published in 1893 by Arena Publishing Company in Boston, which was a press focusing on social reforms literature, and the following year released again in a second edition. As Carol A. Kolmerten writes in her introduction to the novel, it has been labeled a utopian novel, a sentimental romance, a satire of proper spheres, and a feminist novel, which in Kolmerten’s words has been doomed to “an unjustified obscurity” (x). Sharing Kolmerten’s opinion, I will demonstrate that this novel approaches the issue of the double standard in a way that is relevant both then and today. Although it might seem that the authors, in accord with the period’s sentiment, privilege the morally pure Ariadne over the
uninhibited Elodia, I will argue that they reject both characters as narrow and reductive in an effort to turn the readers’ attention to the society that does not seem to be capable of originating any other alternatives.

As the novel begins, a young American male arrives in Thursia, a city on Mars he often compares to New York. He is amazed by the luxury and refinement around him, convinced that he found a true utopia. The reader, of course, is to believe the same. According to the convention, soon upon his arrival the visitor meets his guide, in this case the gentle and nonjudgmental Severnius, who tells him about Thursia but, contrary to the convention, does not hesitate to point out its problems as well as successes. The visitor spends his days learning the language and conversing with Severnius on different topics. Severnius’s sister, Elodia, is presented as the compulsory love interest and the motivation for the visitor to become closely acquainted with the new world, but fulfills this role in a way shocking to the visitor. The playful resistance to and often humorous treatment of the utopic as well as societal conventions make this novel one of the most entertaining and insightful utopias of the late nineteenth century.

Jones and Merchant were not first to combine utopia with romance and use the plot devices of a sentimental novel. Indeed, male and female utopian authors relied on the power of the romance and the sentimental novel just as heavily as their female counterparts. In fact, as Northrop Frye argues, utopia and romance seem to be intertwined by their nature as they are both centered around a process of wish-fulfillment aimed at “a displacement and transfiguration of the given historical world” in order to “revive the conditions of a lost paradise or to anticipate a future kingdom in which suffering and limitations have been effaced (187). Pfaelzer follows
Frye’s proposal that the literary tradition of romance plays a large role in shaping the narrative patterns of utopian fiction (Utopian Novel 20). She stresses that utopia’s plot structure grows from the romance tradition with the stranger – wanderer at its center and enumerates romance devices often used in utopia, such as lost family ties, characters near death restored to life, periods of wandering and exile, recognition through a physical trait or a piece of jewelry, and a beautiful woman who assists the stranger in his initiation (“The Impact” 120-1). While Jones and Merchant’s utopia includes a beautiful woman who is to assist the stranger, it satirizes the romantic interplay between the visitor and the woman and presents it as an extended metaphor for the gender double-standard. Further, the novel emphasizes the dilemma nineteenth-century women faced as they tried to create within literary genres imbedded with patriarchal ideology. This dichotomy is further emphasized by the conflict between the fictional New Woman and the real New Woman as discussed above.

To demonstrate how Jones and Merchant alter the utopian convention in order to disturb the reader’s expectations and thus enhance her awareness of her own reality, I will first focus on the interaction between the visitor and the guide, and as a familiar point of comparison use Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Herland, which is the only other text in my selection that uses fully the convention of an uninitiated male visitor to utopia.38 Traditionally, a visitor to utopia serves

38 One might make a claim that Lane, although introducing a female visitor to Mizora, insists through the visitor’s name on her inability, even in the utopia, to escape the patriarchal culture of her origin. Let us explore how Lane revisions the convention of the male visitor through the example of Vera Zarovitch, the female visitor to Mizora. She is an informed, socially and politically aware woman, who hails from a Russian aristocratic family “of nobility, wealth, and political power” (8). Before she arrived in Mizora, she was a wife and mother to whose “cup of earthly happiness…not one more drop could be added” (9). When she finds herself, through a series of unfortunate circumstances, in a position of resistance to the patriarchal system of czarist Russia, this exotic, dark-haired heroine must flee the country. Vera’s characterization is increasingly sentimentalized and romanticized to lure the female readership further as we learn that Vera discovers Mizora during her desperate and exhausting attempt to reunite with her husband and son, whom she is to meet in France. Vera’s situation immediately places her into opposition to
as a vehicle of exposition through whose eyes we observe and evaluate the utopian society. The visitor is the romantic hero traveling to unknown locations or through time usually via some fortunate discovery or accident. More often than not, the visitor is male, liberal, somewhat naïve, and often critical of his own society while in many ways representative of it (Pfaelzer, “The Impact” 123); such a visitor is usually converted to the utopian vision and grows to see it as a superior alternative to his own society.
I have already mentioned Bellamy’s Julian West as an example of a typical visitor to utopia. Gilman’s *Herland* analyzes the gender prejudice through not one but three male visitors to the utopia—Jeff, Terry, and Van—who illustrate the most common patriarchal attitudes toward women and emphasize their problematic nature. These men dream of discovering the “strange and terrible Woman Land” (2). What else could they possibly expect? Gilman makes fun of these scientists, who have the knowledge and the tools necessary to gain insight but are completely subjected to gender prejudices. Different in their nature, all three are symbolic of a particular patriarchal approach toward women. Jeff is a hopeless romantic who puts women on a pedestal, constantly oscillating between the visions of a woman as a maiden in distress and almighty goddess (89). Terry is a good companion to his male friends, “generous and brave and clever” (9), but he is also a ruthless womanizer, who enjoys sexual conquest and expects women to submit to his masculine charms immediately and unreservedly. Van is the most complicated of the three visitors. He is a detached sociologist, who is interested in “a lot of other sciences” (2) and devoted to the patriarchal learning. He is “used to argu[ing] learnedly about the physiological limitations of the [female] sex” (9). The men anticipate witnessing every possible stereotypically female behavior in Herland, yet, they encounter women who do not fulfill their expectations in any aspect. As Lane summarizes in her introduction to *Herland*, “Gilman romps through the game of what is feminine and what is masculine, what is manly and what is womanly, what is culturally learned and what is biologically determined” (xiii). The ending, however, succumbs fully to the expectations of the sentimental romance. There is an attempted
rape, which complicates the matters, but there is also “true love.” The sequel even gives us a male offspring, a sure sign that all ends well.

Jones and Merchant’s utopia, written five years after *Looking Backward* and twenty-three years before *Herland*, stresses the equality between sexes thus challenging the culture’s gender ideology that Bellamy accepts with little questioning. In anticipation of Gilman’s work that comes two decades later, the utopia also rejects the social construction of maleness and femaleness but does it in a much more straightforward and forceful manner. I would like to suggest that *Unveiling a Parallel* goes even farther than that. It attempts to probe deeper into the meaning of words such as *equality* and *individual liberty* and to draw readers’ attention to active questioning of the possibility to change the status quo without questioning the tools with which we want to do it. We hardly see women to play the role of political indoctrinators in the nineteenth-century utopias (Pfaelzer, “The Impact” 124), think again of Edith, but even if they take on that role, like in *Herland* or *Mizora*, one can argue that the women, although intelligent and highly aware of the advantages of their societies, have no other choice than to offer a female guide since there are no males in their all-female utopias to take upon the task. Were there another sequel to *Herland* and *With Her in Ourland*, which could be called, say, *With Him Back to Herland*, I’m quite convinced that Van would be all-too-glad to take the responsibility of the guide upon himself this time.

In *Unveiling the Parallel*, the American visitor is accompanied by Severnus, who is quite meek and effeminate while his sister, Elodia, exhibits all of the aggressive characteristics

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39 At the end of *With Her in Ourland*, the couple returns to Herland to live and raise their child in the utopian community.
typically assigned to males and does not hesitate to insist on her choices and desires. At one point, the visitor even relates that “you had to take her as seriously as you would the Czar” (18), thus clearly indicating that she will represent in some aspect the patriarchy.\textsuperscript{40} Jones and Merchant truly have fun with Elodia. She is not Bellamy’s pure creature gathering flowers in the garden. She is also not Gilman’s Herlander interested in genetic experimentation with the garden’s produce. Instead, Elodia frequents “Cupid’s Garden”—a place where rich women meet their lovers or male prostitutes. She runs several businesses, manages her brother’s capital, drinks often waking up with a hangover, and has an illegitimate daughter who does not live with Elodia and does not know that Elodia is her mother. She is the “bachelor girl” who is bold and free, certainly to be distinguished from the spinster or an old maid with their “connotations of pathos, of faded left-behindness” (Matthews 50-51). She is also the Supreme Sorceress of the Order of the Auroras, a once charitable organization but now merely a women’s social club so resembling a bachelor club. She is the antithesis of the Victorian ideal of womanhood, which is emphasized when Severnius tells the visitor that Elodia is “as responsible as a man” and “not inconsequent,” to which the visitor replies that his society has always considered inconsequence as adding to women’s attractiveness (30). While ultimately Elodia’s character might serve in the novel to satirize the double standard of the nineteenth century behavioral norms, she is always an undisputable part of the conversation and of the novel.

This utopia is often considered a gender-role reversal satirizing the nineteenth century double-standard. Patai explains that there were dozens of sex-reversal novels written both in England and in the United States, which included both feminist and anti-feminist attitudes and

\textsuperscript{40} See Footnote 37 for my explanation of the connection.
their number increased by the end of the nineteenth century because of the suffragist movement that re-ignited this issue (56). While many of sex-reversal texts simply exploit the notion that a society in which women dominate is an obvious absurdity (58), thus promoting a return to the status quo, Patai stresses utopias’ defamiliarizing function that helps cast “an innocent eye upon [our] own society by means of…reversal roles, so that not only the reversal in itself but also the [visitor’s] expressions of surprise play upon the readers’ imagination and appeal to us to see into a situation that is, in our own terms, habitual (60). Accordingly, Elodia is presented to the reader neither as a prototype of a feminist revision of womanhood nor is she denounced as a New Woman gone wild. She thinks and acts as a typical upper-middle class man. Because she is a woman, however, we see the beliefs, behaviors, and habits in a different light and are urged to question what equality means and how it should be defined. Is it as simple as extending the freedom men enjoy in a patriarchal society also to women? This issue is introduced most overtly when the visitor and Severnius exchange their theories of creation, which Barbara Quissell calls the authors’ “rewriting of the Christian creation myth” that opposes both “the Pauline view of God-ordained sex roles” and “Milton’s version, which prescribed guilt and male dominance” (157). When the visitor stresses the belief that God made man and from one of his ribs created a woman, Severnius explains that according to their theory, two creatures, “male and female, sprang simultaneously” from a lake and when “God breathed a Soul into them,” they became “Man and Woman, equals in all things” (32). Thus, these authors not only question the double-standard when it comes to gender roles but also ponder a wider issue—what do we mean when we talk equality. As the visitor feels himself “driven to a close scrutiny of the Woman
Question…for the first time in his life” (24), so is the reader encouraged to participate imaginatively in the text and apply his or her critical potential.

The novel is not just a typical gender-reversal one would expect, however. Severnius does demonstrate some of the typical traits associated with what would be considered a woman’s nature such as gentleness and spirituality, and Elodia absolutely lacks them, but no limits that would be usually imposed upon women are forced upon Severnius or other men in the novel. Jones and Merchant give Ellodia significant agency, providing her not only with voices but also brains to function in the novel on a more sophisticated level than a mere romantic inspiration.

Elodia is as much a guide to our somewhat slow and prudish American as Severnius although she is much less interested in the visitor than would be normally expected of a guide’s sister or other female relative. She is directly involved in many of the conversations with the young American, providing her point of view and disclosing her motivations and aspirations. Unlike the usual passive prey placed in a story for the visitor’s taking, Elodia is, in Kolmerten’s words, “impenetrable” and “her logic…irrefutable” (xxii). She shows the traveler that on Mars women share not only the same rights and privileges as men in America but also vices. This is important. The utopia does not simply switch the tables. It takes the notion of equal mores for both sexes and places it in the context of patriarchal society run on the mores of capitalist men.

Elodia is an integral part of this satire, in my opinion, not because she is overpowering her meek brother, which challenges the utopian convention of a wise, yet authoritarian guide

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41 An example of a more traditional sex-reversal utopia would be, for instance, Annie Denton Cridge’s Man’s Rights; or, How Would You Like It? published in 1870. Through the series of dreams, the narrator visits Mars, where she finds a society in which the gender stereotypes are still prevalent, but the genders are reversed. Therefore, the narrator encounters noble, dignified, and strong women who politically and socially oppress the “vain, silly, half-educated” men (qtd. in Quissell 154).
through utopia. I believe that her significance lies in her relationship with the visitor as her manlike behavior creates situations that force the visitor to identify with the nineteenth-century woman of the reader’s world and view the situations from her perspective. During one of their conversation about marriage, Elodia tells the visitor, “My experience and observation have been the reverse of yours. Will you kindly tell me...why you think I should wish to marry any more than a man, --or what reasons can be urged upon a woman more than upon a man?” (97). Her continuous transgression to the male sphere that challenges everything the visitor believes in and makes him feel threatened is where Jones and Merchant’s satire is at its most powerful. This also echoes the fear and anxiety with which the New Woman was approached during the time.

Unlike the typical female in a utopian novel, Elodia is not too interested in the visitor, who remains nameless and thus, we can argue, quite irrelevant or at least without a marked identity. Just like the women of his world that he describes as “inconsequential,” he is inconsequential to Elodia, who does not spend much time or effort in keeping him company. And, she certainly does not attempt to charm him through flirtation of any kind. When she first sees him, she “indulges her curiosity” about him “only for a moment,” and then she “passes [him] over as though she had more weighty matters in hand” (17). To the visitor’s despair, he only gets “scraps, the remnants” (62) of Elodia’s time because she is always busy elsewhere, and on one occasion he even compares her to “a busy father” who amuses “himself with his family for an hour or so” in the evening (62), thus making her the ultimate patriarch. He is transformed either into the devoted, passive “spouse” who spends his time stationary and always waiting, or he becomes the powerless, dependent child eager to be in the company of a beloved and admired
adult. He catches himself to save his best ideas and jokes to share with Elodia when she comes home in the evening and must always wait for her to make time for him. Although disgusted by her drinking, vaporizing, and sleeping around, the visitor can never resist her charm. Even when he is resolved to “meet her with an air of cold superiority,” the glance with which she favors him reduces him to his customary attitude toward her—that of unquestioning admiration” (50). His final identification with a female of his time makes him realize that women often love and marry men who behave exactly like Elodia, but such a thought makes him shudder. He cannot, as he says, renounce his “faith in woman’s purity” (110). She is too much for him.

Because he cannot marry her (she wouldn’t have him anyway), he reaches for the other ending in the sentimental romance tradition. She is a bad woman, so she must die. With his final outpour, he compares himself to Jesus and Elodia to Magdalene and despairs about his incapability to pardon Elodia (not that she is asking this of him). He attempts to kill this “bad woman” by proclaiming her dead: “Elodia is dead; Elodia had never been! That night I buried her” (110). After such denunciation, he decides to leave for Lunismar, which is another community on Mars set up as a parallel to Thursia, where both men and women are pure and Victorian notions of pastoral bliss and purity run amok.

Before I expand on the visitor’s Lunismar experience, I want to pause to consider carefully the outcome of the first part of the novel. According to utopian tradition, the visitor is supposed to be resistant and somewhat defending his own world before he is finally able to see and admit the flaws in his society and convert to the better system of the utopia in question. In the nineteenth century, as Pfaelzer argues, utopia “implied a historical situation of perfection”

42 Inhaling drugs.
(119), so the reader came to expect a conversion especially since the visitor feels continually attracted to Elodia. He rejects her, ultimately, because she lacks virtue. In his eyes, she is a “splendid ruin, a temple without holiness” (110). While she might be too promiscuous for some readers’ taste as well, it is the visitor who rejects her, not the authors. Although dead in the visitor’s mind, Elodia is not killed off by the authors to become an example of bad behavior that must be punished. Quite to the contrary, nothing happens to her. She continues to live her life without losing any thought on our poor visitor. She is never judged by her brother Severnius or anyone else in the community. The authors of the novel leave this decision to the reader. Some might be horrified just like the visitor; others might find Elodia refreshing and certainly more interesting than other typical utopian females. I read this part as an extrapolation of the idea of equality through which the authors appeal to search for other possibilities that lie beyond the simple imitation of men and their mores.

Lunismar appears in the second part of the novel, but even this society resists a simple binary interpretation. When the visitor is in Thursia, he is often told that he has not found utopia, that it exists at another place, which, as we learn later, is Lunismar. Severnius says that Thursia compares with Lunismar “as the rude blacksmith compares with the worker in precious metals” (57). These people have the ability to empathize with others to the point that “a wrong done to another reacts upon themselves with exquisite suffering” (58), which is an idea much later pursued by Octavia Bulter in her Parable series. They believe in personal independence and freedom, but they apply such freedom to the benefit of the whole society rather than to their own

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43 Consider Richardson and Willis’s comment that New Woman novelists often used suicide as the ultimate outcome of the heroine, which was (mis)read by many as a symbol of the heroine’s “damnation” (20).
material gain and entertainment. Everyone is perfectly healthy and longevity is the norm. They live according to the creed of “mutual pleasure, mutual sympathy, mutual helpfulness” (126) and embody the ideal of equality, which is underscored by the fact that when the visitor arrives, he is not met by one person but by a couple, Clytia and Calypso, and their two children—a boy and a girl. The visitor admits that when he is in Lunismar, Thursia “drop[s] from [him] like a garment” and he feels raised to a “different, unmistakably a higher, plane” (117). Yet, those of us who did not share the visitor’s indignation over Thursia feel hesitant to embrace without reservation something he cherishes so. This dilemma is further emphasized when we learn that these utopians were just simply lucky since the mountains that surround them happen to be full of precious metal (120), which ensures that they are never lacking. Even in this egalitarian society, just like in Mizora, “higher grades of service” (125) still exist, and one cannot miss the irony that the object of the visitor’s interest and his guide, Ariadne, is a heiress who teaches in one of the city schools (129). So much for true equality. Further, the visitor later acquiesces that these utopians have “no imagination” and are incapable of emotional excitement (123). This contradictory nature of Lunismar is previously emphasized also by Elodia, who repeatedly questions the possibility of reaching the ideal. She ridicules these people as “so extraordinarily good” that “they cast no shadow in the sun,” and she laughs that they “name themselves after the planetoids and other heavenly bodies…because they live so near the stars” (52).

What is one to make of Lunismar, then? Although Quissell does not question its being a representation of an ideal community, she considers it the author’s “last laugh” because of the ridicule that the visitor is subjected to throughout the novel, and she somewhat dismisses this
boring part of the novel (157). Roemer describes it as an attempt to balance the more radical ideas in the first part of the novel by the means meaningful to the nineteenth-century readers: Christian views, nationalism, and sentimentality (Kolmerten xxxvii). Kolmerten emphasizes the desire of the women at the turn of the twentieth century to “get rid of male lust” (xxxvii), which is a reason often used to justify a puritanical view of sexuality and reproduction also notable in Herland. Kolmerten’s justification that “living just as the twentieth century began and imbued with the language of the Social Gospel movement and Christian spirituality, [these authors] negotiated the path to a better world for women the best they could” (xxxviii) seems, however, somewhat patronizing. On the other hand, the reaction of Kolmerten’s students upon reading the novel, which she mentions in her introduction, seems more genuine, especially their excitement that “a dumb man’s dumb ideas about women were being made fund of” (xxxviii). Kolmerten summarizes her students’ responses thus:

“Look,” they told me, “at least women really are equal to men. Old people are being taken care of, children are loved, and no one is being oppressed.” “How can you,” they said, “not like a place where good food is taken seriously.” (xxxviii)

Their response indicates that not only Thursia but also this awfully idealized social vision of Lunismar touch upon some of our major concerns today.

I would like to add another point, however, that follows my investigation of the interaction between the visitor and the guide as representative of the ways, in which the authors play with the genre and use it as a platform to highlight their contemplation of the possibility of a meaningful change in society. Ariadne serves as Elodia’s alter ego, the good sister if you will. She is the angelic woman, the antithesis of Elodia—the fallen one. She is intelligent, pure as a
child, and available. Yet, Jones and Merchant again refuse to go along with the expectations of
the genre. The visitor does not send Ariadne to an imaginary death like he does Elodia, at least
not overtly. As he parts with Ariadne, however, the visitor tells her that every time he raises his
eyes to heaven when he is back on earth, he will always see her image there. Clearly, she can as
well be dead. Since the visitor leaves, there is no marriage and no children are born. Although
Lunismar is a place of “the newness and delightful freshness of spring” (115) and the visitor is
quite fond of Ariadne, he returns to Earth alone. Consequently, Lunismar serves in the novel as a
clear rejection of gender judgments and expectations propagated by sentimental novels. Both
options represented by Elodia and Ariadne are equally dead ends, unusable for productive
relationships and happy lives. Drawing a parallel between our world and Thursia, Thursia and
Lunismar, and our world and Lunismar, Jones and Merchant enter the debate of the “true”
qualities of the New Woman. They show the extreme yet so familiar notions of womanhood and
question the possibility of negotiating gender roles within these narrow ideological parameters.
Defining the role of utopian genre for women in the nineteenth century, Quissell tells us that they
“provided a stage for rehearsing the stifling mores and laws of American society and for
presenting the effects of a feminist reordering of society” (149). She also adds that the women
utopists insisted that “no effective reconstruction of America was possible without first
eliminating the restraints on women’s actions and power” (150). Quissell argues that Jones and
Merchant show us that “prevailing attitudes must be desentimentalized and then human rights
extended to women before elevation to an ideal world is possible” (157). Indeed, the novel is
structured in a way that contributes to the Hegelian interpretation of the continual development
toward the ideal. Yet, the visitor chooses to return home rather than stay in this “ideal” society, which, together with some of the contradictory statements the authors provide about Lunismar, complicates this interpretation. The fact that the visitor chooses to leave both Thursia and Lunismar suggests to me that the authors’ concern lied in the insistence that a patriarchal society based on a patriarchal hierarchy and gender prejudice cannot produce anything more productive than two extremes of womanhood both unusable for real women and their real experiences.

Eloise Richberg’s *Reinstern*, published seven years after *Unveiling a Parallel*, follows a similar strategy of negotiating between the differing versions of the New Woman. Richberg’s approach, however, is much more straightforward and overtly supportive of the women’s movement. I will argue that, just like Jones and Merchant’s text, Richberg’s work is worth exploring for its analysis of the reality and options opened to women rather than for the discussion of her ideal society blueprint’s feasibility. I also find that she takes a more relevant approach since, instead of offering two versions of the New Woman that are being analyzed and commented upon by a male visitor, in this utopia we encounter a late Victorian feminist trying to initiate changes in her society on one hand and the New Woman celebrated by Eastwood and other promoters of moral purity on the other, which they regarded as “a product of evolution, as a ‘higher’ type (Ledger 23).

The visitor to this utopia is a female who describes herself as one of the “workers for the elevation of mankind” (5), which can be understood in many different ways, one of which might suggest that she is a social reformer and possibly a suffragist. She is “raised” (42) in her spirit to another planet as she falls asleep during her train ride. Just like our visitor when he arrives in
Lunismar, she is offered the services of representatives of both sexes, in this case a girl and a boy rather than adults, to take her through the utopian land and explain the local customs. While the rejection of the traditionally male guide is obvious, the insistence on a female guide is not considered most beneficial either. The point is explicitly made when the visitor asks the little girl to “show [her] around”(5); the visitor is immediately told that the boy and the girl “always help each other” (5) and will guide the visitor together. This notion of cooperation between sexes is stressed throughout the utopia. We are never told which of the children is speaking at a particular moment, and the boy and the girl are always referred to jointly as “guides” (40) or “merry children” (28). The situation thus developed in the text carries a quite obvious implication. The reader expects the visitor to overcome some initial resistance in order to finally accept and willingly convert when faced with this more developed community that puts some much stress on the equality of sexes. The visitor might actually begin to see this utopia as the ultimate goal of women’s rights efforts. Several times in the text, however, Richberg’s manipulation of utopian conventions opens the text for readers to actively participate in an interpretation of both the visitor and the community it presents.

The community itself is quite a typical one in terms of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century utopia, and Richberg never denounces Eastwood’s ideas of virtue and moral norm or Sarah Grand’s emphasis on a moral superiority of the new type of woman. The ability to parent is approached as a tool of privilege similar to that in Gilman’s Herland. Though the author insists

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44 It is difficult to comprehend how this new type of woman differed from the Victorian ideal of the angel in the house, especially when we consider Grand’s explanation developed in her “The New Aspect of the Woman Question.” In the article, Grand says that the new type of woman will hold out “a strong hand to the child man,” and she will do so with “infinite tenderness and pity, upon helping him up” (qtd. in Ledger 20).
that “there is no dominating or servile class” (22), we learn that “parents are the highest priced laborers in the land” (23). It is at least of some comfort that both parents are receiving “equal honors, salaries, and privileges” (24). Child-rearing is taken quite seriously as couples must obtain a permit to marry and pass parenting classes before they are allowed by “several department of Education and Preparation; and, by the State Records” to have children (19). Although not articulated in racial terms, the prevalent ideas of the time about ethnic and class taxonomies as well as social Darwinism are veiled in a chilling proposition that the inhabitants of Reinstern mate to create children of a certain profession. So, for example, “if a carpenter-man does not wish to raise carpenter-children, he seeks a wife among the farmers, philosophers, professions or wherever his preferences tend” (8). He is thus fishing in the pool of occupational genes and depriving his future offspring, through the selection of his mate, of a free choice just like once in the past this choice was, by the nature of heredity, taken from him. It is interesting to note at this point that there is no mention of a carpenter-woman seeking a man according to her ideas about her potential children. Clearly, the man’s wish has a priority even in this “egalitarian” society.

Richberg’s utopia resembles also Fry’s Other Worlds, in which we witness the idea of divine inspiration mixed together with an interplanetary cooperation. The importance of Christian living as indicative of the chance for survival is addressed much more strongly in this novella, however. Richberg insists that the Reinstern functions so well because all of its members “serve the same Divine Will” (22), and she emphasizes “Love and Truth” as the only two values worth pursuing. Yet, I find her explanation of love somewhat confusing. The visitor
is told that it is “not love in the corrupt sense,…which is not Love at all, but only a low grade of selfishness. True Love seeks the good of all, and thereby, wins the best for self. This too is selfishness; but such is a duty” (12-13). Appealing to the Father’s love and his “outward manifestation of His power” in the people of Reinstern (13), Richberg makes several such proclamations in her novella, which are all similarly convoluted and contradictory.

In many ways, Reinstern might seem like a pastoral vision of a dictatorial hell to a twenty-first-century reader. In some aspects, Jones and Merchant offer a similar vision in their portrayal of Lunismar, but their description is much lighter and never completely loses its tongue-in-cheek quality. In comparison, Richberg’s proposition is taken to extreme and seems to be presented in all seriousness. Country is privileged throughout the novella as the visitor has her first glance around. We know that we are in a “good” place when the visitor glances over “fertile fields and wooded hills” that stretch away and sees “men, women and children in ideal peasant costumes [move] gaily about,…chatting…, singing, dancing…, leaping…, or gathering the luscious fruit” (3). Certainly, one has not seen this much countryside frolicking since William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890). In fact, Richberg seems to follow some of the same conventions: the main character enters the utopia through sleep, well-functioning countryside is privileged over the evil nature of cities, and the major stress is put on cooperation. Instead of promoting socialist and Marxist ideas *per se*, however, Richberg mixes Christian creed with some quite totalitarian tendencies. We learn, for example, that there are no poor in Reinstern because “the government is the friend of everyone” (8). Everything in the community is in hands of the government that is comprised of veteran parents who “have outlived the parental term and
successfully graduated into full citizenship three or more children” (18). Another discriminatory tool besides this “premium on parentage” is the Certificate of physical fitness, which must accompany the permit to marry. Governmental Agents roam the countryside, recording any offense to the rules they witness and keeping time accounts of people’s work. Those who transgress and dressed in red, which makes their transgression immediately identifiable and impossible to deny. They are sent to the School of Philosophy for a term of reformation and considered to have entered “the Second Childhood” (33-4). Admittedly, reading this novella, one gets at times a spooky feeling of being transported into a communist regime of the Cold War era.

Yet, despite these contradictions in Richberg’s utopian production, some being more disturbing than others, the novella provides a direct, and I believe noteworthy, critique of the patriarchal society through the framing of its utopian narrative. It is one of the most common tactics to have the visitor to utopia sleep his (or less often her) way into the utopia proper. Edward Bellamy’s Julian West or William Morris’s William Guest are two examples. Richberg does not use this convention only to provide her heroine with a way to enter the utopia but uses it to make a pronounced, critical point about the position of an activist female in the society of Richberg’s time. As the heroine is dreaming about Reinstern, she feels “an uncomfortable rumbling and jarring,…jolting, rocking” and becomes “dimly aware of harsh voices unpleasantly” surrounding her (40). The dream interrupted or, on the other hand, the visitor’s dosing off in utopia for a while, are frequent utopian devices that place the visitor momentarily back to his or her “real” world to emphasize the point of comparison for the reader and to make the visitor to reassure himself or herself that the utopian community truly is superior. After the
brief interruption, the visitor usually returns to the utopia relieved to leave the dreadful real world behind. Our heroine does not have that opportunity, however. Her fellow passengers mistake her deep sleep for unconsciousness and try to revive her. They are “robbing [her] of this opportunity” (41) to dream of another world where women are freer and independent. It is no coincidence that, when she “very reluctantly” opens her eyes (43), she sees “a red-faced, wrinkled and be-whiskered man” who tries to revive her, thus disrupting her dreams of utopian equality and possibility. She is awakened to the reality, in which no such utopian cooperation between sexes exists. As she screams at the physician and the conductor, two quite obvious personae of authority, for “meddling with [her] affairs” (43), she clearly vocalizes the constant struggle against obstacles patriarchy puts in the women’s way as they try to reform their own lot. Before she is completely awake, she is told that the people of Reinstern will attempt to make contact with her again when she is “in the quiet of [her] own home, alone, and the prospects are favorable” (42). This statement is quite startling as it implies that in the visitor’s real world the dreams of better social and economic conditions for women are not tolerated in the public sphere and women are certainly not encouraged to congregate in order to share their ideas with others. Only at home, during that brief moment after all their work is done and everyone else in the family is taken care of, they might indulge in momentarily entertaining the idea of “What if?”

The visitor’s upset over the men’s interference with her dream turns into an open conflict. As she tries to explain to them that she did not need their “help” and attempts to verbalize what has happened to her, the men immediately assume that she is crazy. They try to convince her that

45 Gilman uses a similar strategy in her sequel to Herland. In this case, the whole novel becomes the visitor and his new wife’s temporary venture to the “real world,” at the end of which they gladly return to Herland determined to remain there.
they did so out of “kindness” (44), out of concern, and for her own good. The heroine feels shamed and “resourceless before suspicions” (44) as the small crowd of gathered people “with horror-stricken faces” (44-5) quickly retreat. The visitor feels that she has no other choice than to “relinquish all intentions to elucidate” (45), but she still cannot help but ask if there was anyone on the train who thought that she should not have been disturbed. The only person who is capable of understanding the heroine’s annoyance with the males’ insinuations that she must be either ill or crazy because she does not behave the way expected of her is a fellow passenger—a young female traveler—who immediately recognizes a connection between the heroine and her own activist aunt, Sophronia. Although the young woman admits that she does not comprehend the actions of activist women fully, a hopeful line of continuity is drawn between the older generation of women who struggle in a male-dominated society as the heroine tells the young woman that she must be the only one around with “some common sense” (45). When the heroine later assures the passengers that she appreciates their concern and help to “convince [them] of [her] sanity” (46), the reader comprehends the difficulty of the task ahead when it comes to the women’s movement. The sentiment of a continuous line of female activists building on one another’s effort to better the conditions and circumstances of all women is at that moment the only source of hope.

Because the heroine is interrupted from her sleep before she is ready to leave it and because she is not allowed to return to it, the incident evokes the feeling of an unfinished, incomplete experience. I find this important because it seems to challenge the prevalent assumption that the nineteenth-century utopias “mark the end of history” and “lack fictional
activity” (Pfaelzer 120). Pfaelzer adds that these works are “predicated on the individualist assumption that the dreams of a single person ought to be realized in society as a whole” (131). Oftentimes, the nineteenth-century utopias are dismissed in such a way because they are not as self-consciously complex as the later feminist utopias of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, I do not view either of the utopias discussed above as imposing a static vision of a perfect future on their readers. In *Unveiling the Parallel*, the visitor leaves both communities on Mars, seeing “dimly through the darkness…a new earth” (158), which might possibly find a better balance between these two extreme visions. Similarly, as the heroine falls asleep while traveling by train, she experiences “a rumbling, jolting, wheezing dizziness” (2), which emphasizes the unreal, fantastic aspect of the vision presented to us. Since the author uses words such as jolting and dizziness, generally considered unpleasant feelings, as she describes the heroine’s sensations, instead of using qualifiers that would be indisputably positive, such as calm repose or refreshing slumber, the text is open to the possibility that the vision might be closer to a nightmare than a sweet dream. Further, as she is being yanked back to reality, while she is still dreaming, she thinks that she hears the words “Not right yet;--better,--decidedly better” (44). While it might be the physician commenting on her condition, the words might also still be part of the dream, possibly a commentary on Reinstern: while the vision might present a society that is better because it lacks overt oppression, it is “not right yet.” The ending of the novella is far from definitive, which is emphasized in the final lines: I “tried to imagine a life of love, truth, justice, charity;--among idiots” (46). With this statement, the heroine tells us that she “tried,” not that she succeeded, and she points to the burden of conformity and the fear of change. The interrupted
dream invites the reader to continue this dreaming, to take it a step further, beyond the realm of the binary opposition between a disobedient woman and a saintly one.
...human longing in both forms – as impatience and as waking dream – is the mainsail into the other world. This intending toward a star, a joy, a truth to set against the empirical, beyond its satanic night of incognito, is the only way still to find truth.

Ernst Bloch

Thomas More named the utopian literary genre, but numerous thinkers before him already dreamed of altered living designs. In the epic Gilgamesh, written sometimes in the second millennium B.C.E., we can find a description of an earthly paradise. Plato in his Republic (360 B. C. E.) provided an outline of an ideal society ruled by a philosopher-king. The City of God (413) by St. Augustine developed the notion of an attainable paradise even though for Augustine it was a heavenly rather than an earthly city. And there have been, of course, many legends and stories of the land of plenty even though it can be argued that they do not constitute utopia because there is no trace of social design and, therefore, they do not challenge the status quo. They are known as Arcadia, Cockaigne, or Golden Age, where people do not have to work, food is plentiful, and the general feeling of pleasure, ease, and luxury prevails. If we follow More’s good place-no place (eutopia – good place and outopia – no place) concept of utopia, these legends and stories certainly find their proper place in the genre. Among all of these, however, More’s Utopia (1516), with its ambivalent title and ironic tone, best exemplifies the complexity and potential of the genre.
In his 1975 article, “The Problem of Definition,” Lyman Tower Sargent, the field’s main bibliographer, brought to readers’ attention what he saw as a major obstacle for anyone interested in utopias—“the definition, or more precisely, the limitation of the field” (137). Far from having been resolved, this problem has grown as the discussion of utopia expanded from definitions to methodological approaches. Judith Shklar brought together the two issues in her 1994 article, “What is the Use of Utopia?,” in which she pronounced the task of defining utopia “difficult and controversial” (40) and foresaw the inevitable doom of the genre, pronouncing it of little use for current readership (57). Yet, despite Shklar’s bleak outlook, vigorous scholarly discussions about utopias have not lost its relevance. In fact, the recent publication of the first volume of the Ralahine Utopian Studies series, *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming*, suggests a millennial “utopian revival” in popular culture (Moylan 13) and celebrates “renaissance” in utopian scholarly interest (14). The collection showcases self-reflective commentaries by leading utopian scholars on their approaches to the genre and on their methods of investigation. The necessity to clarify one’s position within the numerous critical approaches to the genre has become a crucial aspect of the scholarship. In my project, I have chosen to analyze specific ways in which the turn-of-the-twentieth-century utopian literature by female writers reflected, contributed to, and expanded upon the issues of the women’s rights movement, so at this concluding point it is also necessary for me to explain my theoretical view of the genre and my thoughts on the “use value” of these utopias in terms of the twenty-first century readership.
The study of utopias as an academic field did not emerge until the 1960s and even then definitional problems of utopian literature were not of a great concern. Instead, studies commenting on utopias published in the first half of the twentieth century usually mimicked Mumford’s approach, analyzing utopia as a social blueprint and discussing the possibility of its realization. Such studies, as Sargent explains, made the definitional problem invisible or at least obscure since it went unchallenged that the works being discussed belonged in the genre (“Themes” 1). Sargent outlines the following as the major problems in the scholarship: usage that confuses utopian literature, utopian thought, and utopian communities and the lack of a proper distinction between form and purpose or intention (“The Problem” 137). For the past thirty years or so, scholars have acknowledged this problem and involved themselves in the uneasy task of defining utopia and its purpose. Yet, as Ruth Levitas points out in her comprehensive study of utopian thought, The Concept of Utopia, there is not (and possibly never will be) any consensus within utopian studies about the meaning of the term utopia and, consequently, no agreement about the object of analysis. This fact certainly poses a challenge for anyone intent on scholarly analysis of utopias. Different approaches in contemporary utopian studies refer to content, form, or function, or some combination of these as determinants of what constitutes utopia; thus, these approaches privilege descriptive, analytic, and/or normative elements (178-9).

46 Yet, Mumford, renowned for his writings not only on literature but also on cities, architecture, technology, and modern life, attempted to classify utopias already in 1922 in his book The Story of Utopias. He divided utopias into two categories: utopias of escape and utopias of reconstruction. While the first category includes personal fantasies and desires, the second category consists of social fiction.
I must precede the explanation of my approach by a brief discussion of Darko Suvin’s contribution to the scholarship. In 1973, Suvin, mirroring Ernst Bloch’s notion of comprehensive function of utopia and the formalist’s notion of defamiliarization, produced the seminal definition of utopia that has provided a theoretical foundation for his contemporaries as well as future utopian scholars regardless of their privileging content, form, or function in their approach to utopia. Suvin says, utopia is

the verbal construction of a particular quasi-human community where sociopolitical institutions, norms and individual relationships are organized according to a more perfect principle than in the author’s community, this construction being based on estrangement arising out of an alternative historical hypothesis. (qtd. in Sargent, “The Problem” 141)

Suvin calls the innovation that is superimposed on the reality the novum, which is a term he also borrowed from Bloch. Suvin saw comprehension and alienation as critical functions of utopia and, consequently, as necessary conditions of our response to utopia. This idea, called “cognitive estrangement,” names the utopian for Suvin. Others have devised their own terms to describe utopia: Joanna Russ calls it the realm of “subjunctivity”; Rachel Blau DuPlessis prefers the term “future perfect”; for Paul Tillich it is “the negation of negation;” and for Louis Marin “the ideological critique of the ideological” (Bartkowski 10). While each of these terms stresses an...
important characteristic of utopian genre, Suvin’s definition has proven itself to be essential in the general approach to utopia to this day.

Mindful of Sargent’s point mentioned above, I differentiate between utopian literature, utopian thought, and a utopian community. This project is concerned solely with texts and, therefore, focuses on utopian literature not only because that is where my interest lies but also because, as Angelika Bammer states, it is “in the realm of fictional…[that] the utopian imagination is most visibly articulated” (4-5). The novels are referred to simply as utopias\(^4\) because this term contains the ambiguous connotation necessary for my understanding of the genre. Further, adopting Sargent’s division of utopias into those developed by human effort and those not relying on human effort (“Utopian Traditions” 333), this project includes only utopias produced by a conscious effort since the main concern of the dissertation is the utopias’ designs and their consequent socio-political and economic structures.

My understanding of what constitutes a utopia builds on the definition by Glenn Negley and Max Patrick.\(^4\) It includes fictional works that describe a state or community developed by human effort. Further, utopia describes the community’s social, political, and economic structures that differ significantly from the contemporary socio-political and economic environment, which the work strives to improve or alter. It could be assumed that utopia as a good place strives to present a good place for everyone, including women, rendering the term feminist utopia redundant. Yet, a look in literary history will reveal that what is often called

\(^4\) As opposed to Sargent’s specialized terms, eutopias or positive utopias, dystopias, and satirical utopias (“The Problem…” 143), which seem to preclude one work being all of these at once.  
\(^4\) Negley and Patrick’s was one of the first articulated attempts for defining literary genre of utopia. In their study *The Quest for Utopia* (1952), they approached utopia as literary practice and focused on the text’s content.
utopia should in fact be marked patriarchal utopia as opposed to feminist utopia because it privileges established forms of gender behavior. Further, as I demonstrate in previous chapters, certain groups are always left out of these utopian visions, whether it is because of their race, ethnicity, or social status. Thus, further distinction seems necessary, and, therefore, the term feminist utopia, in my view, must be used in this project to emphasize my focus on “good place” as defined by women.\footnote{Even then, however, we must acknowledge that these visions are limited to largely white, middle-class women.} My definition of a feminist utopia follows the definition stated above but must be expanded in the following terms: the utopia through its social, political, and economic structures must reject patriarchal ideologies and designs and revise women’s and men’s positions and roles in the community (if there are men in the community).

When considering utopian literary genre, it is imperative that we define its functions since that is where most meaning is being generated for the contemporary reader. Different types of functions have been considered in utopian scholarship. Mumford made a qualitative distinction between utopias that serve as a means of escape or a directionless substitute for the outside world (compensatory function) and those that make a conscious attempt for change (transformative function). For Mumford, the primary function of utopia was a social progress, and all the other aspects, he held, should be submitted to this goal. Bloch saw utopia as extending or extrapolating (mostly in positive terms) from reality, assigning an anticipatory function to utopia, and Suvin, as explained earlier, promoted the comprehensive function. One of the first true promoters of function-based approach was Marin, who already in 1973 in his \textit{Utopiques: Jeux d’espaces}\footnote{\textit{Utopiques: Spatial Play} (1984).} suggested approaching utopia as a process rather than mere representation of
some realized vision. His central, most influential proposition is that the relationship between the utopian text and the reader’s society, or what he calls utopia’s referential subtext, is neutralization. He presented the relationship between utopia and the reader’s society in terms of binary oppositions, as the crude matter of the real with its contradictions on one hand and a utopian neutralizing reaction to it on the other. Explained in terms of More’s *Utopia*, the utopian island is viewed as a continuous canceling of the historical England, which is to be understood as a combination of imaginary synthesis of the basic contradictions of More’s time. Although Marin did not acknowledge the authorial and/or non-authorial contradictions in utopian production, he believed that it is possible to appreciate the utopian text as a determinate type of praxis, which he understood in terms of “a concrete set of mental operations to be performed on a determinate type of raw material given in advance which is contemporary society itself” rather than in terms of constructing or perfecting an idea of an ideal society (Jameson, “Of Islands” 6).

Yet, we must go beyond the notion of neutralization because the utopian visions of two centuries ago do not and cannot “neutralize” our circumstances. It can be safely stated that compensatory and anticipatory functions of utopia are considered only marginally if at all in current scholarship as they promote the notion of utopia as a fanciful dreaming or a blueprint— notions largely abandoned today. Where does, then, lie the relevance of the selected utopias for a reader today? If we approach utopias as reactions and direct critiques of reality, we find value in their oppositional and comprehensive functions as they make us aware of our own standing and conditions. Thus, I argue, utopian function is foremost critical and, consequently, comprehensive.
In my consideration of utopian literary genre, I find helpful Jameson’s critical approach that focuses on the function of the genre while utilizing Marin’s idea of utopian neutralization within Marxist context. Disturbed by the disappearance of the negative in postindustrial capitalism, Jameson brings forth the revival of the very idea of negation, which, according to him, is being smothered in the society where the class struggle has almost disappeared and revolt has been assimilated to an entertainment-type value. While he assents that utopian thought might have represented a diversion of revolutionary energy in the older society (as in Marx’s classic analysis), Jameson argues that in our time the utopian concept has undergone a dialectical reversal (*Marxism* 110-11). He refuses the notion of utopia (and science fiction in general) as a representational genre that provides images of the future and simply accustoms the reader to rapid innovation and change because such notion underestimates the genre, making utopia dated as “particular utopian future…turn[s] out to have been merely the future of one moment of what is now our own past” (“Progress” 151). Instead, Jameson sees utopia as defamiliarizing and restructuring our experience of our present and suggests that utopia’s “deepest vocation” is to demonstrate and to dramatize our incapacity to imagine the future, which transforms reading of utopia into a contemplation of our own absolute limits (153).

Moreover, I wish to suggest that Tom Moylan’s well-known definition of critical utopia can be adopted and adapted for a critical approach toward the turn-of-the-twentieth-century utopia. Moylan identifies utopia with a literary genre, focusing on utopias of 1970s and arguing that “utopian writing in the 1970s was saved by its own destruction and transformation into the ‘critical utopia.’” He uses the word *critical* in the Enlightenment sense of *critique* as well as in
the nuclear sense of the *critical mass* required to make the necessary explosive reaction (10). He sees it as cultural praxis that attempts to contest and undermine dominant ideology. The form of critical utopia, as described by Moylan, underlines these points: the text is usually self-reflexive, fragmented, and indefinite, containing comments on the operations of the text itself, narrative ambiguity, and interpolations (46). Moylan refuses critical opposition in terms of the classical binary opposition of one view against the other. He offers a postmodern approach because he considers, indeed celebrates, contradictions as crucial for the survival of the genre as the ambiguity renders it more exploratory and less open to charges of totalitarianism.\(^{52}\) Moylan argues that the critical utopia, by opposing the existing spaces of opposition, demonstrates that the existing options (whether in the real world or in utopia) are not the only ones available to the reader.

While thoughtfully drawn and cleverly applied, Moylan’s concept of critical utopias relies on the right or “correct” textual characteristics. It might be true that there is no space in contemporary scholarship for utopias that are more than hundred years old; it might be also true that for the genre to survive well into the twenty-first century the form and content of these utopias must be abandoned in favor of the critical, ambiguous heterotopias. This suggestion, however, disregards all utopias written before the 1970s, which gives the impression that the utopias written before 1970s are of no value as critiques of dominant ideology and that the reader, when facing anything other than the critical utopia as defined by Moylan, cannot uncover any contradictions, imperfection, or limitation within utopian society and, consequently, in his or

\(^{52}\) Tobin Siebers, who discusses a postmodern vision of utopia he calls heterotopia, also insists on differences and heterogeneity as necessary in contemporary utopias.
her own society. Where the function of utopia is to make us estranged from ourselves and our circumstances to comprehend better, it requires an active participation from the reader who must be critical not only of the current situation but of the utopian vision as well. Keeping in mind the limitations of the utopian tradition, the reader is urged to reject utopia as a blueprint and to focus on the continuing presence of contradictions within utopian society, thus discovering the contradictions within our world, which, ultimately, is the goal. While Moylan relies on authorial intent and sees potential only in the critical utopias of 1970s and 1980s, I believe that this approach is applicable to any utopia.

I identify mostly with Lucy Sargisson, who considers literary utopias primarily based on their function. She urges the reader to focus on the transformative, ironic, and satirical aspects of the genre. Sargisson, similar to Moylan, shows the greatest appreciation for the critical utopias of the 1970s and 1980s, which she sees as going beyond the conventions of the genre in their ambiguity, skepticism, and open-endedness. She believes in the necessity of retaining imperfections and differences as contributing to the multiple critiques of not only the contemporary society but also the utopia and the text itself. Sargisson absolutely rejects any notion of approaching utopia as blueprint because the fixed and finite character of such proposition cannot reflect and address concerns and needs of a contemporary reader (53). There is no doubt that Sargisson’s methodology, like Moylan’s, is extremely useful for utopias written in the late twentieth century. The question remains, however, whether the reader can apply a similar approach in his or her treatment of utopias written in the first half of the century or possibly even earlier. For example, Sally Kitch does not consider Sargisson’s approach as
applicable to the feminist utopias of the nineteenth century because she sees the contradictions present in these texts as accidental rather than intentional. I, on the other hand, believe that we need to consider all utopias in these terms. Whether the utopia is purposely filled with contradictions or not, the contradictions are always present albeit in less apparent form. Therefore, we should not discuss utopias in terms of their finality but rather act as skeptical readers who investigate and question. By identifying the contradictions in any utopian work, the reader, as a result of the transformative function of utopia, is inspired into a new way of thinking. It is certainly doubtful that any utopia has been ever intended as a perfectly realizable blueprint without reservation (think only of the societies reproducing parenthogenetically); if we consider utopia as a playfield for new ideas, we certainly can utilize Sargisson’s approach.

As Marin observed, utopia is the ideological critique of the ideological, and Jameson stresses this idea by his insistence on our inability to imagine utopia. He makes an additional point by tracing the interdependence of ideology and utopia. As I mention above, Jameson, commenting on this relationship, points out that the ideological must be necessarily utopian. Because we can just as readily state, then, that the utopian is necessarily ideological, we must be constantly reminded of the artificiality of utopia as a social construct and approach it skeptically. Thus, utopias encourage, we might even say provoke, active reading that is both critical and resistant. For that reason, I see utopian literary genre, by extension, also as transformative; it is not so in the sense that it calls the reader to action as much as it transforms the reader’s point of view and alters his or her comprehension of the world around. I disagree with Pfaelzer’s claim that “utopian authors escaped the social contradictions by adding the dimension of the remote
future or, as Bloch puts it, by relying on ‘the utopian interpolation, the adverbial ‘not yet’” (“The Impact” 122). On the contrary, utopian authors can never escape social contradictions; they may try to escape them through utopian production, but they inevitably create new ones in the process. In sum, we cannot view utopia as a positive antithesis of a flawed reality; rather, finding flaws also in the alternate version of reality, we will enable ourselves to turn our eyes back on our circumstances and see them with even more clarity. Levitas’s definition nicely supports the critical function of utopia, which she sees as “a socially constructed response to an equally socially constructed gap between the needs and wants generated by a particular society and the satisfactions available to and distributed by it” (181-2). This explanation brings out perfectly the artifice of social organization by suggesting different ways a society could be organized. There is nothing determined about it, and the contradictions necessarily contained in any utopian vision only highlight this point. While the utopian content may be a good expression of the historical desires, which I have attempted to demonstrate in the project, we have to always keep in mind that the contradictions within utopian expression propel the function of the utopia. It is not only to provoke the reader to take a critical stance toward her own reality and to recognize its ideological artifice and the different ideologies at work but also to reveal a possibility of change.

I certainly do not read utopias to search for visions of flawless, better worlds. I do not believe that such perfect visions can ever be presented. I find utopias inspiring because they make us question our desires and help us see the world around us differently, possibly more clearly. Ultimately, they carry the prospect of hope deeply in them, reminding us that there is
always a possibility of change and that we might be capable of the change for the better. After all, as the oft-quoted words of Oscar Wilde remind us, “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing.”
APPENDIX

SELECTED UTOPIAN NOVELS IN A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER
Mary Bradley Lane. *Mizora* (1881)

Located in the interior of the earth somewhere below the northern seas, Mizora is a society of blond and beautiful women who, in the past, forced men into extinction. They are visited by Vera Zarovitch, a member of a Russian aristocratic family, who is forced to flee Russia through a series of unfortunate circumstances and discovers Mizora by chance on her way to France. Mizoran women stress education, science, and technology. When Vera leaves Mizora, she takes Wauna, a woman from Mizora, with her. The differences between the current society and the utopian one are thus highlighted. Wauna, whose name means happiness in the language of Mizora, dies before she manages to return back to Mizora and is buried by Vera.

Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant. *Unveiling a Parallel* (1893)

A young American arrives on Mars, where he meets a sister of his guide. He soon realizes that the ways in which he approached women on earth are not the same on Mars. Here, women not only share the same rights and privileges as men in America, but they also have their vices. A spiritual and egalitarian community high in the mountains is also described in which men and women are honored according to their skills and education.
Eloise O. Richberg. *Reinstern* (1900)

In this dream vision, a woman is brought to an extraterrestrial society that is ruled by equality, gentleness, and humanity. A great stress is put on education and child rearing. Parents and children are not separated because of parents’ employment. There is no poverty, servant class, and private property. There is no death even. Men and women strive together for a common goal—harmonious and fair society. The woman, who is traveling on a train, leaves the utopia by being woken up by fellow passengers who think that there is something wrong with her.

Lena J. Fry. *Other Worlds* (1905)

The story takes place on Herschel, which is a planet indistinguishable from the turn-of-the-century Earth. The Vivians start a cooperative community, a meritocracy, where women enjoy financial independence although their duties are still largely limited to the domestic sphere. Industrious men and women are awarded the title Honorable, and the exceptional members of the community become Princes and Princesses. Cooperation and contribution to the society is accentuated; in return, each member of the community becomes an owner of the community’s shares depending on his involvement.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman. *Herland* (1915)

The women of Herland are separated from the rest of the world by a volcanic eruption. There are no men in their community with the exception of three visitors who discover Herland. Community and communal well-being are crucial; education and child-rearing play an extremely
important role. The three visitors to Herland represent the most common, patronizing patriarchal attitudes toward women. Elador becomes the wife of Van, one of the visitors, and leaves with him for America. Her bitter disappointment is narrated in the sequel, *With Her in Ourland*.

Martha Bensley Bruere. *Mildred Carver, USA* (1919)

The novel describes the United States after the World War I. Industries have been nationalized and all 18-year-olds must serve one year in the National Service regardless of their status or education. Mildred Carver is a daughter of a steel baron whose year of service changes her outlook on marriage, work, and class.
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