The Good Life is out there Somewhere: British and U.S. Women's Utopian Literature 1836-1916

Dan M.R. Abitz
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_diss/215

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.
THE GOOD LIFE IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE: BRITISH AND U.S. WOMEN’S UTOPIAN LITERATURE 1836-1916

by

DANIEL MELVIN ROBERT ABITZ

Under the Direction of Janet Ann Gabler-Hover

ABSTRACT

This dissertation reads women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to understand how authors both famous and unknown used women’s political liberation as the foundation for utopian revolutions. Taking up novels from the United States and the United Kingdom, this transatlantic project connects well-known authors such as George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Pauline Hopkins, Lady Florence Dixie, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman to obscure writers like Lillian B. Jones Horace, Mary E. Bradley Lane, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, Annie Denton Cridge, and Mary Griffith. Chapter I explores how Gaskell and Eliot used different conceptions of “utopia” to connect women’s rights and worker’s rights. Chapter II examines issues of movement, borders, and identity in Gilman’s utopian trilogy.
Chapter III combines Freudian psychoanalysis, critical race theory, and gender studies to argue that utopia and melancholy are interrelated psychical responses to the traumas of race, gender, and sexuality. Finally, Chapter IV looks at how Cridge and Dixie deconstruct the gender binary in ways that reveal gender to be entirely social, constitutive, and performative. Rather than treat women’s utopian literature as a genre too politically stunted for modern readers, this dissertation instead looks at these novels as representative of women’s radical political visions that have yet to come to fruition. In this way, this project argues that our modern utopian visions should be influenced and informed by ones from over hundred years ago.

INDEX WORDS: Utopian Literature, Women’s Writing, Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, Race Studies, Nineteenth Century.
THE GOOD LIFE IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE: BRITISH AND U.S. WOMEN’S
UTOPIAN LITERATURE 1836-1916

by

DANIEL MELVIN ROBERT ABITZ

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
2019
THE GOOD LIFE IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE: BRITISH AND U.S. WOMEN’S
UTOPIAN LITERATURE 1836-1916

by

DANIEL MELVIN ROBERT ABITZ

Committee Chair: Janet Gabler-Hover

Committee: Paul Schmidt
LeeAnne Richardson

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2019
DEDICATION

For Mom.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe more than I can ever quantify to Dr. Janet Gabler-Hover, whose indefatigable efforts as both a reader and mentor have shaped my life, work, and time as a graduate student. Her knowledge of the field, theoretical insights, critical acumen, and editorial prowess have made me the scholar and person I am today. My committee members Dr. Paul Schmidt and Dr. LeeAnne Richardson, who also served as my professors along the way, provided indelible support throughout my time at Georgia State. I can only hope to payback in kind their work, time, and investment. The most heartfelt and gracious thanks to Pops, Mel, and Julie; Hannah and the IBCC; Hubie, Nat, Hank, Matthew, Steven, Tom, Jenna, Lindsay, Patrick, Kally, Zach; Andrew, Randi, David, and Brian and the Pinecones; Cristine, Devin, and Colleen; Sara, Ian, Susi, and Michael; Christine, Stephanie, Matty; Paul Donnelly, Dr. Elizabeth West, and the rest of SAMLA; the Abitzes, Shaibes, Ondrichs, Morans, Rockmans, and Byerses.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. V

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1

1 UTOPIANISM IN ELIZABETH GASKELL AND GEORGE ELIOT .................. 19
   1.1 North, South, and Utopia ....................................................................................... 21
   1.2 Daydreams, Inheritance, and the Working Class .................................................. 31
   1.3 A Queer Epilogue ................................................................................................... 39

2 TRAVELING THROUGH THE ROOTS AND ROUTES OF CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN’S UTOPIAN TRILOGY ................................................................. 53
   2.1 Sea Change: Travel, Immigration, and Alterity ...................................................... 57
   2.2 Rape Culture in/and Herland .................................................................................. 69
   2.3 Van’s Imperialism and Ellador’s Utopianism: The Bi-Sexual Method ............... 77

3 LOSS, RACE, AND THE MELANCHOLY OF UTOPIA ........................................ 94
   3.1 Melancholy in Utopia ............................................................................................. 99
   3.2 Melancholy and Utopia ......................................................................................... 116
   3.3 Melancholic, Utopic, Queer .................................................................................. 143

4 FEMINIST UTOPIANISM AND THE DISRUPTION OF THE GENDER BINARY IN MAN’S RIGHTS AND GLORIANA ................................................................. 150
   4.1 Men, Women, and Butterflies ................................................................................. 153
   4.2 Gloriana/Hector and the Queerness of Desire ...................................................... 179
4.3 Androgynocracy ................................................................. 196

CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 203

WORKS CITED........................................................................... 209
INTRODUCTION

In the Preface to her utopian novel *Moving the Mountain* (1911), Charlotte Perkins Gilman claims that the human mind possesses “a natural tendency to hope, desire, foresee, and then, if possible, obtain” what she calls “better human possibilities” (6). Gilman presents this natural tendency towards utopianism as procedural. For Gilman, utopianism begins with a strong sense of wishing and longing, moves towards imagining ways to fulfill those hopes and desires, and then culminates, if at all possible, in actionable responses towards achieving those goals. These goals are not castles in the sky; rather, they are necessary and attainable improvements made to the world’s current condition. This is why, according to Gilman, *Moving the Mountain* “involves no other change than a change of mind, the mere awakening of people, especially the women, to existing possibilities. It indicates what people might do, real people, now living, in thirty years – if they would” (6). Gilman thus presents *Moving the Mountain* as a plea for social and political action in the short-term, as a glimpse into a conceivable alternative future that only requires a collective decision to make things better for everyone.

Gilman’s definition of utopianism anticipates, by nearly a century, the ways modern utopian theorists understand this “natural tendency” of the human mind. In *Utopia as Method* (2013), Ruth Levitas defines utopia as “the expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living, and as such is braided through human culture” (xii). Levitas continues, qualifying utopia “in terms of desire” as “analytic rather than descriptive. It generates a method which is primarily hermeneutic but which repeatedly returns us from existential and aesthetic concerns to the social and structural domain” (xiii). Though Levitas calls it “human culture” rather than the “human mind,” both Levitas and Gilman believe that this mechanism of desire, imagination, and propulsion takes place ubiquitously or universally. Too, each author links hope and desire to a
“better life,” foregoing an insistence on perfection, focusing instead on alternative pathways towards success and fulfilment. Eschewing perfection, Gilman and Levitas highlight the importance of openness and multiplicity in utopianism. Foreclosing the imaginative capabilities of the utopian subject places limits on how that subject might desire, might look to the future to satisfy such desire, and what actionable pathways might be taken to create future material conditions that would allow for such satisfaction to occur.

Of course, Gilman highlights women as the one group in particular whose collective awakening most impacts *Moving the Mountain*’s utopian vision. *Moving the Mountain* presents a utopian United States beneficial to all US citizens and made possible by women’s full political liberation. In the novel, women’s liberation sets into motion a non-violent revolution that eliminates classism and racism, invests in nation-wide environmentally friendly urban development, implements gender-neutral education models, and replaces monotheistic religions with a non-deistic belief structure focused on empathy and progress. Tacit in both Gilman’s prefatory remarks and her novel, then, is the connection between feminism and utopianism.

For modern critics, utopian thinking is inherent to feminism’s political aim. In *Feminist Utopias* (1989), Francis Bartkowski claims, “Utopian thinking is crucial to feminism, a movement that could only be produced and challenged by and in a patriarchal world” (13). Similarly, Sarah Webster Goodwin (1990) argues that “because any definition of feminism must include an impulse to improve the human community, feminism seems to have at least an inherent utopian inclination” (1). Following in this tradition, Sally L. Kitch (2000) declares, “Feminists love a utopia. At least many of us do. And why not? In order to think about feminist ideas and goals, we are almost forced, like utopian planners, to imagine societies that have never existed” (1). Bartkowski, Goodwin, and Kitch are all participating in and shaping a critical
tradition of studying women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This dissertation seeks to build on such work in order to continue to think through the connections between feminism and utopianism.

As Darby Lewes writes in the introduction to *Dream Revisionaries* (1995), “Nineteenth-century women’s utopian writing must have been lost altogether were it not for the efforts of” feminist and utopian scholars in the 1970s and 1980s.¹ Following Carol Pearson’s “Coming Home: Four Feminist Utopias and Patriarchal Experience” (1977), Nelson F. Adkins’ 1975 edition of Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836), and Ann Lane’s 1979 edition of Gilman’s *Herland* (1915), the 1980s saw the emergence of bibliographies of women’s utopian literature as well as foundational critical analyses of that corpus of literature. Daphne Patai’s “British and American Utopias by Women (1836-1979)” (1981), Carol Farley Kessler’s *Daring to Dream: Utopian Stories by United States Women, 1836-1919* (1984), Kessler’s “Notes toward a Bibliography: Women’s Utopian Writing, 1836-1899” (1985),² and Lyman Tower Sargent’s *British and American Utopian Literature, 1516-1985* (1988) provided the foundation for an ever-expanding bibliography of utopian fiction written by women in the West. Along with these essential bibliographies, studies such as Jean Pfaelzer’s *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896* (1984), Nan Bowman Albinski’s *Women’s Utopias in British and American Fiction* (1988),

---

¹ The growing interest in women’s utopian literature coincided with a revolution in the wider field of utopian literary studies. Texts such as Kenneth M. Roemer’s *The Obsolete Necessity* (1976), Ruth Levitas’ *The Concept of Utopia* (1990), and Lyman Tower Sargent’s “Three Faces of Utopianism: Revisited” (1994) argued against the prevailing anti-utopian sentiments in the West following World War II and provided foundational reconsiderations of what constituted utopianism.

² Kessler published both a second bibliography of women’s utopian literature (1990) and a second edition of *Daring to Dream* (1995). Among the twelve texts reproduced in this edition of *Daring to Dream* (1995), Kessler reproduced in excerpts versions for the first time since their original publications two texts that will be discussed in this dissertation: Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights* (1870) and Lillian B. Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916)
and Bartkowski’s aforementioned *Feminist Utopias* (1989) provided a critical foundation for reading women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³

Pfaelzer, Bartkowski, and Albinski were not content, however, to simply celebrate the existence of these novels. Each offered trenchant critiques of what they perceived to be the political shortcomings of women’s utopian literature. Their critiques mark feminist literary theory’s transition away from second-wave feminism to a more intersectional approach. As such, the conservatism of nineteenth-century women’s utopian literature can be understood as similar to the limitations of second-wave feminism. For Pfaelzer, Bartkowski, and Albinski, this conservatism stems from the inescapable whiteness and middle-class values and desires of women’s utopian literature. Pfaelzer, in the subtitle of the final chapter of her landmark *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896* (1984) asks, “What did women want?” (141). Pfaelzer directs this question to US women towards the end of the nineteenth century and finds her answer in the utopian literature written by those same women: “Writers of both progressive and feminist utopias believed that she [woman/women] wanted political equality and fundamental rearrangements at home” (143). In searching for political enfranchisement and freedom and a reconsideration of domestic duties and identities, these authors, however, according to Pfaelzer,

³ This trend continued into the 1990s. Edited collections such as *Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative* (1990) and *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women* (1994) contributed to the growing interest in the genre of women’s utopian literature and helped bridge the gap between recently recovered nineteenth-century texts and more accessible twentieth-century texts. In *Dream Revisionaries* (1995), Darby Lewes expanded Bowman’s efforts to compare and contrast women’s utopian literature written in England and the United States. Following Bartkowski’s *Feminist Utopias*, Angelika Bammer’s *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (1991), Lucy Sargisson’s *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (1995), and Jennifer Burwell’s *Notes on Nowhere* (1997) consider connections between women’s utopian literature of the nineteenth century and the utopian politics and literature of 1970s feminist movements. Scholarship from the first decade of the twenty-first century such as Kitch’s *Higher Ground* (2000) and Matthew Beaumont’s *Utopia Ltd.* (2005) continued to contextualize women’s utopian literature in the proliferation of utopian communities and women’s movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The twenty-first century also brought modern editions of landmark women’s utopian novels such as Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1881, 2000), Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903, 2004), and Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916, 2011).
maintained “love, sympathy, and motherhood to be woman’s natural instincts,” represented Woman as the “moral warden of the new culture,” and “designed utopias that unwittingly ratified the ideologies if not the economic structures of the status quo” (158). Far from revolutionary, authors such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Mary E. Bradley Lane valorized middle-class values and narrow ideas of social and political agency that, in Pfaelzer’s opinion, reified the very structural modes of oppression facing women in the nineteenth century. Utopian authors did not want to challenge capitalism or gender roles; rather, they wanted to make room for women to participate equally in those damaging discourses towards the same, delimited, conservative ends.

Frances Bartkowski and Nan Bowman Albinski arrive at similar conclusions concerning women’s utopian literature written prior to the 1920s. In Feminist Utopias (1989), Bartkowski quickly dismisses much of this oeuvre as unsatisfactory: “While there were numerous all-female utopias produced in the nineteenth century, they were far from feminist, in that they tended to idealize the ‘true’ woman of the domestic sphere, not the ‘new’ woman” (9). Rather than producing the New Woman, these all-female utopias produced the True Woman,4 Coventry Patmore’s “Angel in the House”5 dressed in utopian attire. Calling Herland “far from feminist” and then focusing the rest of her project on utopian novels written by women in the 1970s, Bartkowski makes explicitly clear that, though written by women, the utopian novels of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries do not fit her model of feminism and do not require further critical attention.

5 Originally published in 1854 and revised through 1862, Patmore’s “Angel in the House” was a poem written about his wife Emily. Believing his wife to be the perfect Victorian woman, Patmore praised her in this poem for her passivity, powerlessness, piety, and purity. This image of the angelic wife became a dominant, influential, and repressive figure in nineteenth-century.
In *Women’s Utopias in British and American Fiction* (1989), Albinski focuses on the difference between US and British women’s utopian fiction before and after 1920, examining such differences through the categories of Politics, Work, Sexuality/Marriage/Family, Science and Technology, and Religion. While Albinski carefully illuminates the national and cultural distinctions between US and British women’s feminist projects before 1920, she nevertheless rejects the feminism of these novels as outdated or unsuited for the socio-political needs and desire of feminists at the end of the twentieth century. In the opening pages on pre-1920 US women’s utopias, Albinski claims that “women’s utopians are radical only insofar as they mention marriage only in the context of a near-unanimous interest in easier divorce” (17). In the following chapter on pre-1920s British women’s utopias, Albinski claims, “Late Victorian women were not eager to reverse the roles assigned to male and female, or to adopt the worst aspects of masculine behavior” (33). For Albinski, women’s utopian literature, through its superficial critique of women’s roles and subjugated status in the nineteenth century, delimits the possibilities of gender/sexual difference and the potential of alterity. Though Albinski does not reclassify any of these utopian stories as “far from feminist,” she regrets their domesticity and conventionalism.

Following these critics, Angelika Bammer (1991) and Lucy Sargisson (1995) continue shifting away from reading nineteenth-century women’s utopian literature to focus more acutely on the feminist movements and literatures of the 1970s. While critical of women’s utopian literature written prior to 1970, both Bammer and Sargisson articulate connections between

---

6 “The women of both countries relied on popular conceptions of their higher moral natures to determine their utopias, but within different frameworks – the British women, secular, often socialist; and the American woman, religious” (Albinski 4). Albinski continues to explain that British women emphasized “a vigorous individualism” akin to “male American writers’ work,” and that American women’s utopias “are… generally communal rather than national” (4). Albinski’s explication of women’s utopias – both British and US – follows this framework to discuss the socio-historical differences facing British and US women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
feminism and utopianism that are useful for returning to that body of literature. Angelika Bammer and Lucy Sargisson both take difference (gender, sexuality, race, class) and possibility as requisite qualities of utopianism and develop theories of utopian feminism predicated on such qualities. In *Partial Visions* (1991), Angelika Bammer contends that the future must exist “as possibility rather than as [a] preset goal” (48). Bammer argues against *Utopia*, the form of literature following Thomas More’s example, and in favor of *utopian*, a way of writing/thinking/theorizing that is “experimental rather than prescriptive, speculative rather than predictive” and necessitated “process” as antithetical to the goal-oriented “spectre of Utopia” (51). For Bammer, the “preset goal” of Utopia forecloses on future possibilities and demands a sublimation of modes of being, doing, existing that do not progress directly towards a particular, delimited goal. Feminism and utopianism in the 1960s and 1970s, with their shared focus on deconstruction and difference, expanded theoretically and imaginatively in such a way to accommodate a variability of processes (critiques and responses to the subject’s material present) towards numerous future possibilities. Specifically, Bammer sees the value of feminist utopianism in this opening up of possibilities by re-conceptualizing gender and sexuality (as well as race and class), rethinking language, and rewriting history (61).

For Bammer, this turn towards feminism and utopianism in the 1960s and 1970s favors the *utopian* as a mode of investigation or engagement that proliferates from a multitude of raced, classed, and gendered experiences and lives. Concomitantly, it turns away from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s utopias. Bammer sees these literary utopias representing a tradition of political engagement and imagination that is inscribed by particular races, classes, and/or genders and only capable of producing foreclosed, preset futures. Particularly, Bammer reads Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*, Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1880-
1881), and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1915) as insignificant variations on traditional utopian literature written by men. In Bammer’s estimation, these texts either erase difference to produce a utopia of sameness or reify gendered, racist, and/or classist differences in ways that exclude numerous groups from utopia. Echoing the sentiments of Bartkowski, Albinski, and Pfaelzer, Bammer contends that these Utopias fail to produce imaginative future possibilities that exceed their historical material realities.

In order to forgo dismissing nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s utopian literature, modern readers require a more nuanced understanding of feminism’s relationship to utopianism. Fortunately, Bammer, though critical of such literature, can be used to rehabilitate the literature it so expressly rebukes. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s utopian literature, while objectionably partaking in methods of disempowerment, *does* produce moments of empowerment for alterities of being that contrast with and diverge from traditional readings of utopian literature, and Bammer’s conceptualization of feminist utopianism can be used towards such readings. For this project, Bammer’s reading of feminism and utopianism as “two ways of seeing the world and responding to the need for change that converged in particular ways in [the 1970s]” will be used as an effective register for reading polyvalence, multiplicity, and women’s utopian literature written between 1836-1916. Feminist movements of the 70s, according to Bammer, “called for new ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling, new ways of living, loving, and working, new ways of experiencing the body, using language, and defining powers” (2). This proliferation of emotions, actions, embodiments, realities, desires, existences, arrangements, alignments, and beings (both as noun and as verb) will be used in this project to expand what “alternative ways” might mean for utopian texts and utopian subjects.7

7 Bammer’s use of the gerund-form also destabilizes the temporality of these alternative ways of existing and expressing, allowing them to exist simultaneously and infinitely, unhampered by past/present/future
Like Angelika Bammer, Lucy Sargisson endeavors to understand the relationship between feminism and utopianism towards a conceptualization of feminist utopianism. While Bammer reads the political movements of the 1970s as the site of intervention between these interrelated modes of interrogation and imagination (feminism and utopianism), Sargisson, in *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (1995), turns to poststructuralism to produce a utopianism for contemporary feminism and a feminist utopianism suited to the contemporary moment.

Sargisson sees the utopian as an imprint of both feminism and deconstructionism: “What was not said was something that, in my view, was central to both feminism and deconstruction, namely the fact that both were marked by a strong utopian impulse… Often, they even agreed on the direction of this change: identity and gender should be re-conceptualized, language rethought, and history rewritten” (61). Feminism, like poststructuralism, seeks a reconsideration and reconceptualization of identity and gender, and, for Sargisson, this direction of inquiry, criticism, and theory points towards what she calls “the utopian impulse.” Sargisson, in naming it an “impulse,” more effectively expresses Bammer’s interest in “the utopian” and echoes both Gilman’s belief in utopianism as a “natural tendency” of the human mind. Sargisson’s reading of feminism, as marked by the utopian impulse towards a reconceptualization of identity and gender, reads feminism as a mode of investigation and critique not limited to re-thinking women’s identity and gender only, but rather as a line of inquiry and thought that exposes the constitutiveness of identity and gender categories of all gendered subjects. Sargisson’s feminism aligns more acutely with this project’s conceptualization of feminist utopianism that intends to as singularly understandable moments of time divorced from their counterparts. Though Bammer initially rejects the history of utopian literature, her readings of the relationship between utopianism and feminism in the 1970s provides valuable insight into how a return to the utopian literature canon can lead to deeper, more complex analyses of nineteenth- and early twentieth century-women’s utopian literature and the alterities expressed therein.
seek out and examine textual alterities present in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s utopian fiction.

Sargisson’s feminist utopian project also provides a denunciation or refusal of binaristic thinking. Just as Bammer rejects choosing feminism or utopianism as the sole lens for exploring the social, political, and philosophical movements of the 1970s, Sargisson rejects the necessity of choosing between “feminism or postmodernism, unity or diversity, equality or difference,” hoping to “transgress the binary position of either/or and say both, neither and more” (95). Sargisson’s rejection represents an important opening up of potential sites of transgressions and alterity in utopian literature in that multiplicity becomes the feminist utopian project and position. Sargisson writes,

>We can simultaneously accept and reject, thus creating a new space beyond binary opposition in which something else (the unforeseeable) can be foreseen. Thus we neither (fully) accept nor (fully) reject, and either/or is no longer a meaningful position. This further allows for more, a more which… I characterize as feminine. This new space, this new position is profoundly utopian. (95)

The “more” of theoretical positioning – a delightful pun on Thomas More’s last name – opens a new space wherein feminist political projects are not delimited by specific binaristic confines.

The space created by Sargisson’s “more” allows for a more nuanced and complex approach to the textual, historical, social, and aesthetic realities of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century women’s utopian fiction as read through the lens of feminist utopianism. While many of the novels discussed in the first half of this manuscript participate in more conservative political fantasy structures, they also contain cracks in the edifices of their homogeneity and universality out from which alterity seeps and spreads. Alterity, as an
embodied or experienced more, demands a space of creativity and imagination, opened up by careful attention to the ways that feminist utopian texts produce glimpses of and gestures towards existing and being alternatively and/or otherwise. Sargisson’s position of more – theoretical, psychical, embodied – can be used to add breadth and scope to this project’s feminist utopianism framework, bringing together difficult or incommensurate ideas or viewpoints towards more productive readings of moments of alterity in women’s utopian literature.

Judith Butler, in her work on performativity and queer kinship structures, is also useful for understanding feminism’s connection to utopianism. This project reads performativity and queer kinship as informing its conceptualization of feminism and utopianism. This allows for more adept and close attention to behaviors and alignments of characters in nineteenth- and twentieth-century women’s utopian literature. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler elucidates her theory of performativity: “Acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed are *performative* in the sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (185). For this project, performativity can be used as a way to analyze the alterities of being that escape and unveil themselves when the truth of gender is revealed as a fiction. In this way, gender performativity will be used to uncover how utopian authors hoped to critique gender norms and demonstrate their social constitutiveness, creating spaces for alterities to emerge out of such

---

8 Sara Salih, in her introduction to *The Judith Butler Reader* (2004), describes Butler’s theoretical project(s) in terms that demonstrate the utopianism implicit to Butler’s work: “Indeed, Butler recognizes that ‘life’ itself is a site of contest and an unstable term whose meanings are multiple and debatable, so rather than setting out to define ‘life,’ her works prompt another fundamental question: what do humans require in order to maintain and reproduce the conditions of their own livability? The impetus towards livability… involves conceptualizing possible lives and arranging for their institutional acceptance and support. In this sense, ‘to live,’ as Butler defines it, is to live a life politically – in other words, to recognize one’s relation to others, one’s relation to power, and one’s responsibility to strive for a collective, more inclusive future” (12). In conceptualizing possible lives, creating the social arrangements necessary for institutional recognition, and focusing on collectivity and inclusivity, Butler can be read as a feminist utopian.
critiques. Similarly, Butler’s theory of queer kinship, as discussed in her chapter “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” (2004), will be used in this project to examine how characters align themselves in non-normative ways towards more livable and flourishing presents and futures. For Butler, queer kinship structures reject traditional, normative modes of social alignment, and, as this project will demonstrate, such non-normative alignments can become the site of feminist utopian critique and imagination.

This dissertation considers a number of utopian novels published in the United States and the United Kingdom that offer visions of non-normative alignments, that reveal gender’s performativity, and that stage moments of transgressive alterity. Those texts published in the United States include Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836); Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights; Or, How Would You Like It?* (1870); Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1880); Pauline E. Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903); Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911), *Herland* (1915), and *With Her in Ourland* (1916); and Lillian B. Horace Jones’ *Five Generations Hence* (1916). Those published in the United Kingdom include Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1854); George Eliot’s *Romola* (1863) and *Felix Holt: The Radical* (1866); Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s *New Amazonia* (1889); and Lady Florence Dixie’s *Gloriana; Or, The Revolution of 1900* (1890). As this dissertation demonstrates, these texts, when taken together, represent how early feminist writers of utopian fiction attempted to imagine a multitude of alternative futures to their own impoverished presents.

This dissertation will be divided into four dependent but interrelated chapters. The first chapter, “Utopianism in Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot,” addresses the utopian impulse in three Victorian novels not traditionally considered utopian. This chapter focuses on Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1854) and George Eliot’s *Felix Holt: The Radical* (1866) and
Romola (1863) as women’s Victorian literature that, while not featuring explicit characteristics of utopian fiction, engage directly with utopianism. The attachment of “utopia” to Margaret Hale and Esther Lyon, the protagonists of North and South and Felix Holt respectively, will be explored as an indication of how Gaskell and Eliot thought about the interconnections between women’s issues, class issues, and utopianism in the middle of the nineteenth century. This chapter will trace such interconnections through the similarities between these novels - Margaret and Esther’s clerical fathers, the provincial English settings, each protagonist’s issues of inheritance, class/labor uprisings – and their divergent conclusions to illuminate how Gaskell and Eliot approached utopianism as a mode of imaginative or civic engagement and how Eliot re-created Gaskell’s novel to better represent her own political beliefs.

The chapter then turns to George Eliot’s Romola, another novel about social upheaval but one instead focused on religious rebellion. The novel’s Epilogue, however, reimagines domestic/social arrangements and places its titular protagonist in the safety of a home populated by three women and two children. This Epilogue interrogates the violence of traditional, heterosexual family structures and imagines new modes of kinship. The utopian impulse of this new arrangement answers Judith Butler’s question “Is kinship always already heterosexual?” and Butler’s chapter named with that very question will be introduced to more clearly understand the utopian impulse of queer kinship structures. Through close readings of Gaskell and Eliot’s novels with the assistance of criticism and the theory of Levitas, Bammer, and Butler, Chapter I expands the applicability of feminist utopianism as a reading framework to include women’s novels not traditionally considered utopian. In the process of turning to utopianism to think through the connection between women’s rights and worker’s rights, Gaskell and Eliot potentially created moments of alterity.
In Chapter II, this dissertation moves from Victorian England to the early twentieth-century United States. Entitled “Traveling through the Roots and Routes of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Utopian Trilogy,” Chapter II reads Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s three Herland novels through the lens of Susan Stanford Friedman’s *Mappings* (1998). Like Bammer, Sargisson, and Butler, Friedman makes explicit the connection between feminism and utopianism. Repeatedly describing it as “utopic,” Friedman develops “locational feminism” as a theory concerned “with the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming” (63). Friedman’s locational feminism looks at the relationship between mimesis and alterity within these spaces of being and becoming, while also using the homonym roots/routes to explore issues of travel, home, and identity. Women’s utopian literature requires a theory of travel like Friedman’s “locational feminism” in order to discuss how that genre works with borders, travel, sameness, difference, and the development of new identities and nations.

Using Friedman’s “locational feminism” as its primary lens, Chapter II explores issues of mimesis and alterity in the rootedness/routedness of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s utopian trilogy. Comprising *Moving the Mountain* (1911), *Herland* (1915), and *With Her in Ourland* (1916), Gilman’s utopian trilogy deploys numerous modes of travel to take characters into, through, and away from utopian lands and visions. In reading *Moving the Mountain*, this chapter will discuss how the production of utopia derives from and relates to the destabilization of home and identity amidst a Transatlantic voyage. During a steamer ride from Europe to the United States, John Robertson, the novel’s protagonist, learns from his sister Nellie about the changes undergone by the United States in his thirty-years absence. By staging John’s introduction to the new utopian United States during his Transatlantic voyage, *Moving the Mountain* centralizes the importance of travel, borders, and identity for its utopian world-building. Issues of immigration and travel, at
work in the novel’s introductory chapters, will also be contrasted with the novel’s final chapter, in which John travels by train to the old family farm, seeking out the non-utopian networks of relation in Antebellum United States.

Next, this chapter moves to *Herland*, the most famous of Gilman’s three utopian novels, and focuses primarily on the relationship between the character Terry’s bi-plane (particularly its ability to bring the men into Herland and then subsequently out of Herland) and Terry’s rape of the novel’s minor heroine Alima. This reading will show the complicated connection between roots and routes for women in women-occupied versus men-occupied spaces and how that connection can and often does result in violence against women. Finally, this chapter will track the global trip taken by Van, the US protagonist from *Herland*, and Ellador, the Herlander who marries Van in *Herland*. To take this trip, Van and Ellador travel by plane, train, ship, and car, and their travels offer to Van and Ellador a global perspective on sexism and misogyny. Van and Ellador’s globetrotting produces a vast matrix of mimesis and alterity that, while inflected by a Western vantage point, attempts to reconcile sameness and difference between women on a global scale.

While Chapter II considers issues of alterity and difference from a more materialist perspective, Chapter III emphasizes the psychical, fantastical, and immateriality of alterity to continue theorizing a feminist utopianism that accommodates the co-constitutiveness of the categories of gender, sexuality, race, and nationality. Entitled “Loss, Race, and the Melancholy of Utopia,” Chapter III focalizes “the psyche” in order to think through the frequent appearance of melancholy in women’s utopian novels and the relationship between melancholy and utopia as two interrelated modes of responding to an impoverished present. Doing so involves crafting a complex matrix of texts written by British and American women, by black and white women, by
women as early as 1836 and as late as 1916, and by women writing about male and female protagonists. Chapter III uses as its theoretical lens Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic definition of melancholy as well as modern theories of racial melancholy and gender melancholy, taking up Anne Anlin Cheng’s claim that “we do not yet know what it means for politics to accommodate the concept of identity based on constitutive loss” (25). Women’s utopian literature, particularly in its melancholic moments, explores in various ways how loss – racial, cultural, gendered, and sexual – informs and shapes utopian modes of critique and imagination. If Chapter II tended towards a focus on the material realities of utopian subjects, then this chapter introduces the importance of how the immaterial (the psyche, the fantastical) bears on and influences the material. In short, this chapter returns utopia to the realm of fantasy to better understand the psychology of loss facing utopian protagonists in novels by Mary Griffith, Mary E. Bradley Lane, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, Pauline E. Hopkins, and Lillian Jones Horace.

This chapter begins with a consideration of how melancholy is borne out of-- while simultaneously emplaced inside-- the confines of utopia. This first section, “Melancholy in Utopia,” puts into conversation the various forms of melancholy experienced by protagonists in Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*, Lane’s *Mizora*, and Corbett’s *New Amazonia* as a byproduct of utopian travel. In this section, I use theories of racial melancholy from David Eng (2010) and Anne Anlin Cheng (2000) to theorize how and why utopic travelers experience melancholy as a response to travel, displacement (or detemporalization), and/or racial othering. In the second section of this chapter, “Melancholy and Utopia,” I build on these readings by attending to melancholy as experienced in Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* and Horace’s *Five Generations Hence*. This section supplements my reading of Cheng’s *Melancholy of Race* with Jermaine Singleton’s recent *Cultural Melancholy* (2015) to explore more profoundly the
connections between race, melancholy, and utopia in these novels. Finally, this chapter concludes with a short coda, “Melancholy as Utopia as Queer,” to think through queerness’ relationship to melancholy and utopia in *Five Generations Hence* and Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain*. By bringing together issues of travel, race, queerness, and utopia under the banner or through the connecting thread of utopia, this chapter seeks to continue to expand the emotional depth and modern resonances of utopian novels that are frequently overlooked or misread.

Chapter IV expands on considerations of queerness in Chapters I and III. Titled “Feminist Utopianism and the Disruption of the Gender Binary in *Man’s Rights* and *Gloriana*,” this final chapter examines two novels that challenge the gender binary, find heterosexuality in disarray, and then endeavor to reconstitute it as the only natural sexuality. Both Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights* (1870) and Lady Florence Dixie’s *Gloriana* (1890) call into question the “natural” coherence of gender identities such as “man” and “woman” but retreat from the emergent queerness produced by their critiques. These texts, however, are not ultimately conservative; rather, each text’s emergent, contested queerness reveals the discursive constitutiveness of both gender and sexuality. In their critiques of gender norms, *Man’s Rights* and *Gloriana* stage both the performativity of gender and the discursive constitutiveness of sexuality. Serving as this chapter’s theoretical lenses, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1978) provide language for understanding how women’s utopian literature simultaneously resists and participates in the production of legible categories of identity. Importantly, it is queerness - particularly queer desire – that repeatedly confounds this production. In Chapters I and III, queerness operated on the edges of the feminist critiques offered by women’s utopian literature. In this chapter, queerness becomes the modus operandi,
an ever-shifting organizing principle for understanding the discursive operations of gender and sexuality in the nineteenth century.

Chapter IV begins with a discussion of Cridge’s *Man’s Rights*, a short collection of interlocking utopian dreams that satirizes and parodies nineteenth-century gender roles through a complete gender role reversal and inversion. Using Butler’s theory of performativity, Cridge’s satire will be read as a trenchant critique of the heteronormative gender binary. The second half of the chapter will focus on *Gloriana*, Dixie’s utopian novel of women’s political revolution in Victorian England. Staging quite literally a Foucauldian medico-juridical legislation of sex, sexuality, and gender, *Gloriana* will be read alongside Foucault’s discussion of the confession act. Finally, Chapter IV concludes with a discussion of how androgyny can be used to conceptualize *Gloriana*’s feminist utopian politics. Androgyny, as a historically grounded yet endlessly shifting concept, offers a key to the novel’s queerness.

Taken together, these four chapters aim to rehabilitate a genre of women’s writing that continues to be read only peripherally. While many of these texts have ideological and political limitations, they nevertheless offer a way to understand how categories of identity such as gender, sexuality, race, and nationality operated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Reinvesting in the complexity of texts often considered outdated, this project re-opens late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century women’s utopian fiction as textual sites of political engagement, adaptation, and influence. It works towards developing an expansive and flexible feminist utopianism that potentially provides a more fruitful, impactful, and incisive response to the current political moment. Though sometimes regressive, they are often still radically forward-thinking. In this way, these texts continue to provide images of possible futures that modern readers ought to consider when imagining their own feminist utopias.
1 UTOPIANISM IN ELIZABETH GASKELL AND GEORGE ELIOT

In *Utopia as Method* (2013), Ruth Levitas writes, “The core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing” (xi). By defining utopia in terms of desire for being otherwise, Levitas treats utopia analytically and not descriptively (xii). Utopianism, then, can be understood as a method for exploring traces of utopianism in novels previously not considered utopian. This chapter thus reads Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855), George Eliot’s *Felix Holt: The Radical* (1866), and Eliot’s *Romola* (1863) as three examples of Victorian novels that engage with utopianism without constructing full utopias. In *North and South* and *Felix Holt*, Gaskell and Eliot intertwine their utopian desires for class equity with an expansion of women’s roles in the public sphere. Gaskell and Eliot thus centralize women’s rights in their desires for socio-economic change. In so doing, Gaskell and Eliot both make an argument for the intrinsic connection between feminism and utopianism. Eliot queers this connection in *Romola*, challenging both patriarchal gender roles and heteronormative filial structures. In moving from a consideration of feminist utopianism to a consideration of queer feminist utopianism, Chapter I foregrounds this dissertation’s argument that women’s utopian literature creates and sustains moments of alterity in previously unexplored ways.

In *Partial Visions* (1991), Angelika Bammer also highlights the importance of desire for thinking about utopianism while exploring the relationship between feminism and utopianism. Bammer initially presents feminism and utopianism as “two ways of seeing the world and responding to the need for change” but immediately begins to intertwine the two methods of critique and action. Bammer asserts her belief “in the importance of utopian thinking for a progressive politics” and argues “that the utopian is… very much alive in people’s longing for a
more just and human world, their belief that such a change is possible, and their willingness to act on the basis of that belief” (2, 3). Rather than a distinct mode of critique and response, feminism as an expression of both a particular “longing for a more just and human world” and a particular set of actions and beliefs contains utopianism within it. Of course, Bammer does not mean that utopianism is always feminist, but rather that feminism must recognize its utopian qualities and characteristics to more fully understand itself as an imaginative and actionable politics. Or, as Sarah Webster Goodwin claims, “because any definition of feminism must include an impulse to improve the human community, feminism seems to have at least an inherent utopian inclination” (“Knowing Better” 1).

Bammer’s yoking of feminism and utopianism resembles Gaskell’s and Eliot’s representation of utopianism as indelibly tied to the women at the center of their social romances. In *North and South* and *Felix Holt: The Radical*, two novels that centralize women’s roles in social unrest in rural English towns, Gaskell and Eliot link the word “utopia” to their protagonists Margaret Hale and Esther Lyon. Gaskell and Eliot contextualize the links between their respective protagonists and “utopia” within conversations about class equity, and, by affixing “utopia” to Margaret and Esther, Gaskell and Eliot connect women’s rights, worker’s rights, and Victorian ideas about utopianism. Though Eliot does not use the word “utopia” in *Romola*, the utopian qualities of the novel’s Epilogue affirm this utopian connection. Together, these three novels represent the attempts of two of the most revered Victorian novelists to think through utopia as connected to women’s identity and prescribed gender roles, women’s legal and political issues, and issues of class inequity. In this chapter, *North and South* and *Felix Holt* will be read as two social(ist) romances whose protagonists embody the utopian precepts of the

---

9 No scholarship exists that reads together *North and South* and *Felix Holt: The Radical*, though Ruth Bernard Yeazell (1985) and Laura Struve (2002) trace the relationship between *Felix Holt* and Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*. 
novels. Margaret Hale and Esther Lyon are the *persona e utopia* of their respective novels, the figuration of how Gaskell and Eliot imagine utopian change. As well, *Romola*’s Epilogue will be read as a Butlerian queer kinship structure. As discussed in Judith Butler’s “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” (2004), such structures are “variations on kinship that depart from normative, dyadic heterosexually based family forms secured through the marriage vow” (104). The non-normative family structure presented by the *Romola*’s Epilogue departs from normative, dyadic heterosexuality and provides a glimpse at non-normative utopian arrangement for Romola and her new family. In these multiple ways, Gaskell and Eliot both use utopianism to express feminist desires for alternative ways of being.

### 1.1 North, South, and Utopia

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *North and South* follows the Hale family’s relocation from the southern town of Helstone, a town Margaret Hate describes as a “village in a poem,” to Milton, a northern manufacturing town in Darkshire (13, 36). Mr. Hale’s dissent from the Church of England precipitates this move, as the sweet and pious Mr. Hale no longer agrees with the clerical charges of the Church and plans to serve as a private tutor in Milton (32, 36). Though initially planning to set out for Milton by himself, Mr. Hale consents to bring Margaret and Mrs. Hale, as well as their caretaker Dixon, to Milton, a decision ultimately fatal for the ailing Mrs. Hale. The air of Milton, choked by the fumes of cotton milling, contrasts with the clean, free air of Helstone. Not only does the deleterious air kill Mrs. Hale, it signals the polluted class relationships of a manufacturing town in which business owners, represented by John Thornton, work inhumanely to profit off the working classes, as represented by Nicholas Higgins and his family. Margaret finds herself at the center of such inhumane labor practices, as well as labor
strikes and class turmoil, entwining herself in the lives of the wealthy Thornton family and the miserable Higgins family.

Gaskell establishes Margaret as a figure of a potential feminist utopianism in *North and South*. As the *persona utopia*, Margaret moves through *North and South* as the hopeful arbiter of renegotiated Masters-Men dynamics and the embodiment of a feminist refusal to intellectual, moral, and physical submission. She possesses, as the marker of both workers’ and women’s rights, the unique ability to conflate the two threads of Victorian social unrest into one potentially powerful agent of social rearrangement and change. Margaret emerges as a utopian potentiality, offering in her education, social works, and financial power an alternative form of womanhood in the nineteenth century. As the *persona utopia*, Margaret functions as the figure with which Gaskell expresses utopian desires in *North and South*.

Margaret also functions as the conduit through which Gaskell explores the lives and desires of both the upper and working classes in the novel. Margaret repeatedly visits the Higgins family in their hovel on Frances Street, becoming friends with the ill Bessy and embodying Nicholas’ hope for peaceful class resolution. Margaret tends to the Higgins family and, after Mr. Boucher, Higgins’ long-time neighbor and fellow worker at the cotton mill, commits suicide due to plummeting wages and disappearing work opportunities, also helps take care of Mrs. Boucher and the Boucher children. At the same time, John Thornton, operator of the town’s mill, begins taking lessons in the Classics from Mr. Hale and falls in love with Margaret much against his mother’s and his own wishes. Thornton and Margaret’s courtship, beset by their conflicting politics, the mystery surrounding Margaret’s brother Frederick, and their divergent class statuses, ebbs and flows violently throughout the novel while ultimately ending in marriage. Margaret, though she marries Mr. Thornton, transgresses class boundaries in *North and South*, spending
time helping the Higgins family and learning to understand the plight of Victorian mill workers while also falling in love with Mr. Thornton and learning the suffocating sociability of the upper classes.

Gaskell morally charges Margaret’s class transgression in two important ways. Mr. Bell, Mr. Hale’s Oxfordian friend and Margaret’s godfather, bequeaths his assets to Margaret upon his death, assets including Thornton Manor and the adjoining Marlborough Mill. This bequeathal disrupts normative patrilineal inheritance structures and influences the union between Margaret and Mr. Thornton. Margaret accepts Mr. Bell’s gift, but she returns to Thornton the power over both Thornton Manor and Marlborough Mill. In uniting Margaret and Thornton through Margaret’s inheritance, Gaskell attempts to compromise Margaret’s disruption of patrilineal inheritance and to unite owner and worker through her guiding moralism. Along with Margaret’s guiding moralism, Gaskell aligns the concept of ‘utopia’ with Margaret through Mr. Thornton’s invectives. In two different conversations involving Mr. Thornton and Mr. Hale, and at least peripherally Margaret, Thornton weaponizes the term ‘utopia,’ aiming it squarely at notions of class equity and Margaret’s politics. These two scenes function as critical moments in North and South in which Gaskell connects Margaret to gender inequity, class inequity, and

\[ \text{10 Margaret’s transgressive behavior has been discussed by scholars in multiple engaging ways. For Kanwit (2009), Longmuir (2007), and Reeds (2014), Margaret’s role as an ethical economic agent upsets the rigid dichotomy of public and private sphere and provides a new capitalist methodology. Margaret, through her inheritance of and then investment in Thornton’s Marlborough Mill, takes on economic risk in such a way that, as Reeds explains, disrupts Victorian-era ideas about economic agents and their willingness to incur risk. That Margaret willingly gives her money to Thornton as a gesture of love – a gesture that presumably saves the mill and its workers from impoverishment – necessitates a reconfiguration of capitalist models of exchange in an attempt to qualify decisions made for reasons aside from financial profit. Harman (1988), Parkins (2004), and Alexander (2015) trace the impact of Margaret’s various public appearances. From her intervention at the Marlborough Mill strike to being spotted by a shopkeeper the night she attempts to smuggle her brother onto a train to London, these scholars discuss how the mere public appearance of women in the Victorian era caused moral panic over the ‘inevitable’ sexualization of the woman in public.} \]

\[ \text{11 Though Mr. Bell owns the deed to Thornton Manor, the family – particularly Mrs. Thornton – treats the property as legally their own.} \]
utopia. Thornton’s contempt for the idea of utopia and Margaret’s sympathies with working class Miltoners can be read as examples of utopia’s inherent relationship to women and women’s rights in the novel.

The chapter “Masters and Men” begins with a conversation between Margaret, her father, and Mrs. Thornton about Mr. Hale tutoring Mr. Thornton. While Mrs. Thornton admits that her son enjoys his time spent with Mr. Hale, she dismisses unequivocally their reading list: “Classics may do very well for men who loiter away their lives in the country or in colleges; but Milton men ought to have their thoughts and powers absorbed in the work of to-day” (104). Mrs. Thornton’s sentiment strictly contrasts Milton against both the Hale’s southern roots and their connection to the Oxfordian Mr. Bell. For Mrs. Thornton, reading, learning, and thinking lead to idleness and corrupt working men’s duties to her mills. Mrs. Thornton is protecting her own vested interest in the current class dynamic, one predicated on class inequity. Margaret responds to Mrs. Thornton that the uneducated mind becomes “stiff and rigid and unable to take in many interests,” a claim Mrs. Thornton summarily rejects (104). For Mrs. Thornton, fluidity and openness, as opposed to stiffness and rigidity, pose an immediate threat to both worker and owner. If reading and education influence workers to think outside their limited roles as cotton

12 In The Principle of Hope, Ernst Bloch claims that “the education of desire,” the “proper and new-found space” of utopia, “is not the same as a ‘moral education’ towards a given end: it is, rather, to open a way of aspiration” (790-791). Levitas reads this claim as “the key function of utopia”: “The education of desire is part of the process of allowing the abstract elements of utopia to be gradually replaced by the concrete, allowing anticipation to dominate compensation” (Concept of Utopia 141). Though one might claim that the Classics discussed in this section of North and South would constitute a “moral education towards a given end,” the ability of fiction (and art) to increase imaginative, intellectual, and emotional capacity functions as the educative steps requisite to transition from compensation to anticipation. For Mrs. Thornton, the dangers of hers on reading the Classics is not only a limited ‘moral education’ for their workers; rather, the Classics – particularly Plato’s Republic – would offer to the millworkers a framework for creating their own utopia and developing the intellectual and moral capacity to do the imaginative and proactive work to move from the abstract to the concrete.
milliners, reading and education, too, potentially lead mill owners, such as Mrs. Thornton’s son, to consider the lives of his workers in larger, more sympathetic contexts.

Later in the chapter, Mr. Thornton comes to visit Margaret and her father in their home. The three begin discussing a potential milliner’s strike, and Mr. Thornton echoes his mother’s sentiments concerning class divisions and worker’s rights. Like his mother, Thornton works to maintain the strictures of the relationship between the title’s chapter: “Masters and Men.” This binary exists through a perpetual subjugation of “men” as labor commodity and the reinforcement of “masters” as owners of that commodity. For Margaret, this relationship makes little sense: “I see two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own” (109). Without naming it outright, Margaret recognizes an asymmetry of desire and power in the Masters and Men binary and addresses its unwieldiness. Thornton rebukes Margaret’s claim and stresses that both poles in this binary want the same thing. Thornton claims, “My theory is, that my interests are identical with those of my workpeople” (110). Thornton’s theory hinges on the precept that both he and his workpeople desire to make money, but Thornton refuses to acknowledge that his desires necessarily sublimate his workers’ desires. Thornton continues, obviously pricked by Margaret’s nascent ideas about class equity, and banishes the very idea of equity to an impossible future. Thornton declares, “On some future day – in some millennium – in Utopia, this unity may be brought into practice – just as I can fancy a republic the most perfect form of government” (110).

13 Thornton, as he immediately notes in the next paragraph, does not fancy such a

---

13 Mr. Hale responds that they will read Plato’s Republic after finishing Homer, a cheeky rebuff of Thornton’s insistence on what he calls “a wise despotism” (110). Unfortunately, Gaskell’s letters offer no indication she read other utopian texts, but Thomas More’s Utopia (1516), Tommaso Campanella’s The City of the Sun (1602), and Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis (1623) were utopian novels well-known to Victorians that potentially account for Thornton’s use of the word. Bacon’s New Atlantis, in particular, involves a future-oriented vision of an ideal society, while the word “Utopia” itself was coined by
government but rather dismisses the merits of republicanism as the stuff of fancy. By dismissing a republic as fanciful, Thornton also dismisses Utopia on similar grounds. “This unity,” for Thornton, means Margaret’s ideas about shared interests between classes in Milton, and he locates such a unity in a future Utopia.

Thornton banishes the utopian unity of class equity into an unforeseeable future, and with it he also banishes Margaret’s belief in that unity. Further complicating matters, it is Margaret’s brief absence from the table that gives Thornton the space to respond to her desires for class equity. Margaret’s absence and subsequent return to her needlework reminds readers of the gender dynamics at work within this scene. Though Margaret participates in the conversation and garners more attention from Thornton than does Mr. Hale, her physical relationship to the space and place of the conversation encodes the scene with an asymmetry of gender roles that imparts specific meanings on Margaret’s and Thornton’s claims. Sitting slightly away from the table and tending to her needlework, Margaret both enters into the conversation and remains removed from it. Her displacement from the table signals her status in relation to both her father and Mr. Thornton, but her participation demonstrates her ability to transgress the physical boundaries of the room as well as the political boundaries of the conversation. Margaret’s needlework keeps intact her role as homemaker but her insistence on her own conceptions of Milton’s labor problems intrudes on Thornton’s authority.

While Thornton allows and clearly desires Margaret’s participation, his bristling at her ideas about class equity and his dismissal of her ideas as the stuff of Utopia and fancy are infused with sexism. The political distance between “some future day” of class equity and the current

Thomas More, so it is possible that Thornton’s understanding of Utopia stems from those two works. The nineteenth century, too, saw the proliferation of utopian socialism as designed by Robert Owen, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier. Again, while Gaskell never explicitly references these socialists, their work would have been well-known to English readers such as herself and her character John Thornton.
day of class inequity is the physical distance between Margaret and Mr. Thornton during this conversation. This scene, then, synthesizes class inequity and gender inequity in the dismissal of Margaret’s ideas as utopian. This synthesis indicates the relationship between Utopia and Margaret, a connection that draws Gaskell’s class and gender sympathies into a knot of critique and imagination. More than just representing class issues, Utopia functions, for Gaskell, as integral to interrogating gender roles and sexism.

In the middle of Volume II, the chapter “Out of Tune” does not stage a conversation between the asymmetrically related Masters and Men; rather, it features an ideological struggle between two Master classes. In this struggle, a conversation between the Oxfordian Mr. Bell and the Miltonian Mr. Thornton, the same material of class inequity and labor unrest that figured so prominently in Thornton’s conversation with Mr. Hale and Margaret in “Masters & Men” continues to function as the space for Gaskell to work through her relationship to utopianism. Using this conversation as an opportunity again to launch an invective against Utopia, the increasingly irate Thornton criticizes utopianism as impossibly suited for the needs of Milton and, in doing so, further divides himself from the “socialist” Margaret.¹⁴

The conversation between Thornton and Bell starts with Margaret’s belief that “it would do both [Milton manufacturers and Oxford men] good to see a little more of the other” (303). Mr. Bell takes up this opportunity to poke fun at his tenant Mr. Thornton for “gathering up the materials for life” instead of living life (303). The conversation, intended to be jovial and light-hearted by Mr. Bell, quickly devolves into Mr. Thornton’s anti-utopian diatribe. Thornton rants, If we do not reverence the past as you do in Oxford, it is because we want something which can apply to the present more directly. It is fine when the study

¹⁴ The chapter begins with Mr. Bell calling Margaret, “a democrat, a red republican, a member of the Peace Society, a socialist” (300).
of the past leads to a prophecy of the future. But to men groping in new circumstances, it would be finer if the words of experience could direct us how to act in what concerns us most intimately and immediately; which is full of difficulties that must be encountered; and upon the mode in which they are met and conquered – not merely pushed aside for the time – depends our future. Out of the wisdom of the past, help us over the present. But no! People can speak of Utopia much more easily than of the next day’s duty; and yet when that duty is all done by others, who so ready to cry, ‘Fie, for shame!’ (304)

As in the earlier conversation, Mr. Thornton contrasts utopia with the present day, defining Utopia as a “prophecy of the future” derived from “the study of the past.” Thornton’s configuration of utopia renders it meaningless for the present, ignoring that utopianism requires a critique of a subject’s current conditions and necessitates alternative methods of succeeding in relation to the ways in which that subject cannot succeed in their present day. Thus, Thornton misreads a critical aspect of utopianism, failing to understand how utopianism addresses, in its orientation towards the subject’s current social and political conditions, the concerns “most intimately and immediately” relevant to the inhabitants of Milton.

To Thornton’s diatribe, Bell responds, “‘And all this time I don’t see what you are talking about’” (304). Bell’s consternation emphasizes the peculiarity of Thornton’s (second) reference to Utopia. Gaskell bookends this conversation between Bell and Thornton with Thornton’s overwhelming and violent passion for Margaret. This framing draws into relationship Thornton’s opposition to utopianism and his fierce love of Margaret. Thornton dreams of Margaret embracing him, making “him loathe her, even while [the dream] allured him”; he “bitterly” calls into question her honor and respectability; and even thinks to himself that “he could have struck
her before he left, in order that by some strange overt act of rudeness, he might earn the privilege of telling her the remorse that gnawed at his heart” (302, 305, 306). Though Thornton aims his anti-utopian outburst at Bell, its fervor gathers strength from his roiling emotions for Margaret, returning readers to the scene in “Masters & Men.”

Thus, the unconquerable millworkers and Thornton’s unconquerable feelings for Margaret knot together, again, Margaret’s politics and the utopianism Thornton rejects. Though Margaret does not participate verbally in the conversation between Bell and Thornton, she figures centrally as Thornton’s ontological (and affective) crisis. Figuring as this crisis, Margaret becomes, for Gaskell, the figure of utopian socialism and the disruption of the Master/Men dialectic so necessary to alternative modes of class and gender equity. Thornton’s position, situated precariously on the verge of violence against the woman he loves, echoes the violence, at least dialogically, with which Thornton responds to issues of class and gender equity. From this position of precarious violence, Thornton’s mastery begins to slip, causing an ontological crisis over the Master/Men dialectic so integral to his worldview. What rings so out of tune for Thornton, then, is a potential future – the time and place of Utopia – when Thornton cannot conquer Margaret and her ideas.

Margaret embodies the seductive qualities of class and gender equity in *North and South*, and figures the unification of critiques of asymmetrical power relations along both class and gender lines. Margaret also figures the novel’s disruption of patrilineal inheritance structures. At his death, Mr. Bell, a life-long bachelor, leaves a propitious sum of money and deeds to

---

15 Sedgwick, on bachelors in Victorian novels: “a preference of atomized male individualism to the nuclear family…; a garrulous and visible refusal of anything that could be interpreted as genital sexuality, toward objects male or female; a corresponding emphasis on the pleasures of the other senses; and a well-defended social facility that freights with a good deal of magnetism in its proneness to parody and to unpredictable sadism” (192). The Oxfordian Bell remains single throughout his life, rejecting the working-class aesthetic of Darkshire for the aesthetically and intellectually pleasing (and stimulating)
Margaret. Without a son upon whom to endow his savings and his properties, Mr. Bell leaves both to Margaret. This turn in financial fortune for Margaret affects immediately the livelihood of Mr. Thornton and his family: Margaret becomes Thornton’s landlord. By this time in the text, Thornton and Margaret have become estranged from one another over complications concerning the identity of her brother Frederick, but her inheritance offers to them, and the novel, a tidy excuse for reunion. In the novel’s final chapter, titled “Pack Clouds Away,” Margaret returns to Milton, pledges nearly twenty thousand pounds to save Thornton’s mill and agrees to marry him. Margaret’s pledge, both financially and romantically, hinges on Thornton’s operating his mill in more humane and economically just modes, but the brevity of the concluding chapter leaves little room for such considerations. Ultimately, Gaskell shies away from completely upending socio-political and socio-economic relations of control and production.

Though Gaskell does not present a fully formed utopia, the conditions of Margaret’s pledge and her role as \textit{persona utopia} can be understand as \textit{North and South}’s utopian drive. In the introduction to \textit{Feminism, Utopia, and Narrative} (1990), Sarah Webster Goodwin writes that, in some feminist utopian literature, “the utopian may be present as a metonymic drive through narrative toward something better than what the text sets up as reality in the present” (5). As the arbiter of a better future for Milton, Margaret figures the novel’s metonymic desire for utopian progress. For Angelika Bammer, the stakes of feminist utopian literature are higher: “for a text to be considered utopian it would have to imagine a world in which the state of oppression had

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{16} A reference to “Pack, Clouds, Away,” a poem written by seventeenth-century British poet Thomas Heywood. The poem celebrates the dawning of a new day and the banishment of sorrow (line 2). The poem’s speaker repeatedly asks various birds to wish his love “goodmorrow,” a poetic depiction of Margaret’s decision to save Thornton’s business and to marry him.
been as dramatically reduced as the consciousness of oppression had been heightened” (29). In *North and South*, Margaret attempts to heighten the consciousness of both worker and owner, and she appears to be on the precipice of fundamentally altering worker’s conditions in Milton. As well, Margaret’s inheritance, education, and independence can be read as Gaskell’s implicit recognition of the interconnection between improving women’s conditions and worker’s conditions. While it is true that Milton never reaches utopia, Margaret, as the *persona utopia*, embodies the entangling of class and gender equity that becomes a hallmark for women’s utopian literature later in the Victorian era.

### 1.2 Daydreams, Inheritance, and the Working Class

Twelve years after Gaskell’s *North and South*, George Eliot examines the relationship between utopia and social change in her own social(ist) romance *Felix Holt: The Radical*. Despite Eliot’s critiques of certain forms of utopian daydreaming, *Felix Holt* can be read as an early example of Victorian feminist utopian literature. As Nan Bowman Albinski (1988) argues, many British Victorian women utopian writers focused on women’s “inclusion in the public domain of ‘culture’” and “on their right to enter political institutions” (4). “Late-Victorian women,” Albinski continues, “were far more interested in asserting their right to be co-inheritors of the power structures of current male-dominated culture than in claiming versions of a domestic-based, devalued, restrictive moral guardianship as their own visionary ideal” (16).

Through her inheritance and intention to improve worker’s conditions, Margaret Hale represents in *North and South* an early version of the late-Victorian utopian woman. In *Felix Holt*, Esther Lyon also interrupts patrilineal inheritance structures and seeks to improve working class conditions. Similarly to Margaret, Esther represents an early version of feminist utopianism.
Felix Holt novel follows a turbulent local election in the wake of the Reform Bill in the provincial town of Treby Magna in 1832, culminating with Felix Holt’s acquittal for the murder of a police officer during a riot. Harold Transome and his lawyers free Felix from his charges, but it is Esther Lyon’s bold testimony that changes Harold’s mind and leads to Felix’s freedom. Though Eliot rendered Felix’s trial so precisely that Frederick Harrison, the barrister with whom Eliot consulted during the writing of the novel, proclaimed, “How did you get the trial scene so accurate? It is a perfect labyrinth to find out the course of criminal procedure 34 years ago,” much of the novel’s politics unfolds in the love triangle between Esther Lyon, Felix Holt, and Harold Transome. Like Higgins and Thornton in North and South, Felix and Transome represent two opposed political consciences, while Esther, like Margaret, transgresses class boundaries in her connection to both characters.

Though both Transome and Felix represent the Radical party, Transome does so opportunistically. While trading in Asia, Transome recognizes the political gridlock between

---

17 The First Reform Bill, or the Reform Act of 1832, extended the franchise to a significantly larger swath of land-holding men throughout England and introduced a voter registration system. Eliot wrote Felix Holt during the legislation of the Second Reform Bill, an Act that, in 1867, doubled the number of enfranchised men in England. Horowitz (2006) and Kucich (2017) discuss in detail the effect of the Second Reform Bill on the politics of Felix Holt.

18 Even so, a significant portion of Felix Holt scholarship ignores Esther Lyon. Horowitz (1975), Bamber (1975), Lesjak (1996), and Hobson (1998), perhaps in an attempt to recentralize Felix Holt as the novel’s true protagonist, explore Eliot’s ethical and political machinations entirely through Felix without a consideration of Esther’s role in the novel. Other examples of contemporary scholarship, such as Rodney Stenning Edgecombe’s “Felix Holt: The Radical and the Gussett of Cryptic Futurity” (2011), minimize Esther’s role in their interpretations of the novel. Fortunately, scholars such as Starr (2001) and Struve (2002) centralize Esther as the novel’s ethical and political agent. Similar to Anne Longmuir tracking Margaret’s role as “middle-class woman shopper” who makes “manifest the tension between an ideology that advocated the separation of public and private spheres and an economy that was sustained, in part at least, by female consumption” (238), Starr argues that Esther “embodies the complex interplay of artistry, gender roles, and commerce that shaped George Eliot’s career” (55). Though Margaret only publicly buys food and other household goods and not, like Esther, aesthetically pleasing garb, both characters, in shopping publicly, create problems for a Victorian marketplace that demanded women shoppers but wanted to conceal them from publicity. As noted in an earlier footnote, Barbara Harman traced the transgressive impact of Margaret Hale’s intervention in the Milton riots. Struve, in reading the transgressive qualities of Esther Lyon’s testimony during Felix Holt’s trial, makes a similar argument regarding women’s emergent entrances into the Victorian public sphere.
Tories and Whigs in provincial England and decides to run for office as a Radical. Though this decision scandalizes his Tory family, he hopes to take advantage of recently enfranchised voters to rise to power. At the same time Transome returns from Asia, Felix returns from a medical internship in Glasgow, opting to make what money he can as a watchmaker to support his family. Transome’s insincerity and opportunism contrast quite explicitly with Felix’s honorable decision to live a working-class life to better help those in need, and it is Esther’s role to embody the novel’s moral thrust. The classed triangulation of desire in Felix Holt is not the only similarity with Gaskell’s North and South. Margaret’s father Mr. Hale dissented from the Church of England in North and South, while Rufus Lyon, Esther’s father figure in Felix Holt, oversees a Dissenting parish in Treby Magna. While readers learn in the novel’s early stages that Rufus is not Esther’s biological father, the revelation comes to Esther towards the novel’s conclusion, and with this revelation comes an inheritance analogous to Margaret’s in North and South. Maurice Christian, Esther’s biological father, informs both Esther and Harold Transome that Esther rightfully owns Transome Estate. As in North and South, a suitor’s property belongs to the woman he wishes to marry.20

Differently than Margaret in North and South, however, Esther rejects her wealthy suitor’s hand and decides to marry Felix and live a working-class life. Esther returns Transome Estate to the Transome family and keeps just enough of her inheritance to support the Holt

19 “‘Why should I want to get into the middle class because I have some learning? The most of the middle class are as ignorant as the working people about everything that doesn’t belong to their own Brummagem life,’” avows Felix during an initial meeting with Reverend Rufus Lyon, Esther’s father (64).
20 Eliot’s letters offer no indication that she read North and South, though Eliot does mention Mary Barton, Ruth, Cranford, and Sylvia’s Lovers, establishing a clear familiarity with Gaskell’s work. Too, the authors began acquaintance when Elizabeth Gaskell was incorrectly identified as the author behind Eliot’s first book Adam Bede. The trial scene in Felix Holt almost certainly comes from Gaskell’s Mary Barton, as noted by Rosemarie Bodenheimer and others, but no scholarship exists examining the similarities between North and South and Felix Holt. Though no textual evidence proves Eliot read North and South, the aesthetic and narrative similarities between the novels demand critical attention.
family and her neighbors. Esther’s decision to renounce wealth and to join Felix in the working class contrasts with Margaret’s decision to marry Thornton and subsidize his cotton mill. Margaret’s decision smooths over the rough edges of socialism in *North and South*, but Esther’s decision courts that very roughness. Importantly, another difference between *North and South* and *Felix Holt* is Eliot’s manner of affixing the word “utopia” to her protagonist. In *North and South*, Thornton deploys utopia as an invective against Margaret, a rhetorical move meant to gain readers’ sympathies with Margaret’s politics. In *Felix Holt*, Eliot uses the term utopia to criticize Esther’s fanciful daydreams. An analysis of Esther’s utopian daydreaming within the context of her choice to ultimately reject such idle fancy demonstrates Eliot’s attempts to respond to and correct *North and South*’s social and political shortcomings.

Long before the revelation of her future prospects, Esther spends time daydreaming of “a sudden elevation in rank and fortune” (360). “In her daydreams,” the narrator remarks, “she had not traced out the means by which such a change could be brought about; in fact, the change had seemed impossible to her, except in her little private Utopia, which, like other Utopias, was filled with delightful results, independent of processes” (360). Eliot’s first mention of utopia comes with a stinging disapprobation not dissimilar from Thornton’s sentiments in *North and South*. Eliot presents utopia as a goal and not a method, a delimited imaginative event without precipitation. For Esther, the “delightful results” of her “private Utopia” are “the signs and luxuries of ladyhood.” Thus, Eliot critiques utopia as middle-class sentimentality, marking it as idle and bourgeois.

Eliot’s critique of utopia in this passage from *Felix Holt* does not reflect any philosophical animosity Eliot held towards utopianism as evidenced by her letters, though one letter references multiple utopian works to describe a beautiful scene. In a letter to Charles Bray
in 1852, she references Utopia and Icaria, Thomas More and Etienne Cabet’s utopias respectively, and Robert Owen’s utopian design of parallelogram communities to describe her lodging in Edinburgh. She writes, “I have a beautiful view from my room window – masses of wood, distant hills, the Firth, and four splendid buildings dotted far apart – not an ugly object to be seen. When I look out in the morning, it is as if I had waked up in Utopia or Icaria or one of Owen’s parallelograms. The weather is perfect” (Letters II 59). Eliot uses the three distinct utopias to express the scene’s stunning picturesqueness. The focus on aesthetics connects this letter to Esther’s daydreams, but Eliot’s letter contains no irony, evincing some philosophical shift in her position towards utopianism in the intervening years between letter and novel. The luxury of the “elegant home” in Edinburgh, though pleasing to Eliot in her letters, faces harsh criticism in Felix Holt.

It is possible that Eliot chooses to critique misdirected utopian imagination while developing a more productive mode of utopianism untethered from bourgeois class dynamics. As Eliot traces the movement of Esther’s notions of ‘ladyhood’ from a psychical space to an imposing physical one, Esther becomes nervous at the imminent possibility of realizing her dreams. The prospect of Esther’s inheritance shakes her from her dreams and confronts her with the realities of change: “But now that fancy was becoming real, and the impossible appeared possible, Esther found the balance of her attention reversed: now that her ladyhood was not simply in utopia, she found herself arrested and painfully grasped by the means through which the ladyhood was to be attained” (361). The realization of Esther’s version of utopia unfolds via

21 By the time Eliot publishes Felix Holt, she is personally acquainted with Robert Owen, the founder of utopian socialism, and her letters indicate a familiarity with Thomas More’s Utopia, Etienne Cabet’s French utopian novel Travels in Icaria (which Eliot would have read in French), as well as the political philosophy of Claude Henri de St. Simon. Though unmentioned in her letters, Eliot’s notebooks leading up to Middlemarch indicate a familiarity with Charles Fourier, and Mark Allison (2011) explores Fourierism’s influence on Middlemarch.
inheritance and enacts simultaneously her upward social mobility and the displacement of the 
Transome family. This creates, for Esther, a moral crisis in the form of a painful grasping.
Esther’s moral crisis results from the movement of ‘ladyhood’ out of utopia, marking the naivety 
and selfishness of her version of utopia and the capability of utopia to be emptied (and re-filled).
Though Esther fills utopia with her upper-class daydreaming, it does not necessarily demand an 
inherent relationship between utopia and those specific class values. The narrowness both of her 
utopian vision and the potential life of ladyhood grasps Esther, while the scene recognizes 
utopia’s ability to be emptied and re-filled with new imaginative material. This allows for a more 
dynamic and expansive conceptualization of utopia. What Eliot begins to criticize in this scene, 
then, is not utopia as a specifically classed mode of passive imaginative engagement, but rather 
the usurpation of utopia’s revolutionary potentiality by idle, simple dreams of class ascension.

Eliot offers her readers one more critique of Esther’s selfish utopia. Esther, watching 
Harold’s senescent father play happily with Harold’s son, finds the scene “something piteous” 
(379). “Certainly,” reveals the narrator, “this had never been part of the furniture she had 
imagined for the delightful aristocratic dwelling in her Utopia” (379). This scene, the final time 
Eliot uses the word ‘Utopia’ in Felix Holt, paints Esther as quite unsympathetic towards mental 
infirmity and incapable of seeing the happiness the narrator claims Mr. Transome experiences 
while playing with his grandson. Esther’s utopia fails to allow for a largesse of compassion and 
thus fails Eliot’s moral standard. In qualifying utopia as “her Utopia,” though, Eliot again 
separates the imaginative mode of utopia from Esther’s particular version and directs the reader’s 
attention to the malleability of utopia and its capability of change and adaptation, as well as its 
capacity for abuse. Eliot, though not as laudatory as Gaskell in North and South of utopia’s 
importance to attacking class and gender inequities, still creates a space for utopia’s positive
functions through her rebuke of Esther’s particularly idle and classed version of it. Eliot evaluates Esther’s utopia as upper-class obfuscation of moral duties to marginalized communities but, in criticizing Esther’s utopia and not utopia entirely, provides room for utopia’s recuperation.

The recuperation of utopia as a viable political philosophy and imaginative structure happens through Esther’s rejection of Harold Transome’s marriage proposal and her subsequent marriage to Felix Holt. Marrying Felix Holt, and thus turning away from the bourgeois life of the Transome’s, Esther courts Holt’s life of poverty and social work. The narrative removes the Holt family from Treby Magna to an unnamed town and gives little indication of the social services the Holts provide to their new neighbors. Readers might question Felix’s plan to “set up a great library, and lend the books to be dog’s-eared and marked with bread-crumbs” with the scant amount of Esther’s inheritance she decides to retain, but Eliot means for Esther’s rejection of a comfortable life of luxury to signal a concomitant rejection of idle daydreaming (474). By marrying Felix, Esther decides to create for herself an alternative mode of happiness that contrasts with the life of Margaret Hale. Though Margaret saves Marlborough Mill and hopefully demands more equitable treatment of its workers, her marriage placates the radical nature of her utopian politics. Esther’s decision, too, supplants her former version of utopia with an alternative mode of existence predicated on social work and community building. Rather than leave utopia behind, Esther abandons her old utopia for a recuperated utopia that falls more in line with Eliot’s ethics of sympathy.

Though seemingly critical of utopia in *Felix Holt*, Eliot creates a space in her novel for reconsidering what utopia should and should not entail. Admittedly, Esther’s marriage to Felix Holt reinforces a traditional Victorian marriage plot, but the arc of Esther’s agency as a moral
subject and as the subject through which Eliot discusses Utopia gestures towards the text’s feminist utopianism. Through her testimony at Felix’s trial and subsequent rejection of both Harold Transome and Transome Estate, Esther eschews normative gender behaviors. Esther emerges from *Felix Holt* as the active hero, saving Felix from execution, saving the Transome’s from displacement, and assisting Felix in his desires to support working-class Britons. Esther’s actions figure as Eliot’s moral reforms; Eliot critiques a woman’s inability to “make her own lot” and shows Esther succeeding in doing just that (407). The lot Esther makes, too, represents Eliot’s moral impetus. Esther’s lot involves sacrifice, hard work, and the immersion of oneself into the lives of another social class. Thus, Esther succeeds in becoming “the man of sufficient moral and intellectual breadth” as discussed in Eliot’s famous essay “The Natural History of German Life” (112). Esther becomes capable, through her moral breadth and immersion in the history and lives of other social classes, of providing a valuable example “to the social and political reformer” (112). *Felix Holt*, then, emerges, through Eliot’s deep consideration of the Reform Bill, its effects on previously disenfranchised Britons, and the labyrinthine qualities of the early-nineteenth-century legal system, as the “book well-nourished with specific facts” that, like Esther’s life itself, makes social and political recommendations for reformers (112).

Reading *Felix Holt* and Esther Holt in this way complicates Eliot’s criticism of Esther’s middle-class utopia. Not incidentally, Eliot’s main criticism of English artists’ inability to produce “a group of true peasantry” resembles her criticism of Esther’s utopia in *Felix Holt*, and both criticisms hinge on the lack of the artist’s or protagonist’s experience and imagination to make something useful out of art or utopia. In marrying Felix Holt and taking part in his deliberate hardship, Esther, at least implicitly, admits that her previous station did not provide her with suitable experience and imagination that would lead to an expansion of sympathies for
marginalized groups. Instead of the marriage meaning that Esther leaves her utopian
daydreaming behind in Treby Magna, it becomes more seductive to imagine the reorientation of
her utopianism once it is educated through her life with Felix Holt. Eliot’s critique of utopia
might more fully represent a critique of Esther’s uneducated and limited imagination. Eliot
recognizes that utopian thinking occurs at the personal level, but Esther’s most irredeemable
quality is her inability to conjure up a utopian vision that extends outside of a single luxurious
parlor. Utopia, to be an effective and valuable imaginative tool, demands consideration of social
(re)arrangement and communal engagement. Felix’s life directs Esther’s imagination away from
interior longings towards exterior concerns, and her decision to marry Felix indicates an
expansion of her imaginative and moral breadths. Utopia, lampooned in Felix Holt as the silly
dreams of a silly young woman, reemerges in the union of Esther and Felix as a vision of the
transformative potential of self-sacrifice, direct action, communal engagement, social
arrangement, and ethical reconfiguration.

1.3 A Queer Epilogue

That Felix Holt catalyzes Esther’s awakening of sympathy and imagination corrects, to
some degree, Henry James’ consternation over the novel’s title. “The history of the hero’s
opinions,” asserts James, “is made subordinate to so many other considerations, to so many
sketches of secondary figures” (908). Felix Holt almost entirely concerns itself with Esther’s life
and portrays her as the protagonist around and through which all activity in the novel occurs.
Esther certainly appears the hero as her actions lead to Felix’s freedom, but Felix, as Esther’s
catalyst, retains a moral righteousness that, like the novel’s title, reminds the reader that Felix
remains the integral agent of change. George Eliot’s Romola, written three years prior to Felix
Holt, bears no titular confusion. Eliot places the novel’s titular protagonist at the heart of its
ethics. A “Utopian heroine,” as described by critic Dorothea Barrett, Romola imbues Romola with the same ethic of self-sacrifice, direct action, and social rearrangement Felix Holt represents in the later novel.

If, like, Margaret Hale in North and South, Romola figures the persona utopia, then that figuration demands fuller consideration. Rather than read Romola as a utopian heroine via religious transcendence as Barrett does in her Introduction to Romola, this project seeks to centralize Romola’s role in the potential feminist utopianism of the novel’s concluding Epilogue. This argument, that the Epilogue, in its arrangement of three women and two children as a cohesive and successful filial unit, represents a productive mode of feminist utopianism, requires the introduction of Judith Butler’s work on queer kinship structures into this project’s theoretical framework. Butler’s chapter “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” from her collection Undoing Gender (2004) thinks of kinship as “a kind of doing, one that does not reflect a prior structure, but that can only be understood as an enacted practice” (123). For Butler, this allows for a consideration of queer kinship as an enacted social and/or filial practice that refuses or resists normative state-sanctioned alliances such as marriage or European PACS. Butler uses “queer” to mean non-normative, or even anti-normative, and leaves intact the word’s productive ambiguity regarding the presence (or absence) of sexuality and sex acts. Queer kinship, in its

---

22 Dorothea Barrett edited and wrote the Introduction for the modern edition of Romola to be used in this chapter. Her description of Romola as a “Utopian heroine” appears in the novel’s summary on the book’s back cover.

23 Barrett reads the two chapters of Romola that take place outside of Florence – “Drifting Away” and “Romola’s Waking” – as the moment in the text where the novel transitions “into a kind of transcendental symbolism” through Romola’s figuration as the Madonna (xvi). In these two chapters, Romola discovers a collection of Jewish refugees in a small fishing town beleaguered by Plague. With the help of the town’s padre, Romola rescues the community from imminent death. Barrett’s alignment of utopianism with transcendentalism lacks citation or reference and does not fit with this project’s understanding of utopianism as not only the education of desire but as a mode of concomitant critique and imagination. Barrett’s point, though, that, since these chapters do take place outside of Florence, and thus initiate a sense of displacement and even detemporalization, does, however, fit with this project’s reading of the novel’s Epilogue, taking place in 1509, as staging a necessary detemporalization to induce a sense of utopian displacement.
non-normativity, also entails a potential disruption of the Oedipal process, resulting in the interruption of gender legibility and thus the transmission of culture. Thus, the feminist utopianism at work within Eliot’s *Romola* creates a space for thinking about queer kinship structures as both a critique of patriarchal and masculinist power dynamics and the articulation of alternative modes of aligning towards more productive and open futures.

Though this project focuses primarily on *Romola*’s Epilogue, the Epilogue directly results from three interweaving aspects of the novel: the fictionalized account of the expulsion of the Medici family from Florence, Italy and the subsequent rise to power of Savonarola in the last decade of the fifteenth century; the marriage plot between Romola and the scurrilous Tito, including Tito’s affair with the *contadina* Tessa; and the litany of fathers and father figures who enter and exit the text. While each of these aspects of *Romola* merits critical consideration, this project reads these prominent features as constituting the patriarchal socio-political field Eliot ultimately critiques in her Epilogue. By contrasting the peaceful scene of queer alignment featuring Romola, Tessa, Tessa’s two children Ninna and Lillo, and Romola’s cousin Monna

---

24 Also known as Fra Girolamo, Savonarola attempted to reform both the Catholic Church and Florence’s political landscape through his prophetic claims and visions and the destruction of secular art and culture. Historically, Savonarola is most well remembered for the bonfire of the vanities, a night during which Savonarola and his followers directed Florentines in a public burning of all secular and non-religious belongings. In 1497, five years after Savonarola’s initial ascension, Pope Alexander VI excommunicated him, and, in 1498, Savonarola and his two closest friars were hanged and cremated.

25 “Contadina” translates to “peasant girl.” The first introduction to Tessa involves Monna Ghita, her mother, addressing her as both “pretty” and a “simpleton” (27-28). In the chapter “The Peasants’ Fair,” Tito and Tessa are married by the conjurer Maestro Vaiano. While considered “an excellent” jest by both Tito and Vaiano, Tessa believes the marriage to be true. Tessa never learns Tito previously married Romola during a legitimate ceremony.

26 These fathers include Bardo de’ Bardi, a blind scholar and Romola’s father; Baldassarre Calvo, Tito’s adoptive father who, after escaping slavery in Florence, finds Tito and kills him for abandoning him after a shipwreck; Bernardo del Nero, Romola’s godfather, whose execution at the hands of Savonarola drives Romola out of Florence; Tito, the illegitimate father to Tessa’s children Ninna and Lillo; and Romola, who figures as the father of the queer kinship alliance in the novel’s Epilogue to be discussed in this section. Savonarola, too, should be considered a father figure; Dino de’ Bardi, Romola’s brother and Bardo’s son, foregoes his father’s life as a scholar to become a Dominican monk under Savonarola. Savonarola, then, figures the religious father to both Romola and Dino.
Brigida with the masculinist violence of the rest of the novel, Eliot presents patriarchal 1490s Florence as incapable of offering to these characters a set of material conditions that provide security and opportunities for flourishing. Eliot imagines a kinship alliance as a new alternative mode of alignment that directly repudiates the novel’s violent masculinity and patriarchal infrastructure.

Two modern critical engagements with *Romola* inform this project’s reading of Eliot’s critique of patriarchy. Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone (1999) and Nancy Henry (2011) demonstrate how masculinity - in various relations and dynamics - defines the socio-political order of *Romola*. The dynamics of masculine interpersonal and political relationships result in violence and fatalities, including Savonarola’s Bonfire of the Vanities, Savonarola’s executions of political adversaries, Tito and his stepfather Baldassarre killing each other in a struggle on a riverbank, and Savonarola’s own execution by the Roman Catholic Church. These interpersonal and political relationships traced throughout *Romola* are invested with patrilineal transmissions of power and knowledge and the coded world of male-to-male sexuality. Though the novel’s last chapter ends with Savonarola’s death by hanging and conflagration, the novel concludes with an Epilogue set eleven years after that event. *Romola*’s Epilogue offers a stark contrast, in its tranquility and absence of masculinity, to the rest of the novel, and stages a queer feminist utopianism impossible to imagine during the rest of the novel.

In her article “Conflicting Self-Perceptions in George Eliot’s *Romola*,” Johnstone argues that filial relationships structure the entirety of the novel’s morality. Johnstone focuses on the contrast between Romola’s devout relationship to her father Bardo and Tito’s ultimately fatal relationship to his abandoned step-father Baldassare. In this contrast, Johnstone reads Eliot’s desire to navigate her own feelings about her complicated relationship to her father and the
domesticity forced upon her by that relationship. More than the expression of these domestic anxieties, however, this dissertation argues that Eliot’s exploration of family in *Romola* represents an incisive critique of patriarchal family dynamics. In fact, only two filial connections survive the violence of *Romola*, and these connections comprise the alternative kinship structure in the novel’s Epilogue. Monna Brigida, Bardo’s cousin and primary maternal figure in Romola’s life, remains with Romola after Bardo’s death and Tito’s murder. Monna Brigida and Romola take in Tessa and her two children Ninna and Lillo. This alignment centralizes Romola as its mother/father, a Butlerian queering of kinship. Contrasted with the violence that marks traditional family dynamics, this alternative kinship structure emerges as a feminist utopia, one that disrupts normative gender roles and power dynamics and that provides its inhabitants with the social and material conditions for flourishing. Thus, Romola figures as the utopian hero of a feminist and queer utopian arrangement of people that protects its inhabitants from the masculine dystopia of late-fifteenth-century Italian religio-politics and the inherent misogyny and danger of the patriarchal family dynamic.

Nancy Henry, publisher of Eliot’s most recent biography and editor of the modern republication of Eliot’s *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, productively complicates any reading of power dynamics at work in *Romola*, filial or otherwise. In her article, “The ‘Romola’ Code: ‘Men of Appetites’ in George Eliot’s Historical Novel” (2011), Henry traces “the love between

---

27 As mentioned in an above footnote, Eliot surrounds these two father-daughter relationships with other filial connections in ways that demonstrate her disillusionment with traditional family structures. Romola marries Tito but soon learns of his duplicity, discovering his secret marriage to the young, naïve Tessa, a marriage that bears two children. Tito uses his marriage to Tessa as an escape from Romola’s religious scrutiny, and he abandons Tessa and their children when he flees Florence. Concomitant with Romola’s discovery of Tito’s marriage to Tessa, Romola breaks from Savonarola for refusing to pardon Romola’s godfather Bernardo from a crime he did not commit due to his political affiliation. Bernardo’s literal death represents the metaphorical death of Savonarola’s spiritual paternity for Romola. This metaphorical death of Savonarola prefigures his actual death at the hands of the Catholic Church. Though violence never mars the relationship between Romola and her aging and blind father Bardo, violence and death wracks every other paternal relationship in the novel.
males and the practice of sex between males” that defined both fifteenth-century Florence and Eliot’s understanding of that era (327). Rather than directly address the realities of Florence in the fifteenth century, Henry argues that Eliot “strategically left out [Savonarola’s] rhetoric about sodomy,” but “through indirection, innuendo, and allusion, however, she managed to convey the prevalence of sodomy in Florence” (327-328). Henry reads Savonarola’s historical tracts against sodomy,28 the coded language of Nello the Barber,29 Tito’s role as a willing sexual agent whose physical attractiveness grants him access to the political power he hopes to gain and wield,30 and the repeated references to historical authors such as Poliziano, whose predilection for sexual engagement with younger men led to his eventual death,31 as evidence of Eliot’s deep understanding of male-male sexuality as an integral aspect of the transmission of political, social, and cultural power in Florence. Eliot’s awareness of such modes of transmission enriches a reading of the novel’s Epilogue as a queer kinship structure that responds to a particularly masculine homosexual socio-political field. If sodomy – the term available to fifteenth-century Italians and to Eliot – permeated such a field, then its queerness, though under siege from Savonarola, emerges not as necessarily queer but as a form of normative socio-political engagement and cultural transmission, and its absence from the Epilogue’s kinship alliance marks this alliance as doubly queer. In Romola, Eliot does not repudiate male homosexuality; rather, she acknowledges both its existence and implicitly critiques Savonarola’s condemnation

28 Tracts Eliot had access to and read in preparation for this novel.
29 Henry argues Eliot based Nello the Barber on Il Burchiello, a “barber, poet, political propagandist and ultimately political exile” (331). Scholars such as Alan K. Smith and Jean Toscan, relates Henry, demonstrate Burchiello’s fixation on coded references to sodomy in his poetry.
30 Describing Nello’s shop and Tito’s role in it, Henry writes, “Nello’s barbershop is the locus of male camaraderie and political and social gossip. The newest currents of thought, embodied in men such as the young Machiavelli, filter through the shop – a space where Tito finds an all-male refuge and a flattering stream of comments about his beauty. It is a space for men devoted to the beautification and vanity of men. Political talk is interspersed with flirtation, and the male gaze falls repeatedly on Tito” (333).
31 Other contemporary Italian poets, such as Lorenzo and Pulci, are referenced in the novel.
of such relationality through Romola’s repudiation of Savonarola’s program. Its conspicuous absence from the Epilogue demonstrates the magnitude of the Epilogue’s queer kinship alliance and Eliot’s deep critique of the novel’s patriarchy. If women exist in Florence solely to reproduce and codify filial connection through heterosexual alignment, then Eliot, in the Epilogue, creates space for women to exist as something other than reproductive tools of patriarchy. Though Tessa has reproduced and the kinship structure features various maternal roles, its replacement of male-male sexual partnerships with female-female filial relationships queers traditional family gender dynamics and provides alternatives towards flourishing for its inhabitants.

The Epilogue, set in 1509, presents a pleasant scene quite disparate from the tumultuous violence plaguing 1490s Florence. In the Epilogue, Eliot describes the interior of a “handsome upper room opening onto a loggia” (580). Seated about this room are Tessa and her daughter Ninna, both set to wreath-weaving, the slumbering Monna Brigida, the daydreaming Romola, and Tessa’s inquisitive son Lillo. Ninna, delicate and blue-eyed, sits among the strewn-about flowers and green boughs of the wreaths, offering an image of peace and serenity that immediately follows the scene of gallows and torches in the final chapter. The physical serenity of the room mirrors the psychological peace of the room’s inhabitants. Tessa, weaving poorly but quickly, admiring her daughter’s dexterity and acuity, turns to Monna Brigida and finds Monna’s attitude most enjoyable: “Everybody was so good in the world, Tessa thought; even Monna

32 Romola’s godfather, Bernardo, whose execution by Savonarola precipitates Romola’s decision to flee Florence and Savonarola’s guidance, becomes inflected by Bernardo’s potential engagement with sodomy. Though Savonarola cites political opposition as the reason for Bernardo’s execution, the pervasiveness of sodomy – and Savonarola’s program to eliminate it – potentially implicates Bernardo in that particularly charged field of politics. Henry does not mention if Romola is aware of the state of Florentine politics and culture, but due to Florentine’s national notoriety for its sodomy and Romola’s learnedness, it is enticing to assume she did know, thus making her rejection of Savonarola a potential rejection of anti-sodomy/homophobic politics.
Brigida never found fault with her now, and did little else than sleep, which was an amiable practice in everybody, and one that Tessa liked for herself (580-581). Monna Brigida’s slumbering attitude, and Tessa’s own professed enjoyment of such an attitude, indicates a life of simplicity or ease unknown to Tessa the *contadina*.

This scene strikes the reader as remarkably feminine. Tessa and Ninna weave wreaths presumably for aesthetic reasons, and the charm of Ninna among the flowers and boughs intermingles with the softness of her mother’s watchful eye and the reposing Monna to produce a sense of tranquil luxury. As the first scene in *Romola* to feature only women, it disrupts the novel’s ubiquitous masculinity, replacing masculinity and danger with femininity and safety. Though this certainly conflates two categories of gender expression – masculinity and femininity – with two prescriptive traits – danger and safety – towards a reductive sense of gendered morality, it signals a significant transition in the text from the history of Florence to the utopic qualities of this room. The “everybody” and “the world” to which Tessa refers possibly entail no more than the room and its five inhabitants, further sectioning off the utopian potentiality of the Epilogue from the historical realities of the novel.

As the Epilogue’s utopianism emerges concomitantly with its insistence on safety and wellbeing, its queerness also emerges in its rejection of heterosexuality as requisite for such safety and wellbeing. Butler attacks the notion that non-normative families endanger the child and culture, arguing, “Variations on kinship that depart from normative dyadic heterosexually based family forms secured through the marriage vow are figured not only as dangerous for the child but perilous to the putative natural and cultural laws said to sustain human intelligibility”

33 As Monna Brigida and Tessa had not interacted until Romola tells Monna Brigida of her decision to take care of Tessa and the children, it remains a bit unclear to what faults Eliot is now referencing. More than likely, Eliot is attempting to fill in the intervening eleven years between the novel and the Epilogue, perhaps to show that, while Tessa has not done much more than grow fatter, Monna Brigida has softened as she continues to age.
(104). No marriage vow exists in the Epilogue to codify this arrangement, as Romola’s marriage to Tito ended at his death, and Tito’s marriage vow to Tessa, being fraudulent, cannot secure Ninna and Lillo as sanctioned offspring. This queer alliance figures safety as its utopian quality, refusing the terms of heterosexuality and state-sanctioned arrangement “necessary” for the well-being of the child as well as the transmission of culture that the child itself represents.

As the Epilogue shifts from Tessa, Ninna, and Monna Brigida to Lillo and Romola, Eliot continues to queer this kinship structure. Romola and Lillo, like Tessa, Ninna, and Monna Brigida, enjoy a sense of security and tranquility. “A placidity” marks Romola’s face as she sits with “her eyes fixed absently on the distant mountains” (581). Lillo, Tessa’s son, absent-mindedly swats at flies with a copy of Petrarch’s poems open in his lap. In this attitude, the five characters comprising this kinship structure offer an alternative to traditional, normative heterosexual alliances codified through marriage. The non-normativity of this kinship arrangement, infused by the detemporalization of the scene, produces the effect of a queer utopianism. This queer utopianism, too, blossoms from the feminist non-normativity of the filial arrangement. With two children and three maternal figures, traditional family roles betray their performative natures, as roles are fulfilled by non-traditional actors. The messiness of relationships between these five people produces a peacefulness more conducive to the demands of kinship alliances. Monna Brigida, Romola’s cousin, appears quite grandmotherly in her repose, figuring as the family’s first generation. This leaves Tessa and Romola as the parents to

---

34 More than likely a book from Romola’s father’s library, Petrarch’s poems represent a potential intellectual and cultural link between Lillo and Bardo. Lillo, however, possesses an “interest stronger” in swatting absent-mindedly at flies than he does in learning any of Petrarch’s poems by heart (581). Petrarch, as well, is considered as a founder of Renaissance Humanism. “Humanist practices,” writes Gur Zak (2014), “not only should be a means of acquiring knowledge but rather should shape one’s way of life” (220). Petrarch’s idea of “self-care” was as much textual as it was personal, as much about the correct way to study and read as it was about the correct way to tend to one’s soul (Zak 221).

35 These demands “may include birth, child rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death” (103).
the third generation of Ninna and Lillo. The explicit bloodlines are between Tessa and her two children and Romola and Monna Brigida, but through the necessity of addressing “fundamental forms of human dependency,” these characters perform new relations to each other that supersede heterosexual blood lineage. This queer arrangement flourishes in its eschewing of heteronormative organization, particularly in figuring Romola as the mother-father. Romola’s figuration of mother-father, in eschewing traditional family/gender roles, shows Eliot re-imagining a woman’s role in the family unit. Though Romola remains parental, she blends the maternal and paternal into an alternative mode of household leadership. Queering the group further, one must consider that, since Tito was already married to Romola when he “married” Tessa and fathered Ninna and Lillo, the children were legally born out of wedlock and thus lawfully illegitimate. Tessa and Romola, as the parents of the illegitimate Ninna and Lillo, were, unbeknownst to Tessa, sister-wives before Tito’s death. This kinship structure, though involving heterosexual reproduction, abandons the grip of heteronormative organizing principles and allows its members to rest, to exist, to grow, and to flourish in their queer alignment.

Lillo interrupts the serenity of this queer scene with a question that demonstrates more acutely this kinship structure’s non-normativity. Lillo, bored with Romola’s daydreaming, asks of Romola, “‘Mamma Romola, what am I to be?’” (581). Lillo’s address of “Mamma Romola” acknowledges the multiple maternal roles in this alliance and the absence of the paternal. This replacement of the father with more mothers disrupts the logic of Oedipalization. Butler describes what Oedipalization means for cultural intelligibility and for gender legibility. Butler writes, “The belief is that culture itself requires that a man and a woman produce a child, and that the child have this dual point of reference for its own initiation into the symbolic order, where the symbolic order consists of a set of rules that order and support our sense of reality and
cultural intelligibility” (118). “This fairly rigid schematic of Oedipalization,” Butler continues, achieves gender “through the accomplishment of heterosexual desire” (120). What the disruption of the schematic of Oedipalization accomplishes is the revelation of gender as a “construction that regularly conceals its genesis” (Gender Trouble 190). Romola’s Epilogue accomplishes the revelation of the genesis of gender’s constructiveness, unveiling the attempts by traditional family dynamics to produce gender identity – and thus stable cultural intelligibility – as a natural, innate quality. With the absence of their biological father, Ninna and Lillo’s referents are three women, and thus cannot “[pass through the gender-differentiating mechanism of [Oedipalization]]” in order to “accomplish both normative heterosexuality and discrete gender identity” (120). Tessa and Romola, as mother-mother/father, disrupt such cultural production, replacing restrictive delimitations of sexuality and gender identities with something untranslatable for normative culture. This untranslatability stems from the contrast between the filial peace of the final scene and the deadly masculinist culture of fifteenth-century Florence. Thus, this queer alignment further demonstrates its utopianism, as it also protects its inhabitants and provides the means for alternative ways of being and connecting. The queer utopia refuses the logic of violence and instead produces a site in which non-normative kin might align towards new queer ontology predicated on a feminist rejection of patriarchy.

A conversation between Lillo and Romola more acutely demonstrates how this queer kinship structure eschews patriarchal and Oedipal cultural intelligibility and production. Romola survives the novel’s numerous “legitimate” fathers – Bardo, Tito, Bernardo, Belassare, Savonarola – to inhabit the role of the constitutive father. Set against the dream-weaving of the Epilogue, Romola performs the role of knowledge-producer in a conversation with Lillo. Bored

---

36 Butler’s focus on Oedipalization as the production of securing normative gender roles harkens back to the chapter “Subversive Bodily Acts” in her groundbreaking Gender Trouble (1990).
by Romola’s daydreaming, Lillo interrupts her and asks, “‘Mamma Romola, what am I to be?’” (581). This question, particularly Lillo’s use of the appellative “Mamma” for Romola, irrupts the scene’s serenity and figures as the site of the Butlerian rejection of Oedipal logic. Lillo recognizes Romola as the mother, implying that he understands that his family has two mothers. Lillo’s question, in its pursuit of knowledge and guidance, figures Romola, already recognized as the mother, as his father. Lillo’s question, too, hangs in the air with a potent sense of ambiguity. Though Lillo eventually qualifies his goal to mean becoming a “great man,” its initial ambiguity highlights the potential instability of gender identity reproduction in this alignment. Romola enumerates the positive qualities of her father and Fra Girolamo as possible role models for Lillo, but her role as mother/father irrupts the legibility of the conversation. While Romola hopes to guide Lillo towards a virtuous life of “wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world,” her mother/father identity opens up for Lillo what a “great man” might mean (582). As Lillo’s mother/father, Romola teaches Lillo to read and tends to him and the rest of his family, offering Lillo an example of a “great man” that expands such a concept to include Romola and rejects traditional definitions of “man.” This concept, stripped of its Oedipalization, just like the heteronormative kinship structure, thus bares its social and symbolic constitution.

Romola, as mother/father and as the potential “great man” Lillo might grow up to be, embodies feminist utopianism’s drive to challenge normative gender roles/identities, provide alternative methods of existing, and imagine new modes of social arrangement. This feminist utopian embodiment occurs within a queer kinship alliance that critiques the misogyny and violence of the heterosexual symbolic order and political sphere. The absence of a father and the replacement of that father with a new method of parental arrangement predicated on three women occupying various roles create fissures in patriarchal, heterosexual ontologies while
providing a space wherein its inhabitants might discover new ways of cooperating, maturing, and 
existing.

Written within eleven years of each other during the heart of the Victorian era by two of England’s most prominent authors, these three novels establish a wide-framed snapshot of feminist utopianism in women’s Victorian literature. Gaskell and Eliot use the term “utopia” in associated but competing ways, and each author, too, approaches the concept with different levels of approval and trepidation. Gaskell, rather than explicitly supporting utopia as the imagined alternative future of wealth redistribution, reconfiguration of models of ownership and propriety, and new forms of gender roles and relationships, hides her approbation of such modes of thinking, desiring, and hoping in the furious critiques of John Thornton. Eliot, like Gaskell, affixes Utopia to her heroine but critiques Esther’s version of utopia for its idleness, consumerism, and selfish individualism. Repainting Esther as the more heroic and noble Margaret Hale, Eliot, instead of dismissing outright the concept of utopia, critiques imaginative work that fails to consider the need for social aid, community engagement, and active response to violent systems of class- (and gender-) based forms of oppression.

Without directly invoking the term “utopia” in Romola, Eliot nevertheless constructs a queer feminist utopian vision as the Epilogue to her historical novel. Utopia, in each of these novels, exists as the education of desire in that Gaskell and Eliot use utopia to imagine, develop, and guide the potential ethical systems presented by the various choices of their heroines. Utopia becomes the mediating lens through which Margaret, Esther, and Romola perform their roles as potential irruptions in narratives of class and gender inequity. That none of the novels and neither of the novelists visualize utopia similarly demonstrates utopia’s variability, elasticity, and plasticity. In *North and South, Felix Holt and Romola*, Gaskell and Eliot think of utopia as a
metaphysical time and location, as an idealized version of class harmony, and as the method through which women unshackle themselves from gender oppression to become the producers of future-based social arrangements that focalize the desires and flourishing of the oppressed.

While *Romola*’s Epilogue provides a brief vision of a filial utopia, none of these novels presents a full vision of the utopias their protagonists seek. In the following chapter, this dissertation explores novels whose utopian societies arise directly from women’s liberation. By moving in this direction, this project continues building its version of feminist utopianism as both invested in centralizing women’s roles in utopian revolutions and in the proliferation of alterities of being and becoming. Using Susan Stanford Friedman’s *Mappings* (1998) to read Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s utopian trilogy (1911-1916), the next chapter argues that utopias are entanglements of sameness and difference. Focusing on roots, routes, and travel, this following chapter reads such entanglements of sameness and difference as sites of both violence and utopian potentiality. Rather than treat Gilman’s feminist utopianism as a failed vision, this chapter continues to read utopia as dynamic and ever-shifting. While Gilman’s feminist utopianism may have some ideological limits, she remains invested in expanding what, how, and for whom her feminist utopianism functioned.
2 TRAVELING THROUGH THE ROOTS AND ROUTES OF CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN’S UTOPIAN TRILOGY

According to Angelika Bammer, women’s utopian literature written in the late nineteenth century “tended to focus particular attention on the structures of social life and the nature of human relationships” (28). “Under the influence that emphasized social, not just political, change,” Bammer continues, “questions of gender, race, and class moved to the foreground” in this literary genre (28-29). Bammer wonders, however, if foregrounding such questions made women’s utopian literature from this period more conscious of oppression’s multiple and intersecting forms. In their utopian-adjacent novels *North and South*, *Felix Holt*, and *Romola*, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot begin working through class, gender, and sexual inequities, often bringing them to bear on one another. Denaturalizing divisions between classes and between genders, Gaskell and Eliot argue that such divisions are culturally created and maintained. In *Romola*, Eliot not only challenges the natural division of gender roles but the natural differences between categories of sexuality. Eliot critiques heteronormative political and filial structures while offering alternative non-normative alliances as more suited for her characters’ flourishing.

While Gaskell and Eliot challenge the very meaning of categories such as class, sexuality, and gender, they do not confront the category of race. The following two chapters of this dissertation address how utopian authors both succeeded and failed in critiquing this category alongside categories of gender and sexuality. This chapter looks at issues of race and nationality in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s utopian trilogy. Using Susan Stanford Friedman’s theory of locational feminism to explore the importance of travel for women’s utopian literature, this chapter examines how issues of race and nationality both complicate and augment Gilman’s
feminist utopianism. In her utopian trilogy, Gilman adeptly critiques patriarchal gender norms and heteronormative sexuality, but she also attempts to expose race and nationality as categories of identity that are similarly culturally created. Though these critiques at times fail to fully challenge racial inequities, they demonstrate how women’s utopian authors at least attempted to confront questions of gender, sexuality, and race in the early twentieth century.

In *Mappings* (1998), Susan Stanford Friedman brings attention to the utopian qualities of her feminist theory. Intent on developing a locational feminism concerned with “the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming,” Friedman returns repeatedly to the “utopic” (63). Whether analyzing the utopic qualities of movies such as *Mississippi Masala* and *The Crying Game* or describing Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of the “mestiza” as utopic, Friedman sees utopianism as integral to late twentieth-century feminism. Friedman even understands “utopic longing” as a foundational human experience in much the same way as Ruth Levitas or Lyman Tower Sargent. Friedman writes, “Utopic longing has a psychological reality that is a fundamental component of social change; it fuels the drive for a better world, the agency to resist” (73). Without utopic longing, Friedman argues, coalition and connection, two goals of her locational feminism, cannot be imagined, theorized, or sought after.

Friedman’s insistence on “being and becoming,” aligns her, as well, with the other feminist projects from the 1990s cited in this dissertation. Like Lucy Sargisson in *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* and Angelika Bammer in *Partial Visions*, Friedman uses “being and becoming” to signal for feminist theory the importance of activity, non-foreclosure, and open-endedness. Friedman writes, “The explanatory power for feminism of this migratory geography of borders moves simultaneously in two directions: the descriptive, delineating networks of existing syncretisms (positive and negative) in everyday life; and the utopic, forging pathways of possible
connection, affiliation, and reconciliation” (68). Friedman sees how difference enmeshes well (positive syncretism), how it does not work (negative syncretism), and how it might work (the utopic) as directionally situated in narratives of travel, migration, and borders. Friedman posits this “migratory geography of borders” as a move for feminism that both considers the material conditions and networks of subjects and allows for the production of alternative modes of relationality and being for those very subjects.

In particular, this dissertation is interested in the relationships between mimesis and alterity in “the space in between difference” (76) and how Friedman’s focus on the homonyms roots/routes can be used to develop the issues of travel (and borders and identities) in women’s utopian literature. As a genre of literature that relies on borders, travel, sameness, difference, and the development of identities and nations, (feminist) utopian literature requires a theory of travel that elucidates the importance of travel to the formulation of utopian critique and imagination. This chapter will explore issues of mimesis and alterity in the rootedness/routedness of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s utopian trilogy. Comprising Moving the Mountain (1911), Herland (1915), and With Her in Ourland (1916), Gilman’s utopian trilogy

37 In her discussion of mimesis and alterity, Friedman draws from anthropologist Michael Taussig’s Mimesis and Alterity (1993). Particularly, Friedman is interested in Taussig’s discussion of “‘the mimetic faculty’ of imitation endemic to the human species” (74). Following Tausig, Friedman argues, “Alterity – and its manifestations in the institutions of power—cannot be understood separate from its counterpoint in mimesis” (75). “One implication of Taussig’s work for feminism,” Friedman continues, “is that theorizing difference (women from men; among women) has too often attempted to isolate difference from sameness” (75). Friedman thus understands “mimesis” as a form of imitation and reproduction used to produce or trouble identity.

38 In “Planned Serendipity: American Travelers and the Transatlantic Voyage in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries” (2004), Mark Rennella and Whitney Walton write, “The act of travel itself – the ocean voyage, in this case – consistently offered the traveler (whether of the nineteenth or the twentieth centuries, or from the upper or middle classes) the opportunity to engage in a constructive questioning and self-examination of previously unquestioned beliefs and habits” (366). Travel, for Rennella and Walton, holds the “empowering potential… to liberate the human imagination” (366). Similarly, Gilman uses travel in these novels to bring characters into contact with new ideas and cultures in order to modify, augment, or improve their capacity to empathize with and relate to others. In particular, Gilman uses travel to teach her characters, often men, of the global scale and damage of patriarchal political structures.
deployes numerous modes of travel to take characters into, through, and away from utopian lands and visions. In reading *Moving the Mountain*, this chapter will examine the novel’s introductory steamer ride between Europe and the United States. During this steamer ride to the United States, John Robertson, the novel’s protagonist, learns from his sister Nellie about the changes undergone in the United States in his thirty-years absence, and this chapter will discuss how the production of utopia derives from and relates to the destabilization of home and identity amidst a Transatlantic voyage. Issues of immigration and travel, at work in the novel’s introductory chapters, will also be contrasted with the novel’s final chapter, in which John travels by train to seek out the non-utopianism of the old family farm.

Next, this chapter moves to *Herland*, the most famous of Gilman’s three utopian novels, and focuses primarily on the relationship between the character Terry’s bi-plane (particularly its ability to bring the men into Herland and then subsequently out of Herland) and Terry’s rape of the novel’s minor heroine Alima. This reading will show the complicated connection between roots and routes for women in women-occupied versus men-occupied spaces and how such connection can and often does result in violence against women. Finally, this chapter will track the global trip taken in *With Her in Ourland* by Van, one of the US travelers in *Herland*, and Ellador, the Herlander who marries Van. To take this trip, Van and Ellador travel by plane, train, ship, and car, and their travels offer to Van and Ellador a global perspective on misogyny and colonialism. Van and Ellador’s globetrotting produces a vast matrix of mimesis and alterity that, while inflected by a Western vantage point, attempts to reconcile sameness and difference between women on a global scale.
2.1 Sea Change: Travel, Immigration, and Alterity

Set in the 1940s, *Moving the Mountain* follows John Robertson’s exploration of the utopian United States that developed during his thirty-years absence in Tibet. A talented philologist and college graduate, John joins an expedition through India and Tibet. During this expedition, John sleepwalks away from his camp and awakens among a village of Tibetan Buddhists. These Buddhists take care of John until his sister Nellie finds him and brings him back to the United States. John’s absence and subsequent return stage the dialogic exploration and explanation of a feminist utopian revolution in the United States. Nellie and her husband Owen Montrose are John’s primary dialogic partners, guiding him through the new United States and educating him on social, economic, and political developments. These developments include, among others, new communal arrangements, de-gendered childhood education, the elimination of Judeo-Christian religion, and the abolition of hunger and poverty. As John comes to learn, the genesis of these utopian changes is the enfranchisement and ‘waking up’ of women (33). At its core, *Moving the Mountain* is a feminist utopian novel that seeks to imagine and implement large-scale social, economic, and political change through the emancipation, enfranchisement, and centralization of women in the United States in the early twentieth century.

Much of John’s education occurs in the novel’s introductory chapters aboard a ship for which John has no name (14). The size of an ocean liner but powered by electricity, the ship is the first piece of utopian technology John encounters on his journey home. While electric boats were at the height of their popularity when Gilman wrote *Moving the Mountain*, they were designed primarily for luxury use in rivers and never reached the size of steamers. Instead, the ship’s electric motor functions as a piece of ecologically friendly technology produced during the
years of John’s absence.\textsuperscript{39} While John admits that such a change is not entirely unexpected, this technological advancement is a moment of what Friedman calls “displacement.” For Friedman, “identity often requires some form of displacement - literal or figurative – to come to consciousness” (151). John’s time aboard a ship propelled by new technology allows for the formation of the identity John loses during his travel from Asia to the United States. About travel and identity formation, Friedman writes, “Traveling is a concept that depends upon the notion of stasis to be comprehensible. Routes are pathways between here and there, two points of rootedness. Identity often requires some form of displacement – literal or figurative - to come to consciousness” (151). John’s “American” identity comes to consciousness through his emplacement on the ship and his displacement from the sociality and politics of his home country to which he returns. The ship that brings John back to the United States, then, routes between the patriarchal United States John left thirty years prior and the utopian feminist United States he will soon explore.

John and Nellie’s time aboard the ship introduces to John many utopian developments and becomes a space of suffuse queerness and instability for him. Gilman affixes repeatedly the word “queer”\textsuperscript{40} to John and his perception of Nellie and the information he learns while aboard the ship. Nellie gives a “queer little smile” to John’s relief about the family’s economic stability, a smile she gives again when John does not immediately understand why people might still visit

\textsuperscript{39} By the 1920s, gasoline-powered outboard motors would replace electric motors and diesel engines would primarily replace steam engines.

\textsuperscript{40} Historically, “queer” has described something or someone that is odd, eccentric, or peculiar (queer, adj.1). By the late nineteenth century, however, the word “queer” came to reference homosexual men (queer, n.2). The popularity of this colloquial term continued to grow in the first decades of the twentieth century in both the United States and in the United Kingdom (queer, adj.3). Gilman would have been acquainted with both of these meanings of the word.
their Uncle Jake and Aunt Dorcas on their farm (9). As their conversation continues, John notes, “There is something queer about Nellie – very queer” and attempts to quantify Nellie’s queerness in her youthful vitality and how “she takes things so easily – as if she owned them” (10). Nellie gives to John a “current magazine,” and John finds in the magazine an article on “educational psychology” that contains a story whose “queer flavor” John realizes emanates from the story’s focus on two women in a business partnership together (11-12). “A queer sick feeling” comes over John as he realizes that, although it was not a “‘woman’s magazine,’” the editor and the contributors were all women (12). As John continues to consider “what was new to [his] bewildered condition and what was new indeed – new to the world as well as to [him],” a “queer feeling of disproportion and unreality” begins to haunt him. Thus, John’s ocean voyage brings about a seasickness, a queer nausea derived from the uprooting of the patriarchal United States of the 1910s and the enrooting of a new Utopian States organized around the centralization of women and women’s issues in the social, economic, and political landscape.

John’s nausea can be linked to the queer realities of a feminist United States and to the vessel that steers John on his route between roots. The ship itself, as both a product and producer of the new utopian United States, emerges as a Foucauldian heterotopia, further highlighting the bearing on utopian constructions of home and identity in Friedman’s homonymic roots/routes. “A train is an extraordinary bundle of relations,” writes Foucault in a parenthetical statement in “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” (trans. 1984), “because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by” (3). Gilman’s technologically advanced ship can be

---

41 Nellie’s “queer little smile” can be read as foreshadowing John’s return (and subsequent departure) from the family farm at the novel’s conclusion. The family farm, in the Alleghenies, is predicated on the gender, racial, and economic politics of pre-utopian United States. Nellie knows that people might only visit the family farm as they might visit a museum – to see the relics of a bygone era.
read in much the same way as Foucault’s train: John explores the ship itself, meeting numerous passengers and members of the crew, while also ‘going through’ the queerness of learning about the new utopian state of the United States; the ship also routes from one root to another, from Europe to the US or from the patriarchal 1910s US to the feminist 1940s US; and the ship passes by, literally passing by those on the US shores as it approaches Long island and figuratively passing by (or over) the intervening thirty years of revolution that John misses while in Tibet.

Though Foucault would counter that, as a bundle of relations in a text, the ship’s “reality” calls into question its heterotopic potential, this particular ship as a literary Foucauldian heterotopia helps narrativize Friedman’s bundling of relations between routes/roots and identities/homes. That is, the ship, as a point that passes between, that passes by, and that can be passed into, through, and out of, mobilizes in its undulations between stability and instability the relationship between routes and roots and the formulations of identity and home derived from that relationship. As something that brings John to the new United States, that brings him to the technological progress made by and for utopia in the ship itself, and that brings John closer to his dystopian belief structure while being brought into closer physical and psychical proximity to Utopia, the ship introduces to both John and the novel what utopianism might look like in the early twentieth century. John admits to having “no name” for the electric vessel and immediately links together the “civil and well-mannered” crew and the “novelty” in his surroundings (14). John considers “the perfect ventilation of the vessel, the absence of the smell of cooking and of bilge water, the dating convenience and appropriate beauty of all the fittings and furnishings, the smooth speed and steadiness” of the ship, aligns the improved “forecastle and steerage” with the “clean and comfortable lodging” afforded to every passenger aboard, and even discovers that “one of the crew was a Harvard man” (15). Though new and unnamable for John, the ship 42 Like utopia, the no-place (u-topos), this utopian ship is a no-name (u-onuma) (OED “name”).
reflects back to John his own personal valuation of cleanliness and the civility of a Harvard education. In mirroring John’s own value system, the ship makes its utopianism understandable to him. However, as John soon learns, the ship will de-stabilize the very concepts of home and identity that he finds so stabilized by the ship and its Harvard crewman.

The ship also brings identity and home into relation in another way in Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain*: immigration. As John and Nellie approach the New York harbor, Nellie begins discussing the utopian ‘solution’ to the “Immigration Problem” (23). Nellie tells John, simply, “We refuse no one” (23). By placing this conversation on the ship, the very mechanism for bringing people to Utopia, Gilman locates utopianism in/on contrivance. Nellie immediately complicates her initial refutation of refusal, muddying the waters of this new open immigration policy. To explain away the expense of such a policy, Nellie rhetorically asks John, “Suppose you keep cattle, John, and knew how to fatten and improve them; and suppose your ranch was surrounded by strays – mavericks – anxious to come in. Would you call it ‘an expense’ to add to your herd?” (24). Nellie’s livestock analogy potentially dehumanizes those very immigrants, but Nellie follows this metaphor with the statement, “We receive Humanity – and introduce it to America” (25). The capitalization of Humanity emphasizes Humanity as a universally recognizable quality in all people.

---

43 Long Island serves as the “‘Reception Room’” of the new United States (23).
44 While Nellie uses the term “Immigration Problem,” the scare quotes around the term in the text signal that Nellie is either responding to an earlier conversation with John or a larger cultural conversation happening in early twentieth-century US.
45 The ship (contrivance), already a Foucauldian heterotopia, embodies and emplaces utopia through its technological innovation, cleanliness, sociality, and, now, its ability to travel routes on its way to the rooted Utopia. Though John has not yet set foot on his home country, the country’s utopian qualities (its technological innovation, its cleanliness and wellness, its reformed sociality, and its openness and accessibility) can be found in/on the ship itself. Gilman embodies and emplaces utopian imagination in/on the steam-less steamer even before reaching the shores of the utopian United States.
Potentially, Gilman’s livestock analogy is derived more from the treatment of humans/immigrants than from their innate qualities. Nellie says, it becomes easy to prove “what good stuff human nature [is]” (25). This, along with Gilman’s capitalization of “Humanity,” points to a global mistreatment of people that leads to unfavorable conditions (those conditions often prompting migration), a recognition of subjects’ contexts, their material conditions, and the traumatic effects of social, racial, ethnic, political, economic, sexual, gendered, and/or religious marginalization. Nellie even rebuffs John’s claim that “’they used to prefer to live like hogs,’” responding, “’We used to say so – and I suppose we used to think so – some of us. But we know better now’” (24). Living “like hogs” is no longer considered an intention or innate quality; rather, living “like hogs” is recognized as a set of conditions enforced onto immigrants. That this recognition of, and correction of, material conditions begins on the migrant’s ship further figures the ship, the site of the Foucauldian heterotopia and the introduction to Gilman’s utopian imagination, as both a constituent of Utopia and as utopian itself.

Even though Nellie argues that such conditions were forced on immigrants and not innate qualities of them, the humanist utopianism of the United States’ immigration policy envisioned in Moving the Mountain remains complicated. Immigrants receive education, jobs (with material benefits), multilingual instruction upon arrival, the “opportunity to be helped up, to have real scientific care, real loving study and assistance,” and clean passage to the United States on their

---

46 Cynthia J. Davis, in her 2010 biography of Gilman, makes note of Gilman’s complicated attitude towards ethnic difference. Gilman “often invoked ethnic stereotypes” “to convey women’s primitive status vis-à-vis men” but “could also view both ethnic and gender relations through the lens of class” (272). Gilman “often blamed existing differences [between ethnic groups, races, genders] on culture rather than nature. Thus rather than branding an entire ethnic group inherently ‘uncivilizable,’ she made class- and culture-based distinctions among individuals” (272). Gilman’s life, then, seems to bear an inextricable mixing of regressive personal antipathy and progressive social sympathy.  

47 Nellie asks John if he had noticed that ships no longer have steerage, highlighting the elimination of unpleasant passenger accommodations or class stratification
journey to citizenship. Each country\textsuperscript{48} possesses its own welcoming gate on Jamaica Harbor, a monument to the openness of utopian immigration policy.\textsuperscript{49} Yet, “hopeless idiots” are excluded; education and work fall under what Nellie calls “Compulsory Socialization”; and the physical examination, “microscopic – chemical,” reads as uncomfortably invasive (24-25). Nellie tells John, “This is not eugenics,” but any society that excludes a segment of its population from the right to live and reproduce practices some form of eugenics. Hopeless both because they cannot be educated and because they are offered no hope of a fruitful or productive life, these people are excluded from the utopian United States. As well, the “microscopic – chemical” physical examination and the system of “Compulsory Socialization” are suggestive of a corresponding authoritarianism. While it is true that United States’ immigration policies already involve health exams and work and education requirements, describing them in authoritarian terms only increases concern over the eugenic practice of eliminating “hopeless idiots.”

To better understand how both Nellie and this utopian United States erect such boundaries while advocating for “open” immigration policies, it is useful to turn back to Friedman’s description of the “explanatory power” of the simultaneously bi-directional “migratory geography of borders” (68). In this migration of borders, Friedman sees both “the descriptive, delineating networks of existing syncretisms (positive and negative) in everyday life” and “the utopic, forging pathways of possible connection, affiliation, and reconciliation” (68). For Friedman, “both directions represent alternatives to the ’difference impasse’” in feminist politics in the late twentieth century (68). For this chapter, networks of existing syncretisms and utopic pathways do not just travel in two directions; rather, they can travel in

\textsuperscript{48} Germany, Spain, England, and Italy are all explicitly named.

\textsuperscript{49} While Jamaica Bay is located on the southern side of Long Island, there does not seem to be – or have been – a Jamaica Harbor. The name is either a misnomer or intentionally signaling the globalism of this new utopian welcoming area.
innumerable directions, often in the same direction at once. The root (the United States) and the route (the ship) are used to intertwine the novel’s simultaneously progressive and regressive immigration policies. Even further, the emplacement of utopianism in the ship and the United States imbricates extant syncretisms and utopic imagination. Friedman’s locational feminism, then, can be read as a way to approach the complexities of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century utopian novels.

In the case of “idiots and criminals,” as John calls them, Nellie’s response that “hopeless” idiots are no longer “kept” brings into uncomfortable proximity this new United States’ extant syncretisms and utopian qualities (24). Nellie’s response invokes networks of delineation already at work socially. The positives: (1) the elimination of the necessity of crime through the elimination of economic hardship and the panacea of universally valued, and varied, labor practices, and (2) the successful integration of humans facing mental, physical, and/or behavioral disabilities into society as a whole. These are two positive forms of cultural syncretism that undo classist violence, labor oppression, and the stigmatization of (most) individuals with disabilities. The negative: the barring of “hopeless” idiots, or those humans suffering from disabilities judged to be too debilitating, from society if not life. Such exclusion of those humans who require more help and hope is hardly utopian. The utopic that emerges, however, is not just Gilman’s limited utopian vision but the utopian vision of possible connection between a utopian society and potential members whose disabilities have been previously judged as unsupportable. What must come from reading Gilman, then, is an imagining of connection, affiliation, and possibility for those who require more assistance. The utopic forges a pathway for readers to consider the valuation of life not based on capability, ability, mental fortitude, or behavioral temperament, but
rather for considering a new value system that includes such people and does so in ways that are fulfilling and alternative to prior modes of inclusion or acceptance.

Such a value system would, in Friedman’s language, recognize the “enmeshing of mimesis and alterity” when considering sameness and difference (76). In Moving the Mountain, the new United States attempts to bridge the difference between those with and those without disabilities mimetically. Cruelly, it does so while (re)producing as the Other those with severe or debilitating disabilities. No evidence is given in the text concerning the lives of people with disabilities in this utopia, but their inferential inclusion (by way of the exclusion of those judged ‘too’ disabled’) can be read as requiring a more comprehensive network of social, political, and economic relations, a network that entangles people with and without disabilities in its utopianism. This entangled network, to make sense of Friedman’s use of the word “enmesh” and to represent Gilman’s utopian vision as a knot of mimesis and alterity, entails a tangling up/together of sameness and difference wherein points of contact and division exist in inextricable ways.

In Moving the Mountain, two alterities are produced or reinforced in this entanglement. Fully integrating those with disabilities unveils a primary alterity, one that entangles with the mimetic connection between people with and without disabilities. A secondary alterity, however, is reinforced via the exclusion of “hopeless” idiots, and it is this position of secondary alterity that requires, if not actuates, further utopic critique and imagination for readers. This production of primary and secondary alterity (and mimesis) emerges in Moving the Mountain in its opening chapters precisely because John and Nellie, in their conversations aboard the international vessel, “[travel] back and forth in the space in between difference” (Friedman 76). In between Europe and the United States, in between John’s former life and the new United States, John and Nellie’s
conversation creates the space for mimesis and alterity to multiply and for readers of utopian literature to actively engage in taking the utopian text further than its pages. Utopia, rather than a rigid blueprint to be reproduced by its readers, can be understood as a critical, imaginative (reading) process that requires activity on the reader’s part. As a method and not a goal, as Ruth Levitas (2013) argues, utopia can and should be approached as a process for evaluating networks of relation for those excluded and for envisioning new networks of relation that undo such exclusion.

Gilman ties together travel, networks of relation, exclusion, and utopia in Moving the Mountain’s concluding chapter. Set in relief against John’s traveling to utopia at the novel’s outset, the final chapter sees John traveling away from utopia to his family’s farm. As Nellie quips earlier in the novel that people might visit Aunt Dorcas and Uncle Jake as they might the Pyramids, John’s return to the family farm is a figurative traveling back in time to Antebellum United States. Growing “desperately homesick” in a world he cannot recognize as his own, John takes a train (“no air travel for this homecoming!”) to the Alleghenies to find a world “that had not changed” (110, 111). Gilman immediately marks this unchanged world with antebellum race and class conditions:

Here was something that had not changed. There was an old negro plowing, the same negro I remembered, apparently not a day older. It is wonderful how little they do change with years. His wool showed white, though, as he doffed his ragged cap and greeted me with cheerful cordiality as Mass’ John. (111)

---

50 As John begins to travel again, his queer feelings return. As he contemplates the changes undergone by the utopian United States, he comments on the “queer feeling” of the noticeable change in his words and judgement (109).

51 About people “visiting” Aunt Dorcas and Uncle Jake and the family farm, Nellie says at the beginning of the novel, “I mean they go to see them as if they were the Pyramids” (9). Like the Pyramids, the Antebellum United States was built by and upon slaves. The Pyramids, too, are the remnant tombs of ancient civilizations, and Nellie draws the comparison to mark the antiquarianism of the old family farm.
John finds solace in this picture of black servitude, predicated on antebellum networks of race (John identified as Master) and of class (a black man working the fields for a white family). Old Joe, as Uncle Jake calls him, smilingly and happily welcomes “Mass’ John” back to the United States he expected to find upon his return from Tibet. That John peppers this scene with racist stereotypes (the ageless black man) and dehumanization (Old Joe has wool and not hair) further situates the family farm in a time made historical and distant – yet accessible and still present - by the rest of the United States’ utopian qualities.52

Gilman pairs enduring servitude of black Americans on John’s family farm with antiquated gender relations. Aunt Dorcas tells John that Uncle Jake discontinued their subscription to the local church paper for growing “too liberal,” though it “‘never seemed over-liberal’” to Aunt Dorcas, and John finds in his cousin Drusilla “a sullen, hopeless timidity due to long restriction” (114, 115). Ultimately, the race, class, and gender conditions of Uncle Jake’s farm prove unsatisfying to John, and John convinces cousin Drusilla to marry him and leave the family farm for New York. John liberates Drusilla – but not Old Joe – from the racist, sexist past figured by the family farm, complicating the anti-racist sentiment in the final chapter and calling into question the (in)visibility of raced bodies in the utopian domain of the new United States. Like immigration at the novel’s outset, race relations appear as ambivalently figured in Moving the Mountain.

Though these ambivalences are uncomfortable and delimiting, the discursive openness of both the beginning and conclusion of Moving the Mountain can be read as expanding

52 Old Joe’s dialect, too, can be read as accentuating the difference between the racism at work in this chapter in contrast to the utopian erasure of racism in the rest of the novel: “‘We all been hearin’ about you, Mass’ John. We been powerful sorry ‘bout you long time, among de heathen,’ he said. ‘You folks’ll be glad to see you!’” (111). While “heathen” here probably means the “Feejees” Uncle Jake references on the next page, it can also be read to refer to the godless citizens “‘meddlin’ with Divine Providence’” in the rest of the United States (112).
consideration of utopia (and its relation to travel) as a method and not a goal. In the first three chapters, Nellie and the ship for which John has “no name” bring John to the new utopian United States, bringing into stark confrontation the rootedness of the United States’ utopianism and John’s own sense of rootedness in the United States. The United States – and its racist, sexist, classist politics - John left behind thirty years prior collides with the new United States and its feminist utopian socio-political structure. As John arrives in New York, much an immigrant himself in this new utopian United States, Gilman entangles a new immigration policy (“we refuse no one”) with John’s queer feelings of dissociation. While Gilman’s at times derogatory descriptions of immigrants contrast with this immigration policy of the utopian United States, the very openness of that policy creates a discursive opening in the text, one that leaves undefined and open the racial and ethnic makeup of the future – near or far - of the utopian United States. Similarly, that John travels inside of the utopian United States to a very dystopian region, and subsequently travels back to utopia from dystopia while never leaving the United States, undermines any sense that Gilman’s particular utopian vision in Moving the Mountains is totalizing or monolithic. Rather, Gilman renders the utopian United States of Moving the Mountains as incomplete. Gilman writes against stasis and in favor of mobility, growth, or even instability. Gilman recognizes utopia as a discursive and prevailingly open act of writing, critique, and imagination. While this does not emend Gilman’s own political and social shortcomings, this structural or formal openness does allow for a consideration of the utopianism in Moving the Mountain as something that can mature, expand, change, and adapt. As something open, adaptable, and expanding, utopia remains travelable and capable of further or alternative entanglement(s). Utopia can thus be read as an entanglement of roots and routes, of mimesis and alterity, a space for traveling towards, into, inside of, and away from.
2.2 Rape Culture in/and Herland

Subject positions within difference – a key conflict in utopian novels – act out the entangling of sameness and difference towards a reconciliation of the socio-political project of that utopia. In Moving the Mountain, this space of difference begins on the electric ocean liner and extends into parts of the United States. In Gilman’s Herland (1915), the utopian country of Herland itself becomes the main space of difference. Travel, or rather the means of travel, makes such difference navigable and bears on the entangling of mimesis and alterity in the novel. In particular, Terry’s bi-plane, the means by which Van, Terry, and Jeff enter – and exit – becomes an inextricable figure in the violence enacted on Alima by Terry towards the end of the novel. Terry’s rape of Alima represents Gilman’s deep concern with the violence that accompanies both roots and routes in Herland. The border, and the transversal of that border, becomes, in Herland, the space for thinking about violence against women as an ever-present possibility that haunts heterosexuality.

Gilman uses a similar dialogic structure in Herland as in Moving the Mountain, filtering her feminist utopian vision through conversations between Van and the utopian Herlanders. In this way, Gilman uses dialogics to educate the non-utopian outsider on Herland’s utopian qualities. While Gilman uses dialogic conversation in this way, Van narrates the entirety of Herland. His “masculine gaze,” the term Gilman uses in With Her in Ourland to refer to Herland, pervades the entire narration of Van, Terry, and Jeff’s expedition into Herland. Specifically, Van’s androcentric anthropology situates Herland as the Other against the United

---

53 As will be discussed later in the chapter, Gilman names this perspective the “masculine gaze” in the opening paragraphs of With Her in Ourland.
54 Gilman’s use of “masculine gaze” anticipates Laura Mulvey’s “male gaze” of the 1970s.
States, the two roots crystallizing as homelands through Van’s comparisons. While Van seems more intrusive than invasive in *Herland*, the sense of an invasion of the “masculine gaze” comes via Terry, culminating in his sexual assault of Alima. Terry, explicitly infatuated with sex, sexuality, and the attractiveness of the Herlanders, produces the Herlander natives as sexual objects for his taking, a familiar function of Mulvey’s “male gaze.” Terry, armed with his masculinity and its accompanying threat of violence as figured by the guns brandished by the men at the novel’s opening, invades Herland as a foreign agent, looking to alter its constitution through masculine colonization. Thus, the very idea of Herland is constituted by the permeating, hostile masculinity that defines the US men’s engagement with Herland. Herland’s rootedness crystalizes through the ruthlessness of the masculine gaze, rooted as that gaze is in the routes of US colonialism. Van, *Herland*’s protagonist, narrates his, Terry, and Jeff’s adventures in Herland, an all-women utopia located in an undisclosed jungle in the Amazon River basin. The three men, originally on an Amazonian expedition, hear stories of a secluded, if not impenetrable, nation comprising only women and, making use of Terry’s bi-plane, enter into

---

55 Van, in fact, while narrating Herland’s history, produces the very image of Herlanders for the readers and does so from his masculinist, imperialist perspective. Van writes, “There is no doubt in my mind that these people were of Aryan stock, and were once in contact with the best civilizations of the old world. They were ‘white,’ but somewhat darker than our northern races because of their constant exposure to sun and air” (55). Van produces Herlanders as “white,” though they are clearly “darker,” because Van cannot assimilate the Herland’s civilized status into his racist worldview. That is, for Van, what makes Herlanders “white” or “of Aryan stock” is their status as a civilized country. Non-white people, in Van’s estimation, cannot produce a utopia, though the non-white Herlanders clearly have.

56 Writing about “eventuary romances” such as H. Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines*, William Scheick (1994) argues, “Racism and imperialism merge with sexism as well when we recall that the literature of male encounters with foreign territory frequently describes this land as a female force to be subdued” (53). If, in Scheick’s estimation, *King Solomon’s Mines* integrates imperialism and sexism “exceptionally,” we might consider how Gilman writes her own exceptional integration of imperialism and sexism in *Herland* towards a much different purpose (53). “The end of *King Solomon’s Mines*,” writes Scheick, “valorizes an all-male world, a sort of paradise regained and temporarily freed from the curse of female-bequeathed mortality” (54). *Herland* ends with its all-women’s world very much intact and unavailable to the Alan Quartermain-esque Terry. Too, that Gilman, in *With Her in Ourland*, stages a reversal of the “journey to the interior” narrative by sending the Herlander Ellador out into the male-dominated world, suggests that Gilman actively participates in the “eventuary romance” genre in order to critique its misogynistic and imperialistic qualities.
Herland as colonial interlocutors. The three men, Van, Jeff, and Terry, pair with three Herlanders, Ellador, Celis, and Alima, as they explore Herland and learn about its history, culture, and citizens. These pairings of US men and Herlanders present both the possibility for positive entanglement – what the text will call bi-sexuality – and violent commingling – Terry’s rape of Alima. In *Herland*, as well as in *Moving the Mountain*, travel enacts the positive and negative syncretisms of intercultural connections at the heart of Friedman’s *Mappings*. While Van and Jeff, like John in *Moving the Mountain*, ultimately accept the feminist re-orientation of socio-political structures in Utopia, Terry rejects the de-centralization of men in Herland’s social and political orders, and his rape of Alima demonstrates the potential for violence in moments of inter-cultural contact.

Few critics, in reading *Herland*, devote much time to Terry’s rape of Alima. For Frances Bartkowski (1989), Alima’s rape signals Gilman’s excision of sexuality from her utopian vision (*Feminist Utopias* 32). Bartkowski is correct that Gilman focuses exclusively on reproduction and maternity, but Bartkowski’s slight attention to Alima’s rape and its implied relationship with her own sex liberation politics oversimplifies Gilman’s attitude towards sexuality in *Herland*. Nicole DeFee (2011) reads Terry as “the brute,” a figure in naturalist literature at the turn of the century. Though DeFee briefly links Terry’s “devolution” to brutishness with the novel’s approach to misogyny, there still remains significant work to do regarding the sexual violence that brings *Herland* to a close.

---

57 Lathrop (2006) and Evans (2014) both discuss the role of motherhood in *Herland* towards different conclusions. While Lathrop sees *Herland* as a flawed but redemptive early twentieth-century feminist utopia, Evans uses Lee Edelman’s concept of reproductive futurity to demonstrate the novel’s overarching conservatism.

58 DeFee’s approach to Terry as “the brute” hinges on his raping of Alima, and she compares Terry to other naturalist figures such as Frank Norris’ McTeague and both Edith Wharton’s Ethan Frome and Lawyer Royall (14).
This chapter understands rape in *Herland* as an integral moment in its narration and navigation of borders, travel, and difference. “Traveling,” writes Friedman, “is a concept that depends upon the notion of stasis to be comprehensible” (151). It requires a route (a pathway) between two roots (or fixed points). The relationship between routes and roots, the one that makes travel comprehensible, becomes purposefully murky and complicated in a utopian narrative. Because Herland is a root that must be explored, its fixity as a root is called into question. As both root and route, it emerges as the site of difference from which characters must travel back and forth. Difference, as Friedman rightly notes, can engender violence, and, in the case of *Herland*, does. To this point, Friedman warns against the “all-too-easy idealization of hybridity as utopian panacea for the brutalities that difference can sometimes exhibit” (156).

The brutality begins with Terry’s notion that “pretty women were just so much game” and culminates in his rape of Alima (10). Before even setting foot in Herland, their expedition is thus marked by violence. Gilman links the potential for and the actualization of brutality and violence with travel. When Terry, Van, and Jeff first see Herland, they are traveling high above it, flying over the country in Terry’s bi-plane. Aboard the bi-plane, each man carries provisions for their excursion, including their guns. Gilman weaponizes the very acts of travel and of entry from the beginning of the text (12). Once the three men surveil the land, they return to their place of lift-off, only to set out the next day with guns in hand (15). The threat of masculine violence, then, irrupts into the text, and this irruption signals the tension between Herland as a space of sameness for the Herlanders and a space of difference for the US men.

---

59 For Friedman, hybridity and syncretism can be “imposed” and can “impoverish,” and her concern is for the unequal and asymmetrical relations of powers in what Mary Louise-Pratt names the “contact zone.”

While the misogyny that Van, Terry, and Jeff bring with them to Herland frequently serves as a sort of contrapuntal comedy to the feminist utopian qualities of Herland, the threat of physical violence arises when the three US men first meet Ellador, Alima, and Celis in the outskirts of Herland. From the ground, the three US men espy the three Herlanders perched in a tree observing them, inverting the dynamics of power and surveillance previously at work as the US men circle over Herland in their bi-plane. Seeking to circumvent this inversion, the three men clamber up the tree, and, as the six figures all inhabit the large tree together, Terry tries to capture Alima by luring her with a “necklace of big varicolored stones” (18). Both sexism and racism are imbricated in Terry’s attempt to lure Alima with jewelry: the gesture relies on the double presumption that women and indigenous peoples find shiny objects irresistible. Resistant to such allure, Alima, described by Van as “a tall long-limbed lass, well-knit and evidently both strong and agile,” regards Terry and the necklace with the interest “of an intent boy playing a fascinating game [rather] than of a girl lured by an ornament” (18). Van narrates, “Terry’s smile was irreproachable, but I did not like the look in his eyes – it was like a creature about to spring” (18). Van’s imagination goes so far as to play out a scene of assault: “I could already see it happen – the dropped necklace, the sudden clutching hand – the girl’s sharp cry as he seized her and drew her in” (18). Van sees, or rather foreshadows, Terry’s sexual assault of Alima at the novel’s close. While Terry unsuccessfully snatches at Alima at this moment in the text, his physical pursuit of Alima permeates the entirety of Herland, culminating in his expulsion from Herland for sexually assaulting Alima. Terry’s attempted snatching of Alima and Terry’s rape of Alima bookend the time spent together in Herland by both the US men and the Herlander.

61 The title of this chapter of Herland is “Rash Advances.”
62 Alima’s resistance marks a resistance to the politics of misogyny and imperialism at work in the “eventuary romance” genre (Scheick) that Gilman is critiquing. It also involves a reversal or inversion of gender tropism in the novel, particularly how the US men must reconsider both their own and the Herlanders’ masculine and feminine markers.
natives. Terry’s bi-plane, and its capacity for entering and exiting Herland, bookends these moments, too, bringing into relation the capacity for travel with the capacity for sexual violence. The problems of borders, of travel, of difference in *Herland*, then, become problems of penetration.

The phallic shape of the bi-plane and the phallic nature of the guns carried by the three men further implicate the routes and roots in *Herland* as inf(l)ected by penetration. Since sex acts comprehensible to the US men do not exist in Herland, sex (penetration) and reproduction no longer exist in relation to one another. While reproduction via parthenogenesis marks the Herlanders as utopian others to Gilman’s readers, Gilman’s focus on reproduction sans penetration imagines what social reproduction might look like with the recognition of the sex act as always already intrusive or violent for women. In this way, Gilman critiques the very field of (hetero)sexuality as potentially always already dangerous to women and as possibly incapable of possessing space for women’s revolution via heterosexual liberation. Consider that, while the Herlander natives remain deeply intrigued by the possibilities of bi-sexual reproduction (reproduction via man and woman), the only attempt at bi-sexual sex acts is sexual assault and leads to the conclusion of the novel. In the penultimate chapter “Our Difficulties,” Terry sexually assaults Alima: “Terry put in practice his pet conviction that a woman loves to be mastered, and by sheer brute force, in all the pride and passion of his intense masculinity, he tried to master this woman” (131). After Alima calls for help and several Herlanders finally bind and anesthetize

---

63 This use of the construction “always already” is informed by Judith Butler’s essay “Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?” (2004). In this essay, Butler writes “The hypostasized heterosexuality, construed by some to be symbolic rather than social and so to operate as a structure that founds the field of kinship… has been the basis of the claim that kinship is always already heterosexual” (34). In this chapter, “always already” functions to code the field of heterosexuality, as in Butler, as a hypostasized, symbolic field that determines and is determined by the potential for violence against women. That is, heterosexuality’s potential for violence against women can be understood as both a constituent and product of it.
him, a trial convenes and levies the sentence on Terry, “‘You must go home!’” (131). The concept of home, particularly Terry’s home (the US, patriarchy, misogyny) comes into view as directly arising from his sexual assault of Alima. The route by which Terry hopes to lay roots (to conquer, to make his idea of home out of Herland) is one marked by intrusion, penetration, and violence. His attempted rape of Alima, as well as his initial attempted snatching of Alima, marks Herland as a text whose consideration of sex and sexuality recognizes the potential brutalities facing women in the syncretism of heterosexuality.

The novel’s final chapter, “Expelled,” concludes with Terry piloting himself, Ellador, and Van out of Herland and back into the rest of the world. The chapter features a sustained discourse on the word “sex,” particularly how, for Van and his historical cultural moment, the terms “men, man, manly, manhood” conjure up the entire history of civilization, while the word “women” merely means the female sex (135). In Herland, as Van points out, the reverse is true. Van, however, only partially acknowledges why this reversal of primacies bothers Terry. In the same way that Van makes several apologies for Terry’s behavior in the previous chapter – a deeply prescient look into modern rape culture politics, he substitutes Terry’s rage over Herlanders’ ignorance of sex acts with a rage over gender. “’Parcel of old maids!’ [Terry] called them. ‘They’re all old maids – children or not. They don’t know the first thing about Sex.’” (132). To this, Van relays to the reader, “When Terry said Sex, sex with a very large S, he meant the male sex naturally; its special values, its profound conviction of being ‘the life force,’ its

---

64 Ellador and Van leave Herland so that Ellador can explore the rest of the World. It is the first time a Herlander has ever left Herland.
65 In Transforming a Rape Culture (1993), Emilie Buchwald, Pamela R. Fletcher, and Martha Roth write, “In a rape culture, women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women and presents it as the norm” (1).
cheerful ignoring of the true life process, and its interpretation of the other sex solely from its own point of view” (132).

While Van is undoubtedly correct about Terry’s conviction concerning the supremacy of men over women, he immediately dismisses the possibility – or, rather, the probability – that what truly disgusts Terry is the Herlander’s total incomprehension of sex acts. Invoking the figure of the “old maid” to cast all Herlanders as stodgy, uptight, and fusty, Terry, quite forcefully, centralizes the lack of sex (the act) as his primary issue with Herland. Van’s attempt to explain Terry’s anger as derived from gender politics reinforces the centrality of sex acts as missing from Herland. Van, in the role of rape apologist, finds recourse for both blaming Alima for her role in Terry’s rape of her and suggesting Alima caused her own rape: “Of course I blame [Alima] somewhat” for not being “as fine a psychologist as Ellador” and possessing a “far-descended atavistic trace of more marked femaleness” (129). Claiming that Alima lacks the mental and/or emotional fortitude of Ellador while simultaneously possessing a more basic or animalistic feminine sexuality, Van casts Alima as either deserving of such violence or incapable of protecting herself from a violent brute like Terry. Van, implying a moral turpitude in Alima, implicates Alima as a responsible actant in her own rape. Thus, as Terry is being expelled from Herland, Gilman stages the damage and violence of rape culture as a final act in the traveling in and between difference of gender and (hetero)sexuality that marks the proposed syncretism of

66 In her essay “Backwards Medicine: Female Atavism, Whiteness, and the Medical Profession in ‘The Pineal Eye’” (2017), Deanna Gross Scherger writes, “In the late nineteenth-century United States, atavism was a concept that inspired the public imagination, referred to in scientific journals and popular presses alike as a condition to inspire fear and encourage the population to watch their behavior carefully to avoid a kind of evolutionary reversion” (98). Atavism, Scherger argues, “encapsulated larger cultural anxieties about racial hierarchy and reproduction” at the fin-de-siècle (98). By marking Alima as “atavistic,” Van is trafficking in explicitly racist and sexist discourses that promote particular ideas of Western superiority and native inferiority.
“bi-sexual” entanglement in *Herland* as a syncretism saturated with the potential for sexual violence against women.

Gilman indeed returns to “bi-sexual” entanglements in *With Her in Ourland*, but Terry’s rape of Alima and his expulsion from Herland indicate the limits of such entanglements. More than just the potential violence of (hetero)sexuality, these limits are the inevitable consequences of colonial patriarchy clashing with feminist utopianism. While this clashing clearly critiques colonial patriarchy, it also shows that Gilman’s vision of utopia is incomplete. Unsatisfied with this incomplete vision of utopia, Gilman sends Ellador and Van out into the world. Incapable of contending with the violence that remains a possibility in the space of difference, Ellador and Van leave Herland in order to better understand sameness, difference, and identity. In this way, *Herland* can be read as a point of travel towards a fuller vision of feminist utopianism.

2.3 Van’s Imperialism and Ellador’s Utopianism: The Bi-Sexual Method

As *Herland* ends with the expulsion of Terry, *With Her in Ourland* (1916) begins with a brief reminder of what the bi-plane brought to Herland. Van narrates, “We went up first, and made a wide circuit, that my wife Ellador might have a view of her own beloved land to remember… The little cities, the thick dotted villages, the scattered hamlets and wide parks of grouped houses lay again beneath our eyes as when we three men had first set our astonished masculine gaze on this ultra-feminine land” (6). Contrasted with Van’s description of Herland as that “ultra-feminine land,” the term “masculine gaze” captures the pervasive, invasive, and constitutive qualities of such gazing. In using the term in the first paragraph of the novel, Gilman contrasts the “masculine gaze” of the “ultra-feminine land” in *Herland* with Van and Ellador’s “bi-sexual gaze” on the world in *With Her in Ourland*. While “bi-sexual” operates in *Herland* as
the term to describe man-woman pairings, here it means gaze filtered through both Van and Ellador’s perspectives. This gaze attempts to yoke together a “masculine gaze” with a “feminine gaze” and Van’s Western gaze with Ellador’s Utopian gaze.

By using the “bi-sexual gaze” in With Her in Ourland, however, Gilman hopes to facilitate a more inclusive, more reconciliatory exploration of women’s issues. Mapping women’s issues onto the entire globe works to magnify the tremendous scope of misogyny and sexism. In With Her in Ourland, Van and Ellador travel the world, exploring towns and meeting people on every continent excepting Antarctica. Like Moving the Mountain and Herland, With Ourland is dialogic in structure and funneled through a man’s perspective. While the first two novels use dialogics to educate the non-utopian outsiders – John in Moving the Mountain and Van, Terry, and Jeff in Herland – the dialogic mode of With Her in Ourland blends together Ellador’s global education and Van’s re-education. Or, rephrased, as Ellador builds her worldview through her travels in war-torn Europe, North Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the United States, Van unlearns much of his androcentric, imperialist, and North American worldview. Gilman blends together Ellador’s worldview-in-making and Van’s worldview-unmade into a bi-sexual gaze meant to resist the hegemony of the masculine gaze at work in Herland.

By translating Van and Ellador’s bi-sexual gaze into a dialogical narrative, Gilman produces identity’s discursive nature. Friedman calls this discursiveness of identity “the geographics of identity” (19). Friedman understands the geographics of identity as predicated on difference and sameness, stasis and travel, certainty and interrogation, purity and mixing, emerging from “the movement between borders of difference and borderlands of liminality” (19). Gilman’s move to unveil the discursive nature of identity begins quickly in With Her in
*Ourland*, and it is the organizing principle around which Van and Ellador dialogically explore the world. As Van and Ellador meet people and visit different continents and countries, categories of identity such as “human,” “man,” and “woman” fall under intense scrutiny. By attacking the concept of “human nature” and the discursive work done to include men in and exclude women from this category, Gilman sets into motion a geographics of identity in hopes to undermine the certainty with which people in the early twentieth century approached these categories. That such dialogue can only be set in motion while traveling further emphasizes the purport of movement for mapping identity formations in Friedman’s work.

Gilman, by routing Van and Ellador’s bi-sexual gaze globally, attempts to present feminism as a global necessity, reconciling cultural difference with universal gender oppression in such a way that still keeps intact the various different cultures presented in the novel. In so doing, Gilman perhaps most acutely narrativizes Friedman’s locational feminism in *With Her in Ourland*. Gilman uses this “bi-sexual gaze” to correct *Herland*’s “masculine gaze” by introducing Ellador’s non-masculine standpoint. Too, as Van comes from the United States and Ellador comes from a utopian country secreted away “among the thousand tributaries of a great river,” 67 Gilman also attempts to introduce a bi-hemispheric gaze into her work (4). This Transatlantic gaze, organized around Van’s US sympathies and Ellador’s Herlandian sympathies, attempts to mitigate an overly Westernized approach to global feminism. As will be seen through tracing Van and Ellador’s globetrotting, the gazes informing the development of Gilman’s global feminist politics are not without pitfalls. The extent to which these modes of engagement – bi-sexual gaze, bi-hemispheric gaze – both succeed and fail to blend together sameness and

---

67 Gilman does not explicitly name the Amazon River, but, as the only river in the world with over 1000 tributaries, it follows that the excursion has led Terry, Van, and Jeff to South America.
difference can be read as an insightful narrativization of the intermingling of borders, travel, and identity in Friedman’s theory.

On their way from the Mediterranean to Africa, Ellador converses with a German officer and an Italian professor of Egyptology and reads histories written by “North Europeans” (33). From her conversations and reading, Ellador learns that the concept “The World” frequently means, to the German officer, the Italian professor, and the North European historians, “their own people” (33). Immediately, then, Ellador begins to understand that purportedly universal categories such as “The World,” as defined by these North European men, exclude most of it. “Perhaps,” Ellador conjectures, “when we get to Persia, India, China and Japan, it will be different” (33). Juxtaposing this list of countries that contain large populations, possess lengthy histories, and encompass significant portions of the globe with the concept of “The World” as derived from histories written by individual North European races, Gilman reveals the tribalism, constitutiveness, and exclusionism that work to produce “The World” so separated from the rest of the world.

Ellador continues interrogating ontological categories as she constructs her worldview. Van “had always assumed that humanity did thus and so,” but Ellador teaches Van that not only was masculinity the sole agent of “thus and so” but also that, as European nations defined (or disguised) themselves as “The World,” masculinity defined and disguised itself as humanity (34). Thus, Van protests when Ellador says Scandinavian men “indulged in piracy” and Spanish men “practiced terrible cruelties,” complaining that Ellador “[was] trying to make out a case against men” (34). Ellador, rather than “trying to make out a case against men,” separates national identity (Scandinavian, Spanish) from gender identity (man, woman) to make the

---

68 “It was different,” corroborates Van (33).
69 Presumably, this refers to the Spanish Inquisition.
rhetorical argument that nationality does not (or should not) imply any one particular gender. Van wishes for Ellador to simply say “Scandinavian” or “Spanish” without explicitly referencing “men,” but, since Scandinavian women were not pirates nor did Spanish women commit terrible cruelties, Ellador makes the distinction between Scandinavian or Spanish men and woman. By making this distinction, Ellador demonstrates both that allegedly “gender-less” national categories such as Scandinavian and Spanish obscure their masculinist composition and that such categories are never actually gender-less. Ellador tells Van that he “does not mind” when she says Phoenician men “made great progress in navigation” or Greek men “developed great intelligence,” since, in his historical narrative, men succeed and nations or races fail. Though Van quickly interjects Scandinavian women would have “raided England and France” and Spanish women would have “[crossed] the ocean and [tortured] the poor Aztecs,” he cannot ascent to the idea that Phoenician women would have made great progress in navigation or Greek women would have developed great intelligence because woman, in Van’s estimation, lack the capacity or ability to do so (34). Ellador, in this conversation with Van, reveals the patriarchal bend and aim to his world- and nation-making. By taking up Scandinavian, Greek, Spanish, and Phoenician histories in conversation with one another, Ellador hopes to demonstrate the cross-culturality and trans-historicism of patriarchal world- and nation-making.

Rather than respond derisively to Van, Ellador takes this conversation as an opportunity to reassert her belief “that two sexes, working together, must be better than one” (35). “I’m firm in my conviction,” announces Ellador, “of the superiority of the bisexual method” (35). Perhaps Ellador is right to feel affirmed in her convictions: Van presents the ‘facts’ of historical development and cultural character and, in response, Ellador re-writes these ‘facts’ of history and culture as narratives of masculine triumphs and ‘human’ failings that, purposefully and violently,
privilege men and exclude women. Van, at the end of the conversation, sees this himself, neatly summarizing the misogynistic discourses that (in)form history and reality: “Wherever men had been superior to women we had proudly claimed it as a sex-distinction. Wherever men had shown evil traits, not common to women, we had serenely treated them as race characteristics” (35). The bi-sexual method, then, can be understood as a dialogic space of telling and re-telling, a space wherein Ellador repeatedly undermines Van’s traditional historical narratives and offers her own anti-colonialist version of histories and cultures.

As noted above, this conversation occurs while Van and Ellador are on board a ship traveling from the Mediterranean to North Africa. By placing Van’s realization of the sexism inherent to narratives of history (and, subsequently, the discourses of identity) on a ship, Gilman locates the unveiling of identity’s discursive nature in the in-between. Dislodged and dislocated, Van’s worldview – the prevailing masculine worldview – becomes unstable and available for interrogation, demonstrating the very precariousness of its presumed fixity. Van and Ellador, too, in discussing the histories of cultures across Europe (and across history), begin to mix together sameness and difference. Each culture, in Van and Ellador’s conversation, has its own triumph and its own failing, but Ellador makes sure to illuminate the constancy/universality of women’s erasure. Van and Ellador’s conversation, tracking histories, cultures, discursive sexism, and the formations of identity, can be read as the foundational backdrop against which Gilman sets the rest of the novel’s interrogation of gender and identity.

Immediately following this conversation, Van and Ellador, accompanied by Professor Signori (the Egyptologist), travel across North Africa, making stops in Tunis, Algiers, Cairo, and Abydos. Ellador marvels at the “five separate cultures” that each made their homes in succession in Abydos, Egypt, and, as Van tells the reader, “found much that pleased her in the power and
place of historic womanhood” in studying ancient Egypt (35, 36). Rather than typecast native African women as uncivilized, Ellador begins to establish a genealogy of dignity for African women, starting with ancient Egypt. By establishing this genealogy of dignity for African women, Ellador continues her (re)visionary project of re-writing history. Traveling across North Africa, Ellador begins documenting the conditions of grass, trees, and the natural world, noting “the value of the palm, the olive, and others” while “readily [understanding] the whole system of irrigation and its enormous benefits” (38). Ellador, however, holds in lesser regard the traditional methods of the “fellaheen” “using the shadoof” for agricultural purposes (38). In wondering why the fellaheen still use traditional, culturally specific tools, Ellador here draws a line between tradition and progress, deeply favoring the latter over the former. Ellador, ultimately, sees this lack of progress as borne from the exclusion of women from decision-making processes, asserting that any attempt by women to “innovate and rebel” would result in the penalty of not being marriageable (38). Ellador calls this “extinction – the end of that variety of woman” (38).

Van responds, “’Everybody knows that their [women in North Africa] position is pitiful and a great check to progress. Wait till you see my country [the United States]!’” (38). Van asserts that the mistreatment of North African women derives from a failing of North African cultures, a moral failing inherent to North African people and traditions. This assertion reifies Van’s sense of the United States’ superiority and (North) Africa’s inferiority, and it is this specific form of cultural hierarchy that Ellador frequently undoes in their conversations. Eager to contrast North African misogyny with his perceived lack of misogyny in the United States, Van, unwittingly, brings the position of North African women into relationship with US women, allowing the reader to think of the ways that US women are also excluded from “education, opportunity, or encouragement in variation” (38). Van’s comparison between North Africa and

70 “Fellaheen” is a North African farmer, and the “shadoof” is an early tool used for irrigation.
the United States fails to reify a hierarchal imbalance between the two poles precisely because misogyny, as Ellador frequently points out in the novel, permeates international borders and boundaries.

As Van and Ellador’s trip moves into Asia, Ellador’s feelings rise and fall in proportion to each country’s treatment of women. “The surviving matriarchate in the island hills” of Burma “was something of a comfort” to Ellador, as are the wonders of the Himalayas and Tibet (39). Ellador’s spirits sink in India, though, as “English and native friends” tell her of the status of women in their country. In China, Ellador finds “intelligence, intellect, a high cultural development,” “beautiful art,” and “an extensive literature” (39). However, Ellador’s delight in China is checked when she encounters the practice of foot-binding, from women “serenely installed in rich gardens and lovely room” to “poor women, working women, toiling in the field, carrying their little mats to kneel on while they worked, because their feet were helpless aching pegs” (40). Ellador draws together wealthy women and poor women in this tradition to demonstrate that class cannot save women from the ubiquity of this practice. After hearing a small child undergoing such a practice, Ellador falls silent for several days. “’To think,’” Ellador bemoans, “’that there are on earth men who can do a thing like that to women – to little helpless children!’” (41). Still incapable of registering systemic sexism and misogyny, Van removes blame from the men and places it firmly on the women, claiming, “’It is the women, their own mothers, who bind the feet of the little ones. They are afraid to have them grow up “big-footed women’”’” (40). Ellador responds to Van by asking, “’Afraid of what?’”, hoping to coax out of Van a recognition that such fear finds its roots in masculinely defined concepts of beauty and marriageability. Big-footed women, Ellador realizes, lack social or bodily capital, but Van cannot see how women’s fear of such lack derives from misogynistic socio-cultural value
systems. For Van, foot-binding reflects Chinese women’s foolishness. For Ellador, however, this practice again demonstrates the deep, inescapable instantiation of women’s global subjugation by both social and physical means.

After this scene, Van forecloses the opportunity to learn more about Chinese culture, as he relays that Ellador and Van met “the most interesting and valuable people, missionaries, teachers, diplomats, merchants, some of them the educated English-speaking Chinese” (42). Lacking Ellador’s appreciation of China’s extensive literature, beautiful art, and high cultural development, Van has little taste for Chinese culture or peoples. Van privileges agents of Western imperialism such as missionaries, teachers, diplomats, and merchants over Chinese people, while also privileging “educated English-speaking Chinese” over Chinese people who do not speak English. In doing so, Van aligns himself with the Western imperial project. That Van’s alliance with Western imperialism immediately follows Ellador’s mourning of the treatment of women in China demonstrates Gilman’s entanglement of feminism and anti-colonial critique in the novel. Further, by contrasting Ellador’s anti-colonial feminist project with Van’s colonial ideologies, Gilman further separates Ellador’s utopian perspective from the domineering and violent perspective of masculinist imperialist discourses.

The dialogic rhetoric of the “bi-sexual method” thus stages the potentials for violence and alliance in what Mary Louise Pratt calls the “contact zone.” In her groundbreaking essay “Arts of the Contact Zone,” an essay Friedman repeatedly references and cites in *Mappings*, Pratt defines a “contact zone” as a “social [space] where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (2). Pratt’s conceptualization of the contact zone, an idea that informs Friedman’s own understandings of borders, migration, contact, difference, power, and identity, can be used to frame how Gilman stages her global
feminist project through the dialogics of Van and Ellador’s bi-sexual gaze. Van and Ellador bring to China unique power dynamics. Van, as a white man from the US, and Ellador, as the previously secluded and hidden Herlander, both traffic in particular ideas of progress, superiority, and morality. Van, of course, believes the US to be superior (morally, technologically, aesthetically, socially, ad infinitum) to China and the rest of the world, and he seems only too happy to condemn Chinese women for continuing the practice of foot-binding. Ellador, coming from the utopian Herland, possesses a unique perspective on gender relations and cultural power dynamics. Only women exist in Herland, and the country organizes itself around and reproduces itself through an “education for citizenship” of its children (109); a rejection of worship and monotheism (111); a rejection of motherhood as a “helpless involuntary fecundity” and reconsideration of mothers as “Conscious Makers of People” (69); a lack or refusal of national pride or Patriotism (95); as well as an immensely cultivated sense of agriculture.

Too, Ellador is new to the rest of the world, having no contact with it before the US men’s intrusion into Herland and her subsequent globetrotting with Van. This adds further complexity to her position in relation to China. While Van comes to China with a fully-formed worldview, one predicated on the dominion of the United States, Ellador explores China as part of forming a worldview. Though Ellador’s Herlandian roots inform this formational project, its lack of androcentrism and Western/Eastern asymmetrical power relations allows Ellador to approach this worldmaking project with an orientation towards openness of consideration and possibility. Van and Ellador, in their particularly contextualized relations to China and the rest of the world, meet these various cultures with different outcomes: Van, in his masculinist imperialism, reproduces the asymmetrical relations of power that defends the superiority of the
United States and entrenches the inferiority of China, while Ellador attempts to write a new world history that undoes such cultural asymmetry and replaces that asymmetry with a global indexing of misogyny and its co-constitutive ties with colonial domination.

Ellador’s critique of the United States’ investment in misogynist and colonialist violence further levels out the cultural asymmetry at play in the contact zone. While Ellador mourns the treatment of women in North Africa and across Asia, she saves her most scathing and sustained critique for the United States. Spurred on by Van’s repeated adulation of his home country and the prospect of the United States’ relative youth in comparison to African and Asian countries, Ellador eagerly awaits her time in the United States. Ellador assumes that the United States’ relative youth as a nation means the lack of an entrenchment of prejudicial belief structures, but, as she quickly discovers, the United States’ foundation and history cannot be extricated from the violence of such trenchant belief structures. Thus, Van and Ellador’s journey from Japan to the United States begins with a laying bare of the United States’ genocide of native peoples. Van’s history of this genocide causes “the rich colour [to] fade from [Ellador’s] face, and her dear gentle mouth set in harder lines of control” (46). As Van continues to describe this “national shame,” Van notes the return to a “lovely far-off homesick look” to Ellador’s eyes (46, 47). Ellador’s homesick look reflects her utter dismay at the United States’ treatment of native peoples, capturing her desire to return to the egalitarian Herland.

71 By using the dialogics of Van’s patriotism and Ellador’s skepticism to critique the United States, Gilman captures the “double vision” Paul Giles sees in other early twentieth-century texts such as Israel Zangwill’s The Melting Pot (The Global Remapping of American Literature 10). Giles writes, “This kind of double vision, simultaneously constructing and deconstructing an image of America as promised land, was characteristic of the way American modernism tended to be wrapped into a rhetoric of nativist utopia, a rhetoric that served as the foundational basis and underlying grid for all the subsequent vacillations and ironies that permeate its texts (10). If, to an extent, Gilman reproduces the rhetoric of nativist utopianism in Moving the Mountain by placing her feminist utopia in a future (1940s) United States, the strength and breadth of her critique of the United States in With Her in Ourland functions as a sort of de-mystification or de-mythification of the United States as utopian.
Though the two do not dwell for long on the genocide of native peoples during their Transpacific voyage, Ellador returns to the subject of US colonialism when the two arrive in Hawaii. 72 Describing the native Hawaiians prior to US contact, Ellador says, “‘They were beautiful and healthy and happy; they were courteous and kind; and oh, how splendidly they could swim! Even the babies, they tell me’” (50). Ellador continues, shifting to the current state of Hawaii, “‘But look here, my dear. Then came the missionaries 73 and – interfered. Now these natives and owners of the land are only 15 per cent. of the population, with 20 per cent. of the deaths. They are dispossessed and are being exterminated’” (50). 74 Van’s numerous responses -- to ask “‘Well?’; to ask “‘You’re not blaming me, are you?’”; to embark “on one of those confined and contradictory explanations by which the wolf who has eaten the lamb seeks to show how unavoidable – if not how justifiable it all was’” -- encapsulate the breadth of discursive constitutiveness requisite of identity formation. In this case, Gilman shows how the formation of the “American” identity necessitates particular narratives to legitimize US imperialism and violence. 75 To make Van see the situation more clearly, Ellador compares the colonization of Hawaii to England’s imperial conquest against the Boers at the end of the nineteenth century, a piece of violent colonial expansion Van finds “particularly inexcusable”

72 In “The Imperial Routes of Mark Twain,” Amy Kaplan discusses how Twain used his lectures on Hawaii to position himself “as a civilized white American by virtue of his travels among primitive peoples” (60). Here, Gilman critiques the United States’ imperial genocide of native Hawaiians in a way that unveils what Kaplan calls the highly “racialized discourse of national identity” at work in Twain’s lectures.
73 Ellador’s condemnation of missionaries in this instance contrasts with Van’s celebration of missionaries in China.
74 Gilman does not make explicit Ellador’s sources for this information. Van, while telling Ellador about the United States’ genocide of native peoples, mentions Helen Hunt Jackson’s A Century of Dishonor (1881), a compendium of atrocities committed by the US government against native peoples, but this text does not mention Hawaii or Hawaiian natives.
75 Kaplan: “Racial discourses do not move in a unidirectional way with the outward course of empire, but they circulate among different imperial sites to build, reinforce, and contest meanings in relation to one another” (84).
Ellador’s feminist project involves the consideration of imperialism as a globally recognizable mechanism of violence. Imperialism, like misogyny, infests the world over. In writing a history of the world that considers the globalization of imperialism and misogyny, Ellador continues to both tie together misogyny and imperialism as co-constitutive power dynamics and to re-define Van’s worldview as predicated precisely on those power dynamics.

As Van and Ellador’s time in the United States continues, Ellador forces Van to confront the other “national shames” of the United States. About democracy, immigration and slavery, Ellador says to Van, “‘To legitimate immigrants, able and willing to be American citizens, there can be no objection, unless they come too fast. But to millions of deliberately imported people, not immigrants at all, but victims, poor ignorant people scraped up by paid agents, deceived by lying advertisements, brought over here by greedy American ship owners and employers of labor, there are objections many and strong’” (70). Van claims that slaves and former slaves “‘can be made into American citizens,’” to which Ellador bluntly responds, “‘They can be, but are they?’’” (70). Ellador’s attack on the United States’ supposed democracy thus begins with this excoriation of the treatment of African and African American people. Ellador’s critique of the treatment of black Americans continues later in the text during a conversation “with a Southern sociologist, who was particularly strong on what he called ‘race conflict’” (112). Ellador greatly confounds this “Southern sociologist,” challenging him on points of miscegenation, race purity, and the “natural” failings of black people (113). Ultimately, Ellador ends this conversation, held publicly and much at the social expense of this sociologist, by “[reeling] off a… list of achievements of the negro race… their developments in wealth, in industry, in the professions…
in the arts” (114-115). Ellador hinges her argument against racism and the oppression of black people on the “noble progress” made by a people subjected to generations of slavery.

Throughout this dialogic interrogation of the United States, Ellador uncovers the imperialist and racist politics that produce Van’s treasured home country. Ellador’s outsider position affords her the opportunity to study the development of US history free of nationalist bias or pride. In this way, Ellador can show to Van the forms of nationalism that blind him to violence perpetrated by the US on indigenous people and people of color. This same standpoint allows her to find immense value in the US women’s movement and labor movement and connect these movements to socialism. She tells Van of these interrelated movements, “’Both [US women’s movement and labor movement] seem to be swiftly growing stronger. The most inclusive forward-looking system is Socialism, of course. What a splendid vision of immediate possibilities that is. I can not accustom myself to your not seeing it at once’” (122). Ellador admits that “ancient mistakes” such as racism, religious dogma, and capitalist economics occlude most United States citizens from seeing more clearly the benefits of women’s liberation and labor reform, but, as the outsider, she can only see both Socialism’s possibilities and Van’s distrust of such possibilities. Thus, much like her critiques of the genocide of indigenous people, the dispossession of Hawaiians, and the treatment of people of color, Ellador, as the “objective” outsider, can see both the problems and their historical, social, and political constituents. The dialogics at work in With Her in Ourland, as employed by Gilman through Van and Ellador’s conversations, attempt to diagnose the ills of the United States and propose solutions to such ills through an unbiased but interested external party.

---

76 Ellador offers no explicit explanation of how this socialism would benefit the United States. More than likely, Ellador views socialism, defined by a rejection of capitalist alienation and universal suffrage as ushering in a social and political egalitarianism, resulting in – possibly – the utopian United States John finds in his return to the country in Moving the Mountain.
As Ellador critiques the internationalization of “ancient mistakes” such as racism, religiosity, and capitalist classism (122), she understands internalization as a requisite facet, result, and constituent of asymmetrical power dynamics and the violence waged against the Other, and her most fervent critique of the United States centers on women’s internalization of misogyny and sexism. Ellador sees “prostitution” and “slavery” as “natural,” albeit deplorable, extensions of “evil conditions,” but it is Anti-Suffragists that most bear the mark of oppression in the United States (130). She finds women’s opposition to women’s liberation as “un-natural,” as explicitly predicated on the internalization of women’s subjugation (131). What Ellador calls “un-natural” might be rephrased as self-effacement. For her, this “un-natural” self-effacement derives from, and constitutes, the pervasive sexism and misogyny defining US politics and culture. Women need “new standards, new hopes, new ideals, new purposes,” according to Ellador, and it is with this mindset that Ellador and Van return to Herland (133).

Back in Herland, with a “passionate enthusiasm,” Ellador “poured out, in wide tours of lecturing, and in print, her report of world conditions” to her fellow Herlanders, stirring “in Herland a new spirit, pushing seeking, a new sense of responsibility, a larger duty” (148). Compelled by Ellador’s presentation of the state of the rest of the world, particularly with the needs of women for “new standards, new hopes, new ideals, new purposes,” the possibility of travel, of making new routes in/to a world of ancient roots, Ellador and her fellow Herlanders begin to awaken to what a large cultural entangling could mean for oppressed peoples of the world. With the route from Herland to the outside world already mapped by Van and Ellador’s travels, the possibilities of a new syncretism – of a utopic syncretism - emerges at the end of *With Her in Ourland*, opening up new methods of connection, affiliation, and reconciliation.

---

Ellador, by linking “prostitution” and “slavery,” again sees the interrelationship between misogyny and colonialism.
between races, genders, cultures, and nationalities. In traveling back to Herland and subsequently imploring Herlanders to travel into the rest of the world, Ellador embodies the persona utopia as necessarily a traveler. The persona utopia must travel, must find routes and roots towards more symbiotic and sympathetic cultural interactions.

Utopian novels, in their structure, narrativize the development of concepts such as ‘home’ and ‘identity’ through the routes traveled by protagonist between the root of the ‘real world’ and the root of ‘utopia’. Though problems of identity and home, such as pervasive whiteness and the centralization of Western feminism, persist in Gilman’s novels, by reading them with Friedman’s locational feminism, this chapter makes the argument that Gilman attempts, succeeds, and fails to engage productively with difference and sameness. This engagement occurs through conversations about women’s rights, immigration policies, imperialist expansion, and enslavement and oppression. Gilman’s various successes and failures reproduce the potential for positive and negative cultural interactions in contact zones and the spaces between borders and liminality. Reading Mappings alongside Moving the Mountain, Herland, and With Her in Ourland demonstrates the applicability of Friedman’s locational feminism and “geographics of identity” to utopian literature and utopian thinking. As a text clearly attuned to utopian discourse, Friedman’s Mappings, when used as a lens for feminist utopian literature, can be understood as another example of feminist theory from the 1990s that recognizes the sympathies and interconnectivity between feminism and utopianism.

The following chapter continues examining issues of identity and alterity in women’s utopian literature. Chapter III traces how both utopia and melancholy bears on the formation of utopian identities. Taking up Mari Ruti’s claim that utopia and melancholy are interrelated affects, this next chapter reads Mary Griffith’s Three Hundred Years Hence (1836), Mary E.
Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1881), Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s *New Amazonia* (1889), Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903), Lillian B. Horace Jones’ *Five Generations Hence* (1916), and Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911). Using Anne Anlin Cheng’s work on racial melancholy and Judith Butler’s work on gender melancholy, this chapter argues that utopianism provides a particularly potent affective and imaginative response to the material and psychical conditions of racial, gender, and sexual melancholy. By taking into consideration both the material and psychical conditions of utopian protagonists suffering from melancholy, this next chapter continues to demonstrate that alterity plays a significant role in women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
3 LOSS, RACE, AND THE MELANCHOLY OF UTOPIA

In reading women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this dissertation agrees with Sarah Webster Goodwin’s claim that “because any definition of feminism must include an impulse to improve the human community, feminism seems to have at least an inherent utopian inclination” (“Knowing Better” 1) and follows Mary Eagleton’s injunction that “we must continue to unpick the complex construction of women in history, in culture, in the psyche as a necessary part of envisaging new politics” (“Literary Representations of Women” 117). I argue in Chapter II that Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s attempt to create a global feminist politics in her utopian trilogy grows up and out of the complexity of the constructedness of the category of “woman” in (as well as alongside) history and culture. Throughout her three utopian novels, Gilman makes explicit her belief that the improvement of the human community hinges incontrovertibly on the improvement of women’s conditions. Using Susan Stanford Friedman’s locational feminist theory and her emphasis on routes/roots, Chapter II explores issues of travel, identity, and im/migration in Moving the Mountain (1911), Herland (1915), and With Her in Ourland (1916), Chapter II shows how Gilman endeavored to trouble or complicate the borders and boundaries between nations and categories of identity, often by staging utopian moments in the movements in/through those liminal spaces. By focusing on how, why, and when protagonists moved into, through, and out of utopian spaces, Chapter II claims that feminist utopianism is suspicious of the ethical shortcomings of gendered, raced, cultural, sexed hierarchies coterminous with rigid or delimited categories of existence. Rather, feminist utopianism finds traction in the porousness of borders and the constructedness of identity categories.
While Gilman does not always succeed in creating a global feminist politics that avoids exclusionary rhetoric or the flattening of signifying differences between women of varying nations and cultures, she attends to issues of race and colonialism with surprising alacrity. In her third and final utopian novel, *With Her in Ourland*, Gilman recognizes most acutely the inseparability of misogyny from racism and Western imperialism. Gilman understands that sexism, racism, and colonialism are co-constitutive modes of oppression, and that any feminist politics must address racist and colonialist forms of violence as well as those rooted in the enforcement of normative gender roles and heterosexuality. Though Gilman organizes her critiques of sexism, racism, and colonialism under the aegis of utopia and thus the realm of fantasy, Chapter II remains focused on the materiality (historical and cultural) of Gilman’s global feminism. This chapter emphasizes the psychical, fantastical, and immateriality of the “complex construction of women” to continue theorizing a feminist utopianism that accommodates the co-constitutiveness of the categories of gender, sexuality, race, and nationality.

Focalizing “the psyche,” this chapter thinks through the frequent appearance of melancholy in women’s utopian novels and the relationship between melancholy and utopia as two interrelated modes of responding to an impoverished present. Doing so involves crafting a complex matrix of texts written by British and American women, by black and white women, by women as early as 1836 and as late as 1916, and by women writing about male and female protagonists. This chapter’s theoretical lens is Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic definition of melancholy as well as modern theories of racial and gender melancholy, taking up Anne Anlin Cheng’s claim that “we do not yet know what it means for politics to accommodate the concept of identity based on constitutive loss” (25). In its melancholic moments, women’s utopian literature, explores how racial, cultural, gendered, and sexual forms of constitutive loss inform
and shape utopian modes of critique and imagination. In short, this chapter returns utopia to the realm of fantasy to better understand the psychology of loss facing utopian protagonists in novels by Mary Griffith, Mary E. Bradley Lane, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett, Pauline E. Hopkins, and Lillian Jones Horace.

In “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), Sigmund Freud writes, “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (242). Melancholia “too may be the reaction to the loss of a loved object” but, importantly, “is a loss of a more ideal kind” (244). “The object has not perhaps actually died,” Freud continues, “but has been lost as an object of love” (244). For Freud, this distinction arises from a difference between conscious and unconscious loss: “one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either” (244). Or, rephrased again, the patient “knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him” (244). This form of a loss “of a more ideal kind,” a form that implies a certain illegibility of that very loss, leads Freud to comment, quite famously, “In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (245). While the mourner can, through mourning, ultimately contend with and give up the lost object (give it back to the world, so to say), the melancholic, both through the opacity of what has been lost and the internalization of that loss, cannot let go of that loss (the poor and empty ego/self). If melancholy, and not mourning, pervades utopian literature, then utopianism, in ways this chapter hopes to illuminate and elucidate, provides some sort of psychical or imaginative response to, relief from, or confrontation with “an identification of the ego with the abandoned object” the melancholic
cannot release back into the world (248). Utopianism, as a particular response to both a “poor and empty” world and a “poor and empty” self, might provide a psychical or imaginative space of reconciliation of the melancholic subject to an impoverished world whose perpetual and seemingly inescapable impoverishment requires something more than mourning – melancholia and/or utopia – from the melancholic subject.

In *The Ethics of Opting Out* (2017), Mari Ruti asks, “How, then, can utopia and melancholia be reconciled?” (181). “Both utopia and melancholia,” according to Ruti, “are modalities of opting out of an unsatisfying present” (181). Ruti continues, “Both are ways of cathecting to a place of impossibility, of insisting on the affective necessity of what is absent: for utopia, the absence in question is the not-yet-present (an ideal future) whereas for melancholia it is the no-longer present (the lost object or ideal)” (181). For Ruti, a “lost object or ideal” is never “the loss of an actual object” but instead a “fantasmatic conjuring,” so that the “no-longer present” of melancholy is always inflected by the “never-was” of constitutive lack (*Distillations* 135). Ruti implies but does not state explicitly in this configuration that both the not-yet and the no-longer are a part of the subject’s fantasy structure.\(^7\) In configuration, then, utopia and melancholy cathect and insist in different directions temporally, and they both do so fantasmatically and in response to “an unsatisfying present” that implies critique (what is absent) and imagination (what might be gained) in ways that potentially, when thought of in tandem, unshackle each modality of opting out from its particular presumed temporal tendency or trajectory. By seeing how the no-longer (melancholy) and the not-yet (utopia) interact, influence, and affect each other, we can

---

\(^7\) About the relationship between fantasy and reality for Freud, Jacqueline Rose writes, “In fact, Freud’s move was... towards a dimension of reality all the more important for the subject because it goes way beyond anything that can, or needs to be, attested as fact” (*Sexuality in the Field of Vision* 13). Melancholy and utopia, both found in the fantastical, are critical – if not essential – sites of analysis.
begin to think through what utopianism might mean for melancholic subjects and their impoverished and unsatisfying world.

Ruti comes to the relationship between melancholy and utopia by reading the “forward-looking queer utopia” of José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia* (2009) alongside the “backward-looking analysis of bad feelings” in Heather Love’s *Feeling Backward* (2007) as a way through the mire of the relational/anti-relational debate in contemporary queer theory. While Ruti does not address utopian literature from the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, her theory can be used to illuminate how melancholy seems nearly inescapable for utopian protagonists in women’s utopian literature. To build upon Ruti’s initial comments on the relationship between melancholy and utopia and to expand upon this dissertation’s consideration of the intellectual and imaginative sophistication of women’s utopian literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this chapter focuses on Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836), Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1881), Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s *New Amazonia* (1889), Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911), and Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916). Reading this collection of novels, we can begin thinking about utopianism as a psychoanalytically adjacent practice, one that provides melancholic protagonists with the opportunity to re-orientate towards their multiple forms of inscrutable loss.

This chapter begins with a consideration of how melancholy is borne out of-- while simultaneously emplaced inside-- the confines of utopia. This first section, “Melancholy in Utopia,” puts into conversation the various forms of melancholy experienced by protagonists in Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*, Lane’s *Mizora*, and Corbett’s *New Amazonia* as a byproduct of utopian travel. In this section, I use theories of racial melancholy from Anne Anlin
Cheng (2000) and David Eng (2010) to theorize how and why utopic travelers experience melancholy as a response to travel, displacement (or detemporalization), and/or racial othering. In the second section of this chapter, “Melancholy and Utopia,” I build on these readings by attending to melancholy as experienced in Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* and Horace’s *Five Generations Hence*. This section supplements my reading of Cheng’s *Melancholy of Race* with Jermaine Singleton’s recent *Cultural Melancholy* (2015) to explore more profoundly the connections between race, melancholy, and utopia in these novels. Finally, this chapter concludes with a short coda, “Melancholy as Utopia as Queer,” to think through queerness’ relationship to melancholy and utopia in *Five Generations Hence* and Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain*. By bringing together issues of travel, race, queerness, and utopia, this chapter seeks to continue to expand the emotional depth and modern resonances of utopian novels that are frequently overlooked or misread.

3.1 Melancholy in Utopia

Considered to be the first utopian novel written by a woman in the United States, Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence* (1836) presents a utopian vision of the twenty-second-century United States brought about by an elevation in the quality of women’s education and women’s economic and social independence. Edgar Hastings, the novel’s protagonist, falls asleep on February 15, 1835, only to awake after a three-hundred-year slumber on April 15, 2135. Upon waking, Hastings is met by two young men, Edgar Hastings and Valentine Harley. Bearing Hastings’ name and his father-in-law’s name, respectively, the future Hastings and Harley guide the original Edgar Hastings through a technologically and socially progressed United States, explaining that an improvement in women’s education resulted in utopic advancements such as eco-friendly transportation, improved produce and goods, more sanitary
and orderly public spaces, and the elimination of various nineteenth-century diseases. Women’s rights, Hastings learns as well, coincided, in the intervening three hundred years between his 1835 and the future 2135, with the elimination of wars, the outlawing of child abuse, and the emancipation from slavery of people of color (129). Like John Robertson in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911), Hastings struggles with this new reality founded on equitable and egalitarian gender relations. While John experiences this dissonance as a sense of “queerness,” Hastings experiences such dissonance as “melancholy.” Ultimately, Hastings discovers his utopian adventures to be but a dream, as the novel concludes with him being wakened by his father-in-law, wife, and young son not long after he first falls asleep in 1835. This re-awakening rescues Hastings from a future he can only accept melancholically.

Throughout his explorations of the utopian twenty-second-century United States, Hastings is dogged by melancholy in such a way that his utopian journey cannot be separated from it, but the specter of melancholy haunts Hastings even before his utopian journey. The word “melancholy” appears twice before Hastings awakes in/dreams of 2135, functioning as both a foreshadowing of the melancholy Hastings will experience in the future United States and as an insight into Hastings’ psychical response to loss. Some years before the events of the novel and after the death of Hastings’ only friend, the narrator tells us that Hastings “was now entirely alone in the world, and he would have fallen into a deep melancholy, had he not engaged in politics” (22). Then, on the fateful February 15, 1835, as Hastings begins falling asleep amidst preparations for a two-week trip from his home in Pennsylvania to New York “where he had some business of importance to transact,” the narrator relates that “a melancholy *would* creep over him, as if a final separation were about to take place” (30). Though Hastings tries “to rouse himself and shake it off,” he falls “fast asleep,” succumbing to the creeping melancholy of a
“final separation” from his family (31). While not melancholic yet, these moments reveal a predilection towards melancholy in Hastings’ psychic constitution and establish Hastings’ life as one marked by loss.

Orphaned at fourteen and alone for two years after his friend’s death but prior to his marriage to Valentine Harley’s daughter Ophelia, Hastings, “had gone through a vast deal of excitement” (21). We might rephrase this as “a vast deal of loss,” and Hastings’ experiences of loss inflect how he experiences the looming brief separation from his family. In a sense, his utopian journey/dream can be read as a melancholic nightmare, wherein the fantasmatic fear of a “final separation” - as opposed to a temporary two-week separation - comes to be real.

Throughout his time in the future utopian United States, Hastings experiences this melancholy reiteratively, but his personal melancholy (the melancholy over what is unknowable about outliving your family by multiple centuries) commingles inextricably with a socio-political melancholy (the melancholy Hastings feels over what is unknowable about living in a society predicated on equitable gender relations). In Three Hundred Years Hence, then, melancholy can be understood as a mode of being or feeling that ushers in a utopic vision of the United States wherein Hastings must say farewell to both his family and to the patriarchal structures that bring together his present/reality. As well, Hastings’ melancholy ushers in a tradition of an intriguing, fruitful commingling of melancholy and utopia in women’s utopian literature.

While Hastings has experienced a vast deal of loss, Hastings is also an educated man of considerable means, and he quite possibly represented to Griffith a significant portion of her

---

79 In The Gendering of Melancholia (1992), Juliana Schiesari points out that Hamlet is the only textual referent in Freud’s “On Mourning and Melancholy,” gesturing towards the play’s – and the titular character’s – significance for psychoanalysis. Perhaps not coincidentally, then, does the melancholic Hastings marry a woman named Ophelia.
80 In Chapter 2, we learn that Hastings is 32. Hastings is 30 when he loses his friend.
reading public. Casting this figure of her reading public as the protagonist draws the reader, perhaps uncomfortably so, quite close to Hastings’ dissociative experiences in the utopic future. In this way, we might think of Hastings’ melancholy as Griffith’s attempts to sympathize with her reading public as they are forced to confront their own forms of prejudice and to imagine a future wherein their interests are decentralized. By reiteratively tying Hastings’ melancholy to the loss of his family, Griffith emphasizes the emotional turmoil Hastings experiences in the future in hopes of keeping her readers invested affectively as the novel’s proto-feminist politics are revealed. Hastings’ focus on his long-deceased family members partially obscures the larger, more nebulous form of confrontation and loss facing him in 2135, and Griffith uses this obfuscation to promote her political project while attending to her readers’ presumed anxieties.

When Hastings imagines “how perfect would have been his happiness if it had been permitted that his wife and his father could be with him to see the improved state of the country” and “what his life might be” in this future, he is overcome with regret and “melancholy reveries” (60). What is “unknown” about Hastings’ future as he “[looks] forward” is precisely what he cannot know about how a man like himself will live in a country that provides social, economic, and political liberty and equality to women. Hastings recognizes the United States’ vast improvement in the intervening centuries, but his recognition cannot be untangled from personal and political loss. Hastings acknowledges that he “awakened in delightful times,” but he cannot do so without melancholy creeping noticeably and familiarly over him (78). Thus, when he learns that “humanizing” women has improved international relations between China, Europe, and the United States, he feels both delight and melancholy. Take, for instance, the final mention

---

81 Duangrudi Suksang (2000) makes a similar case about Griffith’s use of a male protagonist: “To legitimate her worldview and to appeal to male voters, she may have felt she had to speak through a male character… After all, men had been directly responsible for women’s wretched conditions for hundreds of years, and they alone had the legal power to effect change” (34).
of Hastings’ melancholy, arising from Hastings’ acknowledgement of the significance of women’s emancipation: “As a man and a Christian, he was glad this change had taken place; and it was a melancholy satisfaction to feel that with these views, if it had been permitted him to continue with his wife, he should have put her on an equality with himself” (124). While the memory of his lost wife plays a role in Hastings’ melancholy, his “melancholy satisfaction” also comes from just what it would mean for his wife to be his equal. That Hastings imagines himself as the one granting equality to his wife demonstrates his resistance to actually understanding what gender equity might mean or how it might be achieved, and this resistance can be read as the lingering traces of misogyny recast as melancholy. The melancholic Hastings cannot quite fully appreciate what gender equity and women’s emancipation would mean because he only partially comprehends what he will lose with the loss of patriarchy.

Though a melancholic male subject struggling with the inconceivable loss of patriarchy might not seem the appropriate purview of a novel interested in women’s liberation, the rhetoric of Hastings’ melancholy reveals a reality about revolution: those in power, however sympathetic or resistant to the dismantling or elimination of power dynamics that benefit them, find themselves between the “no-longer-present” of their dominion and the “not-yet-present” of the utopic sublimation of that dominion. The patriarchal United States has been lost, and, so with it, both Hastings’ knowable (comfortable) present and various potential futures predicated on misogynistic power dynamics. A gender-equitable United States stands in its place, and Hastings cannot know, even as he explores it, what another’s “ideal future” (i.e. a future brought about by women’s emancipation) will mean for his national and personal identity. What makes Hastings melancholic, we then might say, is his internalization of his former nation (the patriarchal United States) in such a way that makes that former nation’s socio-political structure for him
indistinguishable from his own self. Through this internalization, Hastings not only identifies with the patriarchal United States but cathects to it. In this ego-cathexis, Hastings remains attached to prior forms of gendered power dynamics. This inability to separate his ego from his (lost) nation figures Hastings as the traveler through a future world that he can only appreciate melancholically. The utopian future, though happy to accommodate Hastings, will always be a record, for Hastings, of what he has lost.

Hastings’ melancholic response to such loss seems, in this reading, understandable, even if it is a melancholy brought about by what he loses in the loss of patriarchy. What might seem less understandable, at least initially, is why women might experience melancholy similarly in their travels to gender-equitable or even matriarchal utopias. Assumedly, these characters would simply rejoice over the elimination of patriarchy and the wide-scale advancement of women. Melancholy, however, appears in both Corbett’s New Amazonia and Lane’s Mizora, and each instance marks a critical moment in the text wherein the intermingling of melancholy and utopia produces a keener sense of the protagonists’ orientation to their past, present, and future. Melancholy moments in utopia centralize loss in the midst of so much gain, and protagonists often experience unmournable loss within future or alternative worlds created for their benefit.82

A British suffragist and author for the Newcastle Daily Chronicle, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett wrote New Amazonia (1889) as a response to infamous anti-suffrage articles such as Mary Augusta Ward’s “An Appeal against Female Suffrage” and Mrs. A. Sutherland Orr’s “The Future of Women of English Women.” New Amazonia begins with the novel’s unnamed protagonist, almost assuredly based on Corbett herself, lamenting that the Nineteenth Century magazine “has been guilty of condoning, if not instigating, an atrocity” in its publication of “a

82 For Jermaine Singleton, as well as other scholars cited in this chapter, “unmournable” is interchangeable with “melancholy.” Or, perhaps more accurately, “unmournable” defines the loss that prefigures a melancholic response.
rigmarole, signed by a great many *ladies*, to the effect that Woman’s Suffrage is not wanted by *women*, and indeed, would hardly be accepted if it were offered to them” (6).³³ Though rankled, the protagonist admits to being “soothed by the perusal of the counter protests” written by “Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Ashton Dilke,”³⁴ and she begins “stringing together all sorts of fancies in which women’s achievements form conspicuous features” of society/civilization, such as “how pleasant Mrs. Weldon looks in the Speaker’s Chair, listening to Mrs. Besant’s first Prime Ministerial Speech” (8).³⁵ She soon sinks “into a slumber as profound as that which overcame the fabled enchanted guardians of [her] favorite enchanted palace,” only to awaken six hundred years later in New Amazonia (8). Upon awakening in New Amazonia in the twenty-fifth century, our protagonist meets Augustus Fitz-Musicus, a fellow Victorian time traveler who presumes this event is the result of taking too much “hasheesh,” and much of the novel contrasts the unnamed protagonist’s delight in the feminist utopian qualities of New Amazonia with the utter folly and despair of Fitz-Musicus (9).

The opening scenes in New Amazonia establish this contrast quickly. When the protagonist and Fitz-Musicus first awake in New Amazonia, the Amazonians who discover them are surprised that Fitz-Musicus is “not a little boy,” and Hilda, one of these Amazonians, picks up the “Honourable Augustus” and seats “him upon a tall garden seat, as if he were a baby” (12, 17, 14). While the Amazonians laugh at “‘the little man [who] looks too funny for anything,’” our protagonist meets with Principal Helen Grey, a New Amazonian leader, and learns that “‘no town or village shall receive a name which does not commemorate some woman who has done

---
³⁴ In volume four, published in the same year, Millicent Fawcett wrote a scathing response to Orr’s anti-suffrage article. I could not find the name “Mrs. Ashton Dilke,” nor the name Margaret Smith (Mrs. Ashton Dilke), in the magazine’s table of contents.
³⁵ “Mrs. Besant” is the women’s rights activist Annie Besant, while “Mrs. Weldon” is possibly Caroline Weldon, Native American Rights activist and personal secretary to Sitting Bull.
all she could to advance the interests of her sex’” (21). Throughout New Amazonia, the protagonist relates to readers the utopian qualities of New Amazonia and intersperses her report with moments of the ridiculed and ridiculous “Honorable” Augustus Fitz-Musicus failing quite humorously to grasp what the feminist political revolution of New Amazonia means for his concept of manhood and self.

Fitz-Musicus, in his repeated misogynistic railings against New Amazonia and various attempts to re-assert himself as a domineering figure (much to the amusement of New Amazonians), seems, at first, more suited to melancholy, but Fitz-Musicus, to return to Freud’s distinction between mourning and melancholy, only ever thinks of the world as poor and empty; Fitz-Musicus, to Fitz-Musicus, is still full and rich, just misused. It is the unnamed protagonist, however, that feels an irrepressible melancholy towards the end of her time in New Amazonia. “[Principal Grey] was somewhat surprised to find me full of grief,” relates our narrator, “at the conviction that I had indeed parted for ever from all and everything which I had ever loved” (137). Our narrator quickly qualifies this grief as melancholy. As Principal Grey attempts, albeit coolly, to soothe such grief with the promise of the vocation of author in New Amazonia: “Still in spite of the interesting nature of our conversation, I could not repress my melancholy and was so depressed” (139). Here, like Hastings in Three Hundred Years Hence, the unnamed protagonist experiences melancholy in the face of losing “all and everything which [they] had ever loved.” Her grief makes sense as an affective response to the illegible what that is lost in the loss of whom, and her melancholy seems particularly Freudian in that regard. As such, reading the unnamed protagonist – as well as Hastings - as a traveler who experiences her melancholia

86 Among those honoured with place-names are Millicent Fawcett, Harriett Beecher Stowe, the aforementioned Caroline Weldon and Annie Besant, and Rebecca Jarrett (21).
within a utopia allows us to recast the utopian traveler as a unique form of migrant, or, following David Eng, a “transnational adoptee” (The Feeling of Kinship 94).

To be sure, Eng uses this phrase literally to refer to Korean children, most frequently Korean girls, adopted by US families in the late twentieth century, but the irrevocability presented to protagonists in utopian novels parallels the difficulties facing transnational adoptees. Eng asks many pressing questions of the figuration of the transnational adoptee, many that can be asked of the protagonist in utopian literature: “Is the transnational adoptee an immigrant?... How is the otherness of the transnational adoptee absorbed into the intimate space of the family? How are histories of imperialism and globalization, as well as disparities of race, gender, class, and nation, managed or erased within the private sphere of the domestic?” (94). For the purposes of this chapter, “utopic” would replace “family”/”domestic,” but Eng’s questions can be brought to bear on the discordant position in which the utopian protagonist finds him or herself. Can the unnamed protagonist from New Amazonia become a citizen of New Amazonia, or is she an immigrant with a work visa? Are new disparities, as Eng calls them, created in otherwise utopic worlds? Can we think of these disparities as potentially utopian fissures in the no-longer hermetically sealed purview of the utopian future? What happens to difference and how do subjects and nations mourn or refuse to mourn whatever has happened to difference?

As is the case with utopian travelers like New Amazonia’s unnamed protagonist or Hastings in Three Hundred Years Hence, multiple centuries and fundamental socio-political shifts have brought about an almost entirely foreign future/world, and a return to their respective spatio-temporal locales is impossible. This marks the protagonist’s time in utopia as a time of

87 We can re-word these questions for Edgar Hastings in Three Hundred Years Hence, too: Is Hastings an immigrant in the twenty-second-century United States? What would his absorption back into the United States mean for the longevity of citizenship rights? How will the utopian United States accommodate Hastings’ newly acquired otherness as a relic of a pre-utopian past? How will Hastings confront his new otherness?
Eng writes, “When one leaves a country of origin, voluntarily or involuntarily (as in the case of transnational adoptees), a host of losses both concrete and abstract must be mourned” (115). Eng continues, “To the extent that lost ideals of Asianness – homeland, family, language, property, identity, custom, status – are irrecoverable, immigration, assimilation, and racialization are placed within a melancholic framework, a psychic state of suspension between ‘over there’ and ‘over here’” (116). (Or, for our utopian travelers a psychic state of suspension between the no-longer-present and the not-yet-present.) For Eng, this melancholic framework explains, at least in part, a sector of affect or feeling of the adoptee that remains inaccessible and bewildering to the adoptee’s adoptive family. Often, adoptive families cannot process their adopted child’s sadness (often because adoptive parents feel like they are objectively improving their new child’s life). Eng, in turning to Freudian melancholy to think through the inexpressible and innumerable forms of loss experienced by the transnational adoptee, provides a framework to sympathize more acutely with the immense loss an adoptee experiences even if their conditions are improved objectively improved. Thinking through transnational adoption and utopian travel in these ways makes it far more comprehensible why New Amazonia’s unnamed protagonist would feel such grief and experience such ‘irpressible’ melancholy even though the content of New Amazonia can only mean a better present and future for her. Though her present and future present her with far more opportunities for flourishing, she experiences melancholy precisely because she can never fully know the potential presents and futures she lost by coming to utopia.

Published serially in the Cincinnati Commercial in 1881 and then in novel form in 1890, Mary E. Bradley Lane’s Mizora stages utopian travel as a form of intense displacement. As such, melancholy permeates the atmosphere at the border that separates utopia from the rest of the world. Vera Zarovitch, the novel’s protagonist and Russian exile, finds herself, after leaving the
society of an Eskimo tribe who rescued her from a shipwreck somewhere in the Arctic Ocean, caught in a whirlpool that transports her to the utopian land of Mizora. Lane sets this transitional moment, and Vera, in the pall of melancholy: “A feeling of uncontrollable lonesomeness took possession of me…No sound greeted me save the swirl of the gently undulating waters against the boat, and the melancholy dip of the oars… My feeling of distress increased when I discovered that my boat had struck a current and was beyond my control… Made passive by intense despair, I laid down at the bottom of the boat, to let myself drift into whatever fate was awaiting me” (13). Vera resigns herself to her unknowable fate amidst a sense of loneliness she cannot control, increasing distress, and intense despair. The oars of her boat dip melancholically into the water, into a current that, like her own personal melancholy, is beyond her control. An exile now made doubly lonesome by leaving the society of the indigenous tribe who rescued her from exile, Vera and her environs are composed by loss, and the whirlpool in which Vera finds herself literalizes her downward spiral into melancholy. That the melancholic waters of Vera’s exile deliver her to utopia emplaces, as Ruti says, “utopia and melancholia on the same conceptual map” (181).

It is not just Vera’s own loss that figures her as the melancholic subject in utopia; rather, Vera’s Otherness in Mizora marks her as such: “I stood apart from the groups of beautiful creatures like the genus of another race” (16). Initially, it is Vera’s brown hair that marks her as Other in Mizora (all Mizorans are blonde), but, later in the novel, Vera learns of a harrowing, condemnatory truth of Mizora’s history, the elimination of those with “dark complexions,” and, with this revelation, comes the revelation that Vera herself has that very complexion (92). Vera relates, “In candidly expressing herself about the dark complexions, my companion had no intention or thought of wounding my feelings. So rigidly do they adhere to the truth in Mizora
that it is of all other things pre-eminent, and is never supposed to give offense” (92; emphasis added). Vera, who finds consolation in “secretly disagreeing with [the Preceptress] about the “‘degradation of the human race’” brought about by those of dark complexions, is exempted from literal extermination in Mizora, but her racialization (both at the beginning of her time in Mizora and here in this conversation) figures her as the melancholic racialized subject that, as Anne Cheng posits, is made over into the unassimilable melancholic object by the dominant socio-political order. In her landmark *The Melancholy of Race* (2000), Cheng argues that the melancholic racialized subject is made over into an “object,” a “loss,” an “invisibility,” a “phantom” through racist othering (14). For Cheng, this racist othering keeps the racial other “in a suspended position,” resulting in a paradoxical holding pattern derived from the racial other’s status as an object of rejection and attachment for “dominant, white culture” (xi). By narrating the racially motivated genocide of those of dark complexions to a darkly complected subject, Mizora’s Preceptress reveals to Vera her object-status in Mizora. As Cheng makes clear, the racialized subject is “both a melancholic object and a melancholic subject, both the one lost and the one losing,” and Vera, as the subject-object of loss returned, serves as the embodied reminder of Mizora’s racialized and melancholic history.

The return of the racialized subject/melancholic object, however, is a moment of discomfiture for the dominant (white) culture, and this discomfort reveals the paradox of the racial melancholia that Cheng argues marks not just the racial other but the dominant culture as well. Vera’s status as the racialized subject/melancholic object follows, or is borne from, her

---

88 Cheng writes this “suspended position”: “Racialization in America may be said to operate through the institutional process of producing a dominant, standard, white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others” (10).
journey to Mizora. Mizora, as Vera tells us, translates to “the interior of the earth,” a phrase that can be read to figure Vera, in her utopic journey, as the object of loss being internalized (via *interiorization*) by the world itself. In Freud’s terms, we can think of Vera’s journey to Mizora, then, as the internalization of the ego of the loss that it cannot mourn. Vera’s very presence in Mizora, as the internalized object of loss, reconfigures Mizora from a “poor and empty” world (for what is a utopia built upon racial genocide other than poor and empty) into the poor and empty ego. Mizora devours Vera, to use Freud’s term (250), leading to what Cheng calls a “profound ambivalence that continues to be generated around the ‘swallowed’ object” (9). The discomfiture, or “uncomfortable swallowing” (10), that marks Vera’s status in Mizora and Mizora’s genocidal history can be read to lend “provocative insights into the nature of the racial other seen as ‘the foreigner within’” (10). Vera is this “foreigner within” Mizora, and Mizora’s uneasy digestion of Vera leads to the disturbing revelation of Mizora’s dystopian past.

The “uneasily digestible” racial other reveals, according to Cheng, that “the history of American national idealism has always been caught in this melancholic bind between incorporation and rejection” (10). Cheng writes,

> If one of the ideals that sustained the American nations since its beginning has been its unique position that ‘all men are created equal,’ then one of America’s ongoing national mortifications must be its history of acting otherwise. While all nations have their repressed histories and traumatic atrocities, American melancholia is particularly acute because America is *founded* on the very ideals of freedom and liberty whose betrayals have been repeatedly covered over. Even as the economic, material, and philosophical advances of the nation are built on a

---

89 It also seems like a reference to the “journey of the interior” trope of nineteenth-century adventure romance fiction (Scheick).
series of legalized exclusions (of African Americans, Jewish Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and so on) and the labor provided by those excluded, it is also a history busily disavowing those repudiations. (10)

This is the central paradox of racial melancholy in the United States. Not only has the United States repeatedly betrayed its foundational ideals while simultaneously disavowing such betrayals, it has also produced its image of itself as the ideal nation through the labor of the legally excluded. “America’s ongoing national mortification” is the repeated, disavowed, and foundational loss of its humanity, figured variously (though not exhaustively) through the genocide of indigenous peoples, slavery, Jim Crow, and discrimination against immigrants. The United States’ racial melancholy, then, comes from the foundational, constitutive loss of its humanity (of its foundational ideals of liberty and freedom) and the impossibility of ever knowing what such ideals – what such humanity – might look like.

It is not difficult to draw parallels between the United States and Mizora, as Mizora’s utopianism – its ideals and ideas about itself – is inseparable from its own foundational mortification and loss. Critics of Mizora have long made clear the racism central to the Mizoran utopia. One such critic, Christine Mahady (2004), writes “The same skillful manipulation of science and nature that has enabled the advancement of an all-female society has provided means for ensuring a homogeneous race of Mizoran women. Racist assumptions… underlie notions of progress in the world of Mizora” (93). Katherine Broad (2009) offers a similar analysis to Mahady’s, lamenting “The revolutionary ideals of Mizora hinge on repressive visions of reproductive and social engineering that undermine the radical potential of the text” (246). While both Mahady and Broad, along with other critics such as Jean Pfaelzer (2000), agree that Mizora fails as a utopia, Pfaelzer and Mahady, unlike Broad, find in Mizora certain moments of critique
that place Mizora the utopia at a distance from *Mizora* the novel. At the end of her analysis, Mahady posits, “Vera's own status as immigrant presents an interesting case; perhaps Lane suggests in her portrayal of Vera the acceptability of the immigrant who can uphold ideologies of progress” (111). While I do not agree with Mahady’s conclusion here, I do believe Vera’s immigrant status complicates the text in productive ways. As stated above, Vera’s status as the racialized subject/melancholic object (the immigrant) irrupts in the text to reveal Mizora’s genocidal past and thus its own racial/cultural melancholia. By reading Mizora as a melancholic in its own right, I join Pfaelzer, Mahady, and Broad in critiquing Mizora’s foundational, constitutive racism. In treating Vera as the melancholic *object*, as Mahady implicitly does by noting her immigrant status, I want to make the case that there exists a distinction between Mizora and *Mizora* that can be best understood through a conversation regarding melancholia in the novel.

As the melancholic, then, Mizora, precisely in its attempts to “incorporate this object into itself” (Freud 250) reconfigures Vera as the introjected and reviled object, and “at this moment *loss* becomes *exclusion* in the melancholic landscape” (Cheng 9). This transition from loss to exclusion, for Cheng, occurs in the melancholic dominant cultural order, first from the melancholic culture’s denial of “loss as loss in order to sustain the fiction of possession,” and secondly from the melancholic culture “[making] sure that the ‘object’ never returns, for such a return would surely jeopardize the cannibalistic project” (9). These “multiple layers of denial and exclusion” play out in *Mizora* through the Mizoran genocide of those with “dark complexions” and the Head Preceptress’s denial of that genocide’s horrifying inhumanity. Vera, though, as the racialized subject-object, *does* return, forcing Mizora to “exercise” the multiple layering of denial and exclusion “in order to maintain this elaborate structure of loss-but-not-loss” (9).
Though Mizorans see their path as both righteous and true, Vera’s melancholic unveiling of Mizoran truth can be read, potentially, as the sort of rhetorical irruption into or disruption of the utopian edifice that thus marks a space for critique and re-composition. Through the very mechanisms of internalization - of swallowing Vera - Mizora re-emerges in the novel as a melancholic state, a (dis)ruption of any finality or delimitation in utopia’s signification in the text. Perhaps, then, we might think of melancholy’s relationship to utopia as a necessary recognition and opening up of its imaginative limits. Vera, as the subject-object uneasily digested by the Mizoran world-ego and simultaneously rejected as unassimilable, figures the melancholic limits of utopian composition. Or, restated, the irruption of the no-longer-present in the not-yet-present re-opens Vera’s potential for political agency “in a symbolic, cultural economy that has already preassigned [the racial other] as a deficit” (7). Vera’s subjective potential first emerges at the precise moment that she forces the Head Preceptress to unveil Mizora’s racist genocide, and it continues to take shape when she decides to leave Mizora. By longing to return to Russia and desiring “to carry back to that woe-burdened land some of the noble lessons and doctrines” she learns in Mizora, Vera utters a politically charged “No!” to (parts of) Mizora’s symbolic, cultural economy (140; emphasis added). Vera opts out of Mizora’s form of utopia in order to create alternative, improved conditions for people in her homeland (conditions rooted in gender equity and not racial inequity). In opting out of utopia, Vera asserts the political agency that Cheng believes is available to the racialized subject-object. Too, in her assertion of this agency, Vera introduces a distinction between the politics of Mizora and the politics of Mizora, and this distinction offers Vera (and readers of Mizora) the

---

90 “When it comes to facing discrimination,” Cheng claims, “we need to understand subjective agency as a convoluted, ongoing, generative, and at times self-contradicting negotiation with pain” (15).
91 This is, according to Ruti, what the anti-social subject of contemporary queer theory (as well as the relational subject of affect theory) says to its inadequate, dissatisfying, and subjugating Symbolic Order.
opportunity to re-compose a utopia less contaminated by the genocide that mar(k)s Mizora as inadequate.

As Vera prepares to leave Mizora, it is decided by Vera and the Mizorans to send Wauna, the Preceptress’ own daughter, with Vera as utopian ambassador to the outside world. Wauna consents, and it is during their journey from Mizora to the outside world where the word melancholy resurfaces in the text: “The journey over fields of ice and snow was monotonous… The wind whistled past us without any other greeting than its melancholy sound” (143). Again, melancholy infuses the atmosphere at the point of transition between worlds, holding within it the various forms of loss as felt by Vera and now Wauna as they leave utopia behind. The two melancholic subjects travel to Russia, France, England, and the United States with Wauna’s “lofty ideal of humanity,” an ideal roundly “ignored” by men in each country in favor of Wauna’s physical beauty (145). Much like Vera’s inability to remain in Mizora, brought about explicitly by her homesickness and desire to educate the world but implicitly by her status as unassimilable melancholic/racialized subject-object, Wauna quickly desires a return to Mizora. Wauna, both unsuited to the misogyny of the New and Old Worlds and to the physical demands of life in the Arctic, dies during the journey back to Mizora. Vera writes Wauna’s name, which means “Happiness” in Mizoran, on a “rude wooden cross” marking her grave, the novel’s final melancholic gesture (147). Rarely in utopian literature does happiness die so literally, but Wauna’s death, contextualized as it is with her Otherness as utopic/melancholic subject-object in a misogynist world and with Vera’s Otherness as melancholic/racialized subject-object in Mizora, brings melancholy and utopia into further intimacy with one another. Vera ends the novel “childless, homeless and friendless, in poverty and obscurity” in the United States and “with a heart dead to happiness” (147). Ultimately, Wauna, representing “happiness” and
“utopia” - two concepts whose significations remain dauntingly elusive and unknowable (not to mention fraught with violence in Mizora) -, figures the object of loss that Vera can never fully mourn.

3.2 Melancholy and Utopia

The protagonists of *Three Hundred Years Hence*, *New Amazonia*, and *Mizora* experience melancholy as coterminous with their utopian journeys. This is not to discount that *New Amazonia*’s unnamed protagonist or Vera possibly experiences a sense of gender melancholy prior to their utopian travels, or that Hastings, in *Three Hundred Years*, seems to possess a melancholic predilection leading (up) to his utopian dream (22). In fact, these characters’ potentially pre-utopian melancholy might be what suits them to utopian travel in the first place. Without going so far as to posit melancholy as a pre-condition of utopia, the second section of this chapter will explore how melancholy, as it is experienced by the protagonists in Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood* (1903) and Lillian Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* (1916), might constitute the subject’s psychic reality in such a way that leaves them more open to utopianism. Two of the first black women to publish utopian novels in the United States, Hopkins and Jones both foreground issues of race in their visions of alternative lifeworlds.92 Their protagonists, not unlike the protagonists of earlier works of women’s utopian literature, experience melancholy in ways inextricable from their utopian pursuits. If, as Ruti says, both melancholy and utopia “are ways of cathecting to a place of impossibility, of insisting on the affective necessity of what is absent,” then perhaps a subject’s melancholy, in its particular version of “opting out of the present,” already rends the subject from the present in such a way that better prepares them to respond to the impoverished state of their present in the temporally

92 M. Giulia Fabi (2001) contends that Frances E.W. Harper’s *Iola Leroy* (1892) is the first novel written by a black woman in the United States to contain traces of utopianism. *Of One Blood* and *Five Generations Hence*, however, engage with the genre of utopian literature in more direct ways.
opposite direction. Or, restated more provocatively: as “places of impossibility” (or spaces marked by what is absent), both melancholy and utopia possess ill-defined borders, meaning that the melancholic/utopic subject could slip into utopian reverie and back to melancholic reverie without ever abandoning their particular psychic (or physical) state. Melancholic-utopic subjects find themselves exploring the past and future in a way that privileges neither and resists a delimited valorization of both. These melancholic subjects travel (to utopia) precisely because they have already renounced their attachment to the present.

Unlike other novels discussed in this dissertation, Of One Blood privileges a critique of racial difference over one of gender difference. Rather than focalize women’s roles in a coming utopian revolution, Hopkins instead focuses on denaturalizing racial hierarchies. At the beginning of Of One Blood, Hopkins offers a detailed description of her protagonist Reuel Briggs’ physical appearance, producing a picture of a striking figure whose origins remain a mystery to his fellow students. Reuel’s “skin was white, but of a tint suggesting olive, an almost sallow color which is a mark of strong, melancholic temperaments” (3). Later in this same opening chapter, Reuel reveals himself to Aubrey Livingston as “‘an unfortunate,’” aligning melancholy and misfortune with his being mixed race (9). Unlike Vera in Mizora, whose racialization occurs inside the utopia of Mizora, Reuel begins Of One Blood as the already raced and melancholic subject. Like Vera, however, this racialization and melancholy means that Reuel is the social subject who, according to Cheng, “has been made into an ‘object,’ a ‘loss,’ an ‘invisibility,’ or a ‘phantom’” by “racist institutions” that “do not want to fully expel the racial” and instead “wish to maintain that other within existing structures” (14,12). Reuel’s melancholy, the sallow marker of his race, is invisible to his fellow students, registering as vaguely foreign (Italian, Japanese) instead of as the product of Slavery and Jim Crow. Rather than recognize

93 Aubrey reveals later in the novel that he already knows that Reuel is black.
Reuel’s blackness, his fellow students re-categorize his Otherness in more assimilable ways. Reuel begins the text as “both a melancholic object and a melancholic subject, both the one lost and the one losing” (17). As the social subject-rendered-object, the melancholic Reuel can never fully comprehend just what he has lost through his objectification as an unfortunate. Cheng defines such loss in multiple ways: loss of the “pressing-but-exclusive racial ideal” (19), “the loss of affective discrimination”94 (21), and, at its most Freudian, the “loss of self as legitimacy” (20). Reuel thus embarks upon a journey whose stakes are the re-glorification of his race’s history, the rescue of black subjectivity, and the disentanglement of affective discrimination from racial discrimination so as to make that history and such subjectivity a future possibility.

Reuel, however, is not the only melancholic who cannot comprehend his loss. As Dana Luciano (2003) and Cedric R. Tolliver (2015) both argue in regards to melancholia and Of One Blood, racial melancholia is as much Reuel’s individual pathology as it is the historical condition of the United States.95 “The melodrama enacted in Of One Blood,” writes Luciano, “narrates the unspoken and as-yet-unrecognized trauma of historical and racial separation, deploying melancholia as a symptom exposing the abject underside of American history” (149). Luciano insists that “it is not only African Americans who are rendered melancholic by racial segregation and the legacies of slavery, though Anglo-Americans are, presumably, more easily able to repress their knowledge of the loss that segregation poses to them” (174). Tolliver takes up Luciano’s analysis, positing Of One Blood as a novel particularly suited to respond to the

---

94 Also called “affective formation and distinction,” Cheng defines this step in childhood development as “how one tells the difference between love and hate” (17). For Cheng, racial discrimination entangles and twists with affective formation so that “love and hate both come to be ‘fabricated’ and ‘fraudulent’” (17).

95 While Luciano and Tolliver offer excellent analyses of racial melancholy in Of One Blood, neither relates melancholy to utopia. Scholars such as Fabi (2001), Reid (2011), and Daniels (2013) have recently outlined the utopian qualities of the novel, and Deborah Horvitz (1999) and Jill Bergman (2013) have provided alternative psychoanalytic readings. So far, however, Hopkins scholarship has yet to think about melancholy and utopianism together.
“irretrievable loss in the shattering of certain American democratic ideals” in the post-Reconstruction period (35). If, as Tolliver argues, the post-Reconstruction period “provoked African Americans to question the belief that racial subordination was merely an aberration within and not constitutive of American democracy,” then Anglo-Americans were forced to recognize concurrently “that it was not superior evolution of Anglo-Saxons, but the continued exploitation of black labor that made American democracy possible” (35). “Yet,” Tolliver makes clear, “these were losses that could not be acknowledged” (35).

Like Cheng, Luciano, and Tolliver, Jermaine Singleton, in Cultural Melancholy (2015), focuses on the inter-related forms of melancholic loss and losing that occur on individual and cultural levels. Singleton aims to make even more explicit the relationship between melancholy, history, and subject formation, writing, “Melancholy is part of the process of becoming a racialized subject – which is to say that the disavowal of social loss is what it means to be a racial subject in the world” (9). Reuel, as a mixed race person, cannot avow the loss brought about by being black because what has been lost remains inaccessible and unknowable. This loss, what Tolliver above calls a loss of “certain democratic ideals,” is, for Singleton, abstracted by “white heteropatriarchy” and figured by the white man. Reuel’s loss is inaccessible because Reuel (the raced subject-object) cannot figure the racialized ideal (a white man), and it is unknowable because such an ideal is an ideal normatively produced through “white heteropatriarchy”: “an ideological-proposition-turned-social-commodity at the dawn of the

---

96 We can understand what Singleton means by “social loss” by turning to Freud’s Civilization and its Discontents (1929). Discussing the origins of the sense of guilt, particularly as related to good (moral) and bad (immoral), Freud writes, “Such a motive [for developing a moral system] is easily discovered in his helplessness and his dependence on other people, and it can be designated as fear of the loss of love. If he loses the love of another person upon whom he is dependent, he also ceases to be protected from a variety of dangers… At the beginning, therefore, what is bad is whatever causes one to be threatened with the loss of love” (85). Social loss, then, can be understood as the loss of love that would otherwise protect the subject from exposure to danger and violence at the hands of the “stronger person [who] will show his superiority in the form of punishment” (85).
twentieth century” (Singleton 17). Reuel will never fully know what he has lost as the objected social subject, and he simultaneously will never fully know what could be gained if he were ever to/could ever de-objectivize/re-subjectivize himself.

In the novel, this unknowable loss manifests in Reuel’s incapacity to discuss the “woes of unfortunates, tramps, stray dogs and cats and Negroes” without a sense of “horror” (9) and his inability to marry his love, Dianthe Lusk, without forfeiting professional success (43). After falling in love with Dianthe, Reuel declares this love to his supposed friend and colleague Aubrey Livingston, only to have Aubrey ask him, “‘How can you succeed if it be hinted abroad that you are married to a Negress?’” (43). In response to this question, Reuel reveals to Aubrey, in a sentence “whispered” across the table, his racial identity (his blackness), to which Aubrey responds, “‘I have known it since we first met; but the secret is safe with me’” (44). Ignoring, for the moment, that Reuel’s secret is emphatically not safe with the duplicitous, murderous Aubrey, we can instead focus on the commingling of revelation and concealment in this scene. Livingston forces an avowal out of Reuel by calling into question his (legal, social, professional) inability to marry Dianthe, but the novel keeps this avowal “whispered” and implicit. Once Aubrey reveals Reuel’s secret, he then promises to keep that secret hidden, a disavowal of what the text can already only gesture silently towards. As “the secret,” Reuel’s racial identity enters the text as unspeakably as his sallow skin tone, and Aubrey’s manipulation of and control over “the secret” – Reuel’s blackness – dramatizes white heteropatriarchy’s role in the production and maintenance of asymmetrical power relations between different racial identities.

We can find a parallel to Reuel’s dilemma in Cheng’s reading of Mei Li’s marriage dilemma in Flower Drum Song. To “free herself from the bonds of an arranged marriage,” Mei

---

97 Ultimately, Aubrey, who is revealed to be Dianthe and Reuel’s brother and thus mixed-race himself, will kill Dianthe and try to have Reuel murdered, albeit unsuccessfully. Aubrey’s body, on the other hand, will be found lifeless “floating in the Charles River” (192).
Li announces “to her newfound American friends” her immigrant status (43). As Cheng writes about Mei Li’s pronouncement of her “abject status,” “Only by exposing herself as an object of prohibition can she claim the particularly American dream of the liberty to marry for love. Only by assenting to illegality can she hope to acquire ‘free’ love and make herself worthy of the ideal privileges granted to citizens of the United States” (43). Mei Li rejects the national-cultural custom of arranged marriages, disavowing her “Asianness” to become “Asian-American” so that she may marry whomever she chooses. This disavowal, as Cheng succinctly captures, can only happen through a public avowal, and Aubrey forces Reuel to expose himself in much the same way, though without Mei Li’s “barely suppressed joy.” Reuel must avow what cannot be avowed, “assenting” to his blackness in the attempt to legitimize his desire to marry Dianthe. Both Mei Li and Reuel “denounce” themselves, but, in so doing, reaffirm their status as the racialized subject-object whose attempts to court citizenship (in this case, to marry freely) must necessarily involve a forfeiture of self.

Reuel’s desire to marry Dianthe informs his decision to travel to Africa. After Aubrey presents Reuel with the possibility of traveling on an expedition to Africa, Reuel initially balks at the idea of leaving Dianthe behind in the United States. “Growing more rational,” however, after his initial spasm, Reuel “[gazes] mournfully around [his] room,” mourning that he and Dianthe could not marry if he remained in the United States (60; emphasis added). Though not explicitly melancholic in this scene, Reuel is in the same affective/psychical territory, mourning the ‘impossibility’ of marrying Dianthe in his current conditions. Hopkins plays on the words “home” and “surroundings” in this passage, meaning locally Reuel’s “poor room” but more broadly his status as raced subject-object in his “home” country (60). What makes Reuel

---

98 Though Freud makes an important distinction between the two terms, they are, certainly in the nineteenth century, used relatively interchangeably. In the first non-archaic definition of “melancholy” offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “melancholy” is defined as “gloomy, mournful, or dejected.”
mournful in this moment and melancholic temperamentally, is his own racial condition as well as Dianthe’s; Reuel and Dianthe’s wedding is made impossible not by his shabby room but by their status as raced subject-objects. Ultimately, Reuel decides to join the expedition to Africa, fantasizing about “the possibility of unearthing gems and gold from the mines of ancient Meroe and the pyramids of Ethiopia” to make himself wealthy enough to marry Dianthe (60). Read literally, Reuel’s fantasy is strikingly colonialist, built around the same mechanisms of Western pillaging of Africa that brought slaves to the shores of the United States. Too, the colonialist and materialist nature of Reuel’s fantasy seems antithetical to his previously stated belief that “the wonders of a material world cannot approach those of the undiscovered country within ourselves – the hidden self lying quiescent in every human soul” (7). A more sympathetic or metaphoric reading, then, might see Reuel fantasizing that he will find in Meroe and Ethiopia whatever materials he needs to fulfill the “African position” that he believes “would at least bind [him and Dianthe] irrevocably together” (60). That is, Reuel might be fantasizing about finding his African selfhood in Meroe and Ethiopia and returning to Dianthe a sufficiently and self-determinedly African/raced subject.

If Reuel cannot avow his social loss, it makes sense, then, that his fantasies about re-subjectivization via an African expedition would be routed through materialistic theft. Part of racial melancholy, according to Cheng, is an internalization of the disciplinary and prohibitive regimes of the dominant order (17). Cheng is, in her argument, referring explicitly here to the raced subject’s suspicion of being invisible, but we can see how discipline and prohibition (“rejection,” in Cheng’s terms) would extend to the rendering invisible to the melancholic subject the true(r) nature of their desires. Reuel, in internalizing his own invisibility as the melancholic raced subject, produces the very fantasies of the white heteropatriarchal order while
simultaneously sublimating his own. Rather than acknowledge the ‘impossibility’ of marrying Dianthe as an explicitly racial issue, Reuel reformulates it as one of class concerns, making invisible the racist systems producing the impossibility of their marriage in the first place. That he seeks an “African position,” meaning both a position on the expedition to Africa and an identity position as authentically African/African-American, demonstrates that Briggs, rather than hoping to recreate the colonial pillaging of Africa, hopes to, on his own terms, subjectivize himself in such a way that escapes the trappings of melancholic racial subject formation. The hope Reuel feels when agreeing to the expedition is a utopian affect, an affect that responds to the impoverishment of his present (he believes he cannot marry Dianthe without revealing his racial identity) by imagining the not-yet-present-ness of his “African position” (brought about by the upcoming voyage to Africa) in the context of the melancholic disavowal of the social loss he experiences as the raced subject-object in the United States. Reuel’s decision to travel to Africa is an opting out of the present, located coterminously in his melancholic and utopic affective registers.

While Reuel might be incapable of fantasizing about journeying to Africa in non-colonialist ways, an incapacity demanded by the colonialist pilfering of Africa and casting of Reuel and his antecedents as melancholic objects, Professor Stone, his expedition’s leader, helps excavate, for and with Reuel, the larger purport of their trip: the true gem to be unearthed is the ancient Ethiopian capital of Meroe, whose existence would, in Reuel’s own words, “‘establish the primal existence of the Negro as the most ancient source of all that you value in modern life’” (87). “‘How can the Anglo-Saxon world bear the establishment of such a theory?’” asks Reuel sarcastically, knowing full well that the Anglo-Saxon could never avow such a history (87). In its disavowal of that history – of the “great tide of facts” – the Anglo-Saxon renders
invisible the reality of Ethiopianism (the establishment of Ethiopia as the foundational, originary seat of humanity), a melancholic refutation that results in the (historical) cultural melancholy that, for Singleton, defines race relations (and racial subject formation) in the United States. These race relations, too, are defined through a “distancing” according to Luciano: “The association of blackness with a ‘primitive’ lack of self-consciousness and agency in the Anglo-American psyche enables… both a denial of death and its projection onto the figure of the racial Other, whose distancing as other becomes essential to the maintenance of the stable white self” (174).

Finding Meroe, as both Professor Stone and Reuel understand, will endanger this distancing and re-write history, legitimizing African primacy and unveiling African and African-American agency and the melancholic nation- and myth-making structures of the United States/the West that support and produce white heteropatriarchy. Professor Stone makes explicitly clear, too, why this would matter to Reuel and other African-Americans: “‘Undoubtedly your Afro-Americans are a branch of the wonderful and mysterious Ethiopians who had a prehistoric existence of magnificence, the full record of which is lost in obscurity’” (99). In Professor Stone’s calculation, we hear Freud’s diagnosis of melancholy as a state in which “one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost” and thus “cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either” (244). What is lost in the loss experienced by African Americans, then, escapes conscious perception and thus exists unconsciously, obscured and prehistoric, irrupting as a historical and cultural melancholy.

What haunts this discovery, however, is its inability to undo history. While Professor Stone and Reuel believe discovering Meroe will impact positively future conditions of black Americans, it cannot make any more comprehensible the incomprehensible suffering, terror, and
trauma of slavery and Jim Crow. Discovering Meroe, then, can only mean a partial recovery from obscurity of the “full record” of Ethiopia’s (pre-)history. Partial recovery means partial gains, and the integral gains made by discovering Meroe are still predicated on loss and obscurity. Moreover, such a discovery might be understood to magnify what Singleton calls the “unmourned social loss and hidden grief” of the raced subject in that, in its desire to legitimize black suffering through the simultaneous establishment of black humanity and unveiling of white heteropatriarchy’s inhumanity, it cannot help but make even more incomprehensible the suffering of black humanity precisely because it happened and continues to happen to human subjects (and not just objects). By discovering Meroe, Stone and Reuel emphasize the subject of the raced/melancholic subject-object, and in that emphasis, doubly emphasize the melancholic cruelty of the objectivization of raced subjects by white heteropatriarchy. As a journey whose gains cannot be disentangled from the re-legitimizing of (incomprehensible) loss, this expedition remains a deeply melancholic one.

The melancholic nature of this journey inflects, if not defines, Reuel’s refiguring. By novel’s end, Reuel, now known as King Ergamenes of the Hidden City of Telassar in Meroe, has found his “African position,” and, though it has not materialized in a marriage to the now-dead Dianthe, it has aligned him with Dianthe’s mystical avatar Queen Candace. In his ascension (in)to Ergamenes, Reuel finds himself enthroned at the seat of humanity’s originary civilization, a royal figuration of the now (partially) unearthed history of Ethiopia’s developmental impact on the world. This “new” history, embodied by Reuel and Candace, is not meant to replace the Euro-centric history that undergirds the culture of white heteropatriarchy that produces Briggs as the subject-qua-object of racial melancholy; rather, King Ergamenes and Queen Candace figure as the remnants of an alternative history that could potentially lead to an alternative future
wherein white racial dominion loses some of its foothold. As Reuel’s psychic state at the conclusion of the novel portends, however, the mechanisms of white dominion cannot abide that alternative future. “The shadows of great sins darken his life… the memory of past joys is ever with him,” and Reuel “views, too, with serious apprehension, the advance of mighty nations penetrating the dark, mysterious forests of his native land” (193). Feeling the creep of colonialism, a creep he once assumed as his own fantasy of pillaging Africa, Reuel sadly asks, “‘Where will it stop?... What will the end be?’” (193).

His psychic state, presumably altered by the attainment of his “African position,” remains melancholically marked by “the process of becoming a racialized subject” (Singleton 9). This makes sense, since Reuel, as the melancholic object of the racist US nation-state, cannot be avowed. “On the one side,” writes Cheng, “white American identity and its authority is secured through the melancholic introjection of racial others it can neither fully relinquish nor accommodate and whose ghostly presence nonetheless guarantees its centrality” (xi). The melancholy Reuel feels at novel’s end, then, stems from the renewed efforts of “white American identity” to protect its own ego identity via the penetrative forces of Western imperialism. While Reuel’s journey to Meroe certainly involves an alternative/utopic self-derivative reconstitution of subject formation, providing Reuel with the ability to realize his destiny as King Ergamenes, it does not mean, crucially, that Reuel has transcended the strictures of racial or cultural melancholy. Rather, Reuel, in asserting some control over his own subject formation, has emplaced himself in a subjecthood potentially more equipped to confront white American identity’s incessant refusal of relinquishment or accommodation. Reuel’s subjecthood breaks down the distance between the racial Other and the stable white American self, and, as Luciano
argues, “when that distancing begins to break down, the [white American] subject responds with a concerted, even violent, effort to reinscribe it” (174).

Still melancholic at novel’s end, Reuel remains committed to a critique of the present. His questions (“’Where will it stop? What will the end be?’”) signal an infidelity to the present and a fixation on the not-yet-present (the utopic). Such questions, rooted in melancholy (he asks them ‘sadly’), show that Reuel orients himself towards an unknowable future. If, as I argued earlier in this section, Vera, in Mizora, enacts some level of political agency as a raced subject by uttering “No!” to the Mizoran utopia, then we can read Reuel/Ergamenes’ questions as a similar form of agency. Briggs, at the beginning of Of One Blood, recoils in horror from “discussing the woes of unfortunates, tramps, stray dogs and cats and Negroes” because he, himself, is an unfortunate, and, as such, Reuel has “’never express[ed] an opinion’” about “’the Negro Problem’” (9). Now, as Ergamenes, Reuel finds a mode of expression. Reuel can now critique the present while wondering about the future explicitly in relation to “the Negro problem.” In this sense, Hopkins’ Ethiopianism has granted Briggs a voice of protest and a path towards political agency precisely in the commingling of melancholy and utopia. The conclusion of Of One Blood, featuring the melancholically utopic Briggs as Ergamenes, beginning to imagine what an end to Western colonialism might look like, imbricates melancholy and utopia as mutually related – if not constitutive – modes of opting out of the present towards an impossible fidelity to the no-longer-present (the disavowal of social loss for the racial subject) and the not-yet-present (alternative utopic futures where, among other effects, social loss might be avowable).

Through the penetrative expansion of Western imperialism, white American identity and authority in Of One Blood attempts to keep the “ghostly presence” of the racial other (Reuel) at
its center (Cheng xi). “At the turn of the century,” Luciano writes, “as white American identity was thrown into crisis by the emergence of a generation of African Americans with no personal experience of slavery alongside the influx of non-Anglo European and Asian immigrants to North America, the drive to maintain racial hierarchy took a particularly violent turn” (174). Turn-of-the-century White America required the centrality of this ghostly presence for the manufacturing and maintenance of a racial hierarchy it dominated, and *Of One Blood’s* concluding image of “mighty nations penetrating the dark, mysterious forests of [Reuel’s] native land” dramatizes that maintenance. Hopkins both hopes to wrest Reuel from the centrality of white American identity and authority towards the end of that very identity and authority and to (re)imagine black American identity and authority via the centralization of Reuel at its originary moment (Ethiopia). This does not mean, however, that Reuel is no longer affected by loss. As the novel’s conclusion clearly demonstrates, Reuel remains melancholic, though a shift, literalized through his new persona, implies an alteration in/of Reuel’s own sense of his subjectivity. Hopkins dramatizes this shift in Reuel’s newfound capacity for critique and utopic longing (‘’Where will it stop?’’; ‘’What will the end be?’’), but Reuel’s newfound capacity cannot be separated from white American identity’s renewed investment in its colonial project (“the advance of mighty nations penetrating the dark, mysterious forests of his native land”). “We do not know yet what it means for politics to accommodate a concept of identity based on constitutive loss,” writes Cheng (25). We also do not yet know what it means “for politics to explore the psychic and social anchoring points that keep us chained to the oppressive, wounding memories of love and hate that condition the mutual enmeshment of the ‘dominant’ and ‘disempowered’” (25). Though *Of One Blood* does not provide a solution to these issues, it does contemplate them through the language of melancholy and utopia. As Ergamenes, Reuel
embodies the entanglement of domination (he is king) and disempowerment (to the West he is still the racial Other), and Of One Blood leaves us to contemplate further what such entanglement means for theorizing political agency for those who are denied access to it.

In Five Generations Hence, Lillian Jones Horace attempts to emplace her protagonist Grace Noble somewhere else than at the center of white American identity and authority. As in Hopkins’ Of One Blood, this allows for a utopic re-imagination of subject-formation and subjectivity that opens up the potential of alternative lifeworlds for African Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first novel published in Texas by a black woman, Five Generations Hence blends together Hopkins’ focus on issues of racial difference with women’s utopian literature’s more traditional concern with issues of sexual difference. As with all the novels discussed so far in this chapter, melancholy functions as a constitutive aspect of the protagonist’s and novel’s utopianism. In particular, Grace is most similar to Reuel in Of One Blood and Vera in Mizora; Grace is the melancholic object the dominant culture neither relinquishes nor accommodates, marked by loss and losing in relation to a racial idealism as represented or dictated by the norms of white heteropatriarchy. Grace is the racial other that, Cheng argues, racist institutions “wish to maintain… within existing structures” (12).

Segregation and colonialism, racist institutions Reuel and Grace face in their respective novels, “are internally fraught institutions not because they have eliminated the other but because they need the very thing they hate or fear” (12). This need – epistemological, ontological, economic - leads to the “imbricated but denied relationship [between the oppressor and oppressed] that forms the basis of white racial melancholia” (12). This entanglement of imbrication and denial that Grace, as the racialized subject-object, can never disavow, creates the conditions for her melancholic nature, a quality repeatedly referred to at the onset of the novel. As will be
demonstrated throughout the rest of this section of Chapter III, Grace’s melancholy inflects and constitutes her utopian journey in ways similar to Reuel in *Of One Blood*. What will become clear, too, is how Grace’s melancholy - and how melancholy functions in relation to utopia in *Five Generations Hence* - is directly conversant or intertextually resonant with the commingled melancholia and utopianism in *Three Hundred Years Hence, New Amazonia*, and *Mizora*.

As M. Giulia Fabi writes in her chapter “Of the Coming of Grace: African American Utopian Fiction, the Black Woman Intellectual, and Lillian B. Jones Horace’s *Five Generations Hence*,” Horace “articulated a groundbreaking dual utopian project of emigration and female empowerment that defamiliarized and challenged the prevailing white supremacist and masculinist discourses of her time” (163). Horace articulates this dual utopian project – one simultaneously concerned with combatting racism and misogyny - through the persona utopia Grace Noble. Grace, an educated daughter of former slaves born during Reconstruction, begins the novel as a beloved schoolteacher in a small Texas town. Early in the novel, Grace envisions a utopian Africa wherein “a people, a black people, tilling the soil with a song of real joy upon their lips” build “a new nation upon the ruins of the old” (49). This emigrationist utopia, which will come to light in “five generations hence,” becomes the premise for Grace’s first novel.100


100 This is a reference to Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Years Hence*. 
Alongside Grace’s success as a novelist, Grace’s friend Violet Gray spends much of the novel in Africa as a missionary, corresponding with Grace via numerous letters, performing the groundwork in Africa that a Christian emigrationist utopia would demand. In Violet’s absence, Grace falls in and out of love with a local man named Lemuel Graves, achieves financial independence through her writing, frees Lemuel and his family from the bondage of debt on his family’s farm, and, ultimately, marries Dr. Warner, a physician who, like Grace, braves an outbreak of meningitis to save a young girl, Pearlia, with whom Grace is friends.

Though the utopia that Grace envisions is neither brought about by her writing nor by Violet’s missionary work, it is the personal, economic, and social growth and success of Grace Noble that figures Horace’s utopian vision of a black woman centralized in/central to a community that supports the subjectivity of black people in the United States (and elsewhere). *Five Generations Hence*’s burgeoning economy of affective and relational empathy (Dr. Warner saving Pearlia, Grace offering Lemuel financial assistance, Grace’s original career as a schoolteacher, as a few examples), captures the duality of Horace’s utopian project that, though partially constituted by Grace and Violet’s emigrationist leanings in the text, supersedes the limitations of a colonialist approach to Africa. That is, by focusing, following Fabi’s lead, on the dynamics of Grace’s *Bildung*, most specifically the melancholy that defines her life, this chapter considers how the melancholy Grace feels as she grows into the *persona utopia* of the text enlarges our conception of how utopianism can be used to critique institutionalized forms of oppression and to imagine alternative, better lifeworlds.

In *Five Generations Hence*, the narrator interrupts the novel’s opening scene of Grace Noble “and her forty youngsters” leaving their classroom and “gaily beginning their journey to the woods” to offer a detailed depiction of “this backwoods teacher who is destined to play no
insignificant part in the destiny of a people” (19). Grace Noble is described as “high brown” and as possessing “a face if not decidedly plain, certainly not pretty,” protruding cheekbones that might indicate “the faintest streak of the blood of the red man that coursed through her veins,” and “a nose that forms a compromise between the aquiline nose of the Caucasian and the expanded nostrils of the Ethiopian” (19). Between her olive complexion\(^\text{101}\) (“high brown”), her indigenous ancestry, and a nose both white and black, Grace’s physical appearance undermines any notion of blackness as homogenous. Born during Reconstruction to former slaves, Grace’s racial history – told through her physical appearance - resists simplicity and instead betrays a complexity that highlights the very illegibility of raced lineages in the United States. A collage of subjects-turned-objects (slaves, indigenous peoples) and the very subjects who turn raced subjects into objects (the aquilinity of Grace’s nose), Grace embodies, quite literally the United States’ racist history and its own disavowal of that racist history.

As an embodiment of both white heteropatriarchy’s desire to homogenize the nation and its very requirement of the unassimilable bodies (such as Grace’s) as ballast against which such homogeneity is produced as morally righteous, Grace enters - and emerges from - the text as the melancholic subject/object. Grace, in a sense, represents the “tragic flaw” that white heteropatriarchy melancholically aims to disavow. In *Colonial Desire* (1995), Robert J.C. Young identifies the “tragic flaw” in white heteropatriarchy’s conception of itself.\(^\text{102}\) Young writes that, for Victorian race scientists like Count Gobineau, “Civilization therefore contains its own tragic flaw, because the Aryan races are impelled by a civilizing instinct to mix their blood with the very races that will bring about their downfall” (108). Civilization, as defined by the dominant

\(^{101}\) It is Briggs’ olive (“sallow”) complexion that holds or betrays his melancholy (*Of One Blood* 3).

\(^{102}\) In *Colonial Desire*, Young analyzes the nineteenth-century racist geneticist Count Gobineau’s *Essays on the Inequality of the Races* (1853-1855), a text Young considers representative of Victorian race science.
culture (in this case white heteropatriarchy), must erase its own vanishing point\(^{103}\) (represented by the raced other) by disavowing the raced other it desires (sexually and colonially) and rejects (as other and uncivilizable). It follows, then, that the depiction of the raced Grace would inevitably involve melancholy. “The redeeming features in Grace Noble’s personal appearance,” the narrator relates, “lay in her teeth and eyes” (20). Grace has “deep melancholy eyes that mutely [tell] the story of generations of oppression, of sacrifice and toil,” that “[reveal] a nature possessed of a wealth of tenderness and docility,” and “[envelop] [Grace] in a cloud of mystic darkness” (20).\(^{104}\) Immediately, then, a link is drawn between “deep melancholy” and “generations of oppression, of sacrifice and toil” but also between this melancholy and “a wealth of tenderness and docility” and the obscurity of “a cloud of mystic darkness.” Though historically and personally revealing – generations of oppression; Grace’s own tenderness and docility – the melancholy in Grace’s eyes also obfuscates, casting a shroud of unknowability over their owner.

Grace’s melancholic eyes and infectious smile have a particular effect the narrator finds worth mentioning: interracial appeal. The narrator tells us, “It is not physical beauty that causes one, even a member of another race, to give Grace Noble more than a passing glance,” but rather it is “the high and lofty passions of her highly sensitive nature” that cause people, even those of

\(^{103}\) Here, I borrow the term “vanishing point” from Jacqueline Rose’s “Woman as Symptom” (1986). Discussing cinema and the “logic of desire that is identified as produced and reproduced by the cinematic machine,” Rose argues that this logic is “a logic through which cinema as an apparatus tries to close itself off as a system of representation, but constantly comes up against a vanishing-point of the system where it fails to integrate itself and then has to refuse that moment of difference or trouble by trying to run away from it or by binding it back into the logic and perfection of the film system itself” (219). I believe Rose helps us understand Young’s point about (white heteropatriarchal) civilization as another particular logic of desire that attempts to close itself off at the point/moment of difference and, failing to do so, runs away (rejects) or binds it back in (sexually desires, conquers colonially, enslaves).

\(^{104}\) This cloud of mystic darkness only finds relief in “the display of her beautiful white teeth and a charming smile that began at the corners of the mouth, and like ripples on a pond when the water is disturbed, spread and spread until it transformed the feature into a look of peace and good will that at once became contagious” (20).
other races, to notice Grace (20). If, as Fabi says, Grace figures an intraracially harmonious utopian community (166), then this brief comment signals the possibility of an interracially harmonious utopianism in the text as well. Of course, I am not arguing that people being attracted to a woman inside of what Jermaine Singleton would call a (white) heteropatriarchal Symbolic is any sort of utopian re-imagining of racial/sexual/gender relations, but, clearly, Grace’s melancholy signifies for others. The non-gendered and racially multiple “one” that gives Grace “more than a passing glance” responds to the melancholic affect that constitutes Grace’s “highly sensitive nature.” Too, Grace’s “highly sensitive nature” is described as melancholic. Grace, as the narrator relates, is “of a naturally melancholy disposition” and possesses a “melancholy nature” (22, 23). Just as Grace’s eyes draw a link between cultural/historical suffering and Grace’s personal qualities of melancholy, Grace’s “nature” is both “highly sensitive” and “melancholic,” drawing a connection between her sensitivity – compassion, empathy, artistry, sweetness, sorrow – and the melancholy that figures her as the racialized subject/object of white heteropatriarchy. Racial melancholy, according to Cheng, denotes “a complex process of racial rejection and desire on the parts of whites and nonwhites that expressed itself in abject and manic forms” (xi). Melancholy, then, can be understood as inseparable from those very qualities, from the very qualities that constitute Grace as the persona utopia.105

105 Following Young, however, we might provide another reading of this scene, one that reflects the “ambivalent double gesture of repulsion and attraction that seems to lie at the heart of racism” (115). Young reads this ambivalence – a term at the heart of Freud’s concept of melancholy – as particularly tied to sexual desire. In his analysis of Gobineau, Young reveals the link “between discursive desire and the violence of colonial desire in its execution” (108). Young continues, “In the relation of hierarchical power, the white male’s response to the allure of exotic black sexuality is identified with mastery and domination, no doubt fueled by the resistance of the black female” (108). The negotiation of desire, allure, and resistance play out quite brutally in Of One Blood between Aubrey and Dianthe, as well as in the “unfortunate birth” of Violet Grey, Grace Noble’s best friend, in Five Generations Hence (45). With Grace, however, the narrator moves quickly away from an explicitly sexual desire to a non-sexual
In the chapter titled “The Vision,” which begins with a remark on Grace’s “melancholy nature,” Grace sees the utopian future she will later describe to her friend Violet and turn into her first book. Horace links Grace’s utopian vision with Grace’s melancholy nature in a strikingly Freudian manner. Freud posits that the melancholic possesses “a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic” (245). This “keener eye for the truth” is a sense of “heightened self-criticism” through which the melancholic comes “pretty near to understanding himself” (245). As Grace’s self is the melancholic racialized subject-object of white heteropatriarchy, her “keener eye for the truth” sees clearly the history and culture that has produced her sense of self as racialized subject-object. Horace’s description of Grace as she experiences her vision reveals the historico-cultural stakes of Grace’s melancholy: “In her face was pictured the sorrow and sufferings of her race from the time of the ancient world; her eyes, tender and mournful, bespoke the misery of the young mother who saw her child torn from her breast and sold into slavery” (27). Grace’s eyes speak the story of “generations of oppression,” this time both culturally (slavery) and filially (the mother and child) in a way that demonstrates response to Grace’s particular nature. This movement, I believe, captures how white racial melancholy turns its ambivalent gesture of repulsion/attraction into mechanisms of socio-cultural and economic control.

Following the earlier description of Grace’s melancholy nature as inseparable from her physical attractiveness/sexual appeal, Horace maintains focus on Grace’s melancholy nature in this chapter, delaying the description of the content of Grace’s vision for another four chapters. This has the odd effect of (re)producing Grace as the object of the (always already male-privileged) field of vision and further focalizing Grace as the melancholic persona utopia. “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance,” writes Laura Mulvey, “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (“Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” 837). So far in Five Generations Hence, Grace’s melancholy nature has been described, at least in Horace’s focus on Grace’s physical features, under the “determining male gaze” as it “projects its fantasy on to the female figure” (837). We might think, however, of “The Vision” as the chapter in which the narrative starts shifting from how Grace is seen to what Grace sees, caught in between those two points. Thus, we are still looking at Grace’s face and eyes, but what Grace’s eyes speak shifts into focus, reasserting her role as the persona utopia, as the subject of the novel who produces the vision (and is not just the visual field’s product).

Grace experiences her vision while alone in the woods. “Melancholia,” contends Ruti, “drains the world of its allure, causing us to retreat into a solitary province of a private grief” (144). Grace, as the persona utopia, transforms her moment of private grief into a vision of a utopian society for black people.
how white heteropatriarchy creates a cultural melancholy (slavery, racializing subjects as objects) through the obliteration of the black family unit. Grace - tender, mournful, melancholic – sees with “a clarity of vision, an accuracy of perception” the processes of normalization, naturalization, and subjectivization/objectification that create white heteropatriarchy as the norm (Ruti 144).

Grace also perceives these processes in regard to her contemporaries. In some of Grace’s social circles, “there was an assumption of fine airs, and a ceaseless attempt on scarcely subsistible income to mimic white folks’ ways that was ever repugnant to her refined nature” (23). This mimicry is described as “each chasing his favorite phantom,” a phantasmatic rendering of the melancholic’s impossible search for the satisfaction of the lack or loss that can never be satisfied (23). Part of what Grace’s refined (re: melancholic) nature finds repugnant in her fellow black people chasing the phantoms of originary wholeness is the spectral whiteness of such phantoms. That is, white heteropatriarchy has coded for black Americans a particular set of “ways” that signify success or happiness as white and therefore normal/normative, and this racial coding, as Grace understands it, is absolutely inaccessible to her race. Moreover, its very inaccessibility is what codes her and her people as raced, and thus melancholic, subject/objects. Grace, then, sees clearly “the institutional process of producing a dominant, standard white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others” that Cheng believes to be the operating principles of American racialization (10).

Along with her keen perception of the effects of institutional racism, Grace sees the history of slavery, and thus the past and present of racial melancholy. She also sees, as indicated by the title of this chapter, a vision of a black utopia. Grace’s vision demonstrates an inward/outward duality, or what could also be described as a past/present/future multiplicity.
This duality or multiplicity, as tied to the commingling of melancholy and utopia in Grace’s vision, returns us to Ruti’s description of the similarities between melancholy and utopia in *The Ethics of Opting Out*. “Both are ways of cathecting to a place of impossibility, of insisting on the affective necessity of what is absent,” writes Ruti (181). Grace’s vision captures the immutable and yet unknowable social loss of African Americans/slaves in the United States, and the ever-legible melancholy of her vision repeatedly returns her to a loss that cannot be redeemed, known, or avowed. Though it seems counter-intuitive to call Grace’s cathexis to her racial melancholy an “affective necessity,” Ruti says this of melancholy because it keeps the melancholic subject in a position critical of or oppositional to the present (the “no-longer present” of the “lost object/ideal”). The melancholic subject’s present is marked by the absence rendered partially accessible via melancholy because the melancholic subject’s present is impoverished. Thus, the “looking backward” of melancholy, for Ruti, signals a recognition of the present’s impoverishment for the subject’s flourishing (181). In this same way, utopia, as a “forward looking” site of cathexis to the “impossibility” of an alternative future, puts the melancholic subject in a critical/oppositional position to their impoverished present. For Grace, specifically, this means imagining an alternative wherein black people flourish in a utopian community established in Africa.

Four chapters later, Grace shares with her friend Violet the content of her utopian vision. Grace’s vision accentuates how melancholy involves the objectivization of the racial subject and that racial subject’s disavowal of the loss brought about by objectivization, as well as the resulting clarity of vision and proximity to personal (and socio-cultural) truths. Grace tells her friend that, in the week leading up to her vision, she “distressed” over a “lynching not far away”

---

108 Though Ruti does not cite explicitly Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888), her use of the term “looking backward” echoes the landmark utopian novel.
and the brutal assault of black men, women, and children in “one of our leading cities” (48). The present-ness of such trauma, a constant reminder of the history of terror enacted upon black bodies, leads to Grace’s clarity of vision: “I saw the Negroes for more than fourteen generations of oppression… I saw the land deluged in blood… I saw the legislative disfranchisements and all manner of discrimination… I saw prejudice above, below and all around us” (48). Grace’s vision, then, begins with a cascade of the history of and present-day forms of violence – physical, legal, social, cultural – laid upon her race, each vision another wave of melancholic recognition of unmournable sorrow, trauma, and loss. This imbrication of past and present violence in Grace’s vision(s) demonstrates more keenly how such sorrow, trauma, and loss is doubly unmournable: unmournable both because what has been lost is entirely inconceivable and because the loss keeps occurring. Part of the melancholic condition of the racialized subject, then, is the inescapability of an historic, unmournable past loss that, even though it is of the past, continues to occur and define the present in continuous reinforcement. Grace cannot begin mourning – must remain melancholic – because the loss to mourn has yet to cease, and, ultimately, even if it were to cease, would still remain unmournable because of what can never be understood or made legible about such loss.

With the full extent of Grace’s melancholy rendered as a deluge of piercing visions of the reality of the trauma and terror experienced by her race, Grace then re-renders this melancholy into a penetrating vision of utopia, again layering visions on top of one another:

I saw a people, a black people, tilling the soil with a song of real joy upon their lips. I saw a civilization like to the white man’s about us today, but in his place stood another of a different hue. I beheld beautifully paved streets, handsome homes beautified and adorned, and before the doors sported dusky boys and girls.
I seemed to be able to penetrate the very walls of business establishments and see that men and women of color were commercially engaged with the other. (49)

While Grace begins by seeing the innumerable violations of rights and life enacted upon black people in the US, she transitions to seeing, in the same cascading fashion, the contours of a black utopia freed of the terror of bondage, slavery, and mass murder. Though the vision is ultimately quite short, it is a precise snapshot of a utopic moment, photographed by Grace’s keen melancholic eyes, of an alternative lifeworld wherein black life, community, business, culture, and society thrive. With a clarity of vision and accuracy of perception, Grace “‘looked long and steady at the scene, pondering the singular coincidence,’” seeing, through and with her melancholy, a utopian possibility borne from the dystopian reality of the past and present of black people in the US.

Freud wonders why the melancholic “has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind” (245). Grace’s illness, understood not as a ‘sickness’ in the biological sense but rather as racial or cultural melancholy, arises from the realities of slavery, Jim Crow, and the innumerable forms of violence enacted on black bodies to perpetuate such systems - to maintain white American identity and authority -, and it is precisely truth that, through her melancholy, Grace accesses in her vision. “‘I was stunned,’” Graces relates, “‘as the truth began to draw upon my soul: the land was Africa, the people were my own, returned to possess the heritage of their ancestors’” (49; emphasis added). Here, “the truth” functions as the slow dawning of the location of her vision (Africa), the clarity with which she sees the end of the plight of her people (de-
possession transformed into re-possession over the span of five generations), and the soulful quality struck by her imagination. For Grace, this is the beginning of her defense of the separation of races via emigrationism, and, while such separationism will not appeal to modern readers, it possesses for Grace the truthful spark of psychological, racial, and national healing and reconfiguration.\footnote{Grace’s vision of a separatist black utopia located in Africa echoes that of Liberia in \textit{Three Hundred Years Hence}. In the closing moments of the novel, Edgar Hastings learns from the future Edgar that the US government “transplanted the whole of the negro population to Liberia and to other healthy colonies” (126). “They are a prosperous and happy people,” future Edgar tells Hastings, “respected by all nations, for their trade extends over the whole world” (127-128). Such utopic prosperity results from an intertwining of colonialism and patience (docility), as the future Edgar relates that “they would never have arrived at their happy condition if they had sought to obtain their freedom by force; but by waiting a few years… they were released from bondage with the aid and good wishes of the whole country” (128). Future Hastings contextualizes the emancipation of slaves and the global respect proffered to these new colonies as “inspired by the humane principles of the Christian religion” (128). Thus, the US gives freely of African land to freed slaves, meaning the imperial dispossession of African lands from African peoples, in order to create (black) Christian colonies that serve a global (Western) marketplace.}

Emigrationism is not, however, the only utopian vision proffered by \textit{Five Generations Hence}. Violet, and not Grace, leaves Texas to work as a missionary in Africa, while Grace stays in the United States, and through her career as a writer, advocates for emigrationism. Though Grace’s advocacy for emigrationism is an important aspect of her career as a writer, her career as a writer who writes utopically about black issues is, as Fabi and I would agree, the more unique, dynamic, and overarching utopian vision in \textit{Five Generations Hence}. Immediately after telling Violet her vision of a black utopia in Africa, Grace asks Violet, “Do you think it possible that I may give to the world this inspiration, with power to compel them to appreciate its solemnity; dare I hope to admonish a race to begin the weaving of so strange a destiny?” (51) Though it sometimes “seems mere folly” to Grace “that a Negro woman of moderate education [should dare] to address the public in a literary way,” she yearns for “success in getting the ears of her people to the propounding of a great truth” (51, 52). Violet both commends her friend for this
dream and compels Grace to follow it, urging, “‘Success to you, ardent girl, swerve not from your purpose, and perhaps some of your own posterity may in that sunny land [Africa] compose the national hymn’” (52). Violet adds to Grace’s fantasy structure about her writing, envisioning a utopian lineage that begins with Grace’s writing and leads to a new nation and that nation’s own particular history and belief structures. It is, importantly, a lineage focused on composition, ensuring that part of what both transfers and is transferred through this lineage is writing and creating. Grace and Violet intertwine writing and utopia as two necessary and co-constitutive components of the imagination, creation, and maintenance of a future black utopia.

As Grace interweaves her vision of a future black utopia with her personal desire to become a writer and as Violet further knots together utopianism and composition in this conversation, the rest of Five Generations Hence, which keeps utopia and writing enwoven, does not leave its melancholy behind. Instead, melancholy continues to return to the text as another thread drawn together with utopia and writing. Grace’s financial success allows her to loan Lemuel Graves, the former object of her romantic desire and now described as “a tall, dark figure with deep, melancholy eyes,” the money his family requires to pay their way out of debt to once again own their family farm (85). This loan, which Lemuel fully repays to Grace, also allows Lemuel to - along with encouragement from Grace’s book111 - to “set sail from the port of Galveston, bound for Africa” at novel’s end (95). The melancholic Lemuel, released from the bondage of predatory debt collectors and unfair property laws levied against black landownership by money derived from sales of Grace’s utopian novel, leaves Texas for Africa, following the path charted out in Grace’s book. Lemuel’s exit from the novel (and entrance into

111 “‘Your book and presence have inspired me,’” Lemuel tells Grace (87).
Africa) relies on the coterminous relationship between utopia, melancholy, and writing in *Five Generations Hence*.

Grace’s own happiness and success is also marked, at novel’s end, with an attendant melancholy. Though Violet repeatedly attempts to assure Grace of her happiness in Africa, Grace “often cried softly to herself. Somehow that ‘happy, quite happy’ seemed a kind of gentle wail coming from her friend buried deep in that dark continent, while she, who advocated so much, remained home rich and happy” (95). Grace remains unconvinced, “till years afterwards,” of Violet’s happiness, and though the novel ends with her conviction in Violet’s happiness, Grace’s sadness, and the necessity of her further and future work, remains (95). “‘We need,’” writes Violet, “‘the sons and daughters that pure, educated women like yourself will rear to found a nation here. Continue to write; the seed of your first book is sown, and it will grow’” (95). Too, in Grace’s final wish of the novel – for her daughters to one day be like Violet -, *Five Generations Hence* concludes with the recognition of Grace’s larger socio-political context relatively unchanged. While *Five Generations Hence* stages Grace’s achievement of an almost unprecedented – a utopic – level of personal success, a level of personal success that directly affects the lives of others (Lemuel, Violet), the novel ends by acknowledging the work that remains for Grace, for Violet, and for future generations. This work is both melancholic and utopic, deeply fixated on the impoverishment of the present and rooted in the unmournable horrors of the past and the unknowable possibilities of the future. Grace, “at the center of [Horace’s] vision of a more secure and cohesive black community,” figures the *persona utopia* at the end of *Five Generations Hence*, and, in so doing, embodies the desire and need to expand and to enhance how and for whom utopia signifies.
3.3 Melancholic, Utopic, Queer

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911), John Robertson returns to the United States after spending thirty years in Tibet. The novel’s protagonist, John repeatedly feels a sense of queerness when confronting the utopian changes undergone during his absence. Much of John’s queer feelings stem from the feminist revolution that has brought about these utopian United States; he feels queer because he feels loss of the no-longer-present. In this way, John’s queerness can be understood as melancholy, a melancholy similar to Edward Hastings’ melancholy in *Three Hundred Years Hence*. Hastings, while certainly melancholic over the loss of his family, also experiences melancholy because of the loss of patriarchal dominion. John shares this loss, as both men feel de-centralized, in inexplicable ways, by the full enfranchisement of women. John’s queer feelings are also similar to the melancholies experienced by Vera in *Mizora* and the unnamed suffragist in *New Amazonia*, as both John’s queerness and Vera and the unnamed suffragist’s melancholy are brought about by the entrance into and exploration of utopia. All of these protagonists – John, Hastings, Vera, the unnamed suffragist – confront the loss of the no-longer-present while experiencing utopia, blending together the affects (and effects) of melancholy and utopia in their journeys.

Why, then, does Gilman code John’s melancholy as queer? Judith Butler, in her essay “Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification” (1997), asks a question that might answer ours: “Is there a way in which gender identification, or, rather, the identifications that become central to the formation of gender, are produced through melancholic identifications?” (247)."It seems

---

112 In Butler’s working out of Freud’s theory of melancholy, “identification,” “internalization,” and “incorporation” are used in concert. If, in melancholy, there is “no final breaking of attachment,” there is instead “the incorporation of the attachment as identification” (246). From there, this “melancholic identification permits the loss of the object in the external world precisely because it provides a way to
clear that the positions of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’” continues Butler, “understood as the effects of laborious and uncertain accomplishment, are established in part through prohibitions which demand the loss of certain sexual attachments, and demand as well those losses not be avowed, and not be grieved” (247). For Butler, the categories of gender identification – masculine, feminine – are produced and reified through a melancholic disavowal of “the possibility of homosexual attachment” (247). The possibility of homosexual attachment is preempted by the “assumption” of masculinity and femininity “through the accomplishment of an always tenuous heterosexuality,” signaling a “foreclosure of possibility which produces a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss” (247).

In John’s case, gender confusion clearly plays a part of his queer feelings, as his sister’s masculine traits bewilder him, and this bewilderment both marks his melancholy (his queer feelings) and arises from utopia (the elimination of delimited gender roles). Too, if John feels a “queer, sick feeling” in his own amusement while reading a story about two women “business partners” in a magazine edited and contributed to by women, he does so precisely as a melancholic response to an alteration in the development of gender categories, roles, and expression in the new utopian United States. John’s queer/melancholic reaction can be read as embodying Butler’s claim that “the fear of homosexual desire in a woman may induce a panic that she is losing her femininity, that she is not a woman, that she is no longer a proper woman, that if she is not quite a man, she is like one, and hence monstrous in some way” (247). And if Nellie, or the two women business partners, are no longer women (but not quite men), then John

preserve the object as part of the ego, and, hence, to avert the loss as a complete loss” (246). This marks a transfer of the object (and the object-cathexis) from the external to the internal, leading Butler to posit, “Giving up the object becomes possible only on the condition of a melancholic internalization, or, what might for our purposes turn out to be even more important, a melancholic incorporation” (246-247). Internalization, or incorporation, “will be a way to disavow a loss” (247).
must wonder if he is still himself a man. As Butler writes, “Homosexual desire thus panics gender,” and John’s queerness, particularly in response to Nellie’s manliness and the “business partnership” of the two women in the magazine resonates as a melancholic panic over gender’s (il)legibility (248).

Of course, melancholic panic over gender’s (il)legibility is also a panic over same-sex desire. If women no longer signify in legible, identifiable forms that legitimatize and protect heterosexuality, then John’s continued desire for women – his continued presumed heterosexuality – comes into question, as the distinctions between hetero and homo (and man and woman) begin to dissipate. *Moving the Mountain* ends with John’s marriage to his cousin Drusilla, a marriage that both saves Drusilla from the antiquated, racist past/present of the Antebellum-era socio-politics of the family and saves John from his same-sex panic. This marriage, however, only saves John from his same-sex panic because Drusilla, untouched (as yet) by the influences of the feminist utopian revolution, remains unqualifiedly a “woman” in the “traditional” sense. John’s satisfaction with Drusilla’s change signals a relief from his melancholy over the reconfiguration of the heterosexual matrix undergirding gender formation in the new utopian United States, an indication that John has potentially de-cathedected from the no-longer-present, mourned what he has lost, and healed. The novel’s final line, though, does contain a hint of ambivalence, possibly acknowledging John’s extent melancholy/queerness: John “grew to find the world like heaven, too – if only for what it did to Drusilla” (116). For Freud, ambivalence is a mark of melancholy, as it describes the nature of the object relation, so perhaps John has not de-cathedected but rather remains cathedected, albeit less catastrophically for John, to a (hetero)sexual matrix and melancholic gender structure that ignites in him a (same-sex) panic he now (at least partially) accepts.
Read in this way, the marriage that concludes *Moving the Mountain* fails to tidy up the sexual and gendered ambiguities that arise in the novel as effects of the utopian change to the United States. Similarly, Grace Noble’s marriage to Dr. Carl Warner in *Five Generations Hence* does not fully conceal or erase the moments of same-sex erotics in the novel. In the chapter “Five Generations Hence,” a charged eroticism between Grace and Violet precedes Grace’s narration of her utopian vision and revelation of her desire to become an author to Violet, entangling melancholy (her visions of the past and present atrocities committed against their race), utopia (Grace’s utopian vision), and queerness (the shared eros of the two women). The conversation between Grace and Violet begins with Grace “stroking the hair from [Violet’s] brow,” while Grace’s voice is marked by “soft, tremulous tones” (47). When Grace finishes her preamble to her vision, a preamble that includes Grace asking Violet to encourage her “lofty desires,” “[Grace’s] eyes pleadingly sought those of her companion, who met the parted lips with a kiss’ (47). Grace soon finds herself “fallen into the lap of her friend, shaking with “convulsive gasps” as her “tears fell thick and fast” (47). As Grace prepares to share with Violet her desires and dreams, the two women share a physical intimacy both queer in its eros and erotic in its queerness. It becomes difficult to extricate just what precisely overwhelms Grace (and Violet) in the scene, and rather than attempt to separate out the numerous parts of Grace’s palpable excitement, reading these queer erotics together with the forms melancholy and utopia already discussed in this chapter will reconstitute that excitement into a pulsing assemblage of (dis)avowal, loss, desire, and eros.

In a letter Grace receives from Violet after Violet has left for Africa, Violet reminisces about this very scene. “My mind reverts to our last afternoon together,” writes Violet, “I see your hands clasped in mine, lips slightly parted, the light of conviction flashing from your eyes,
delivering to me the message seems more real each day” (64). Violet’s memory keeps the women physically touching (clasped hands) while returning to the image of parted lips. The “light of conviction” and “message” presumably refer to Grace’s vision, but in their proximity to clasped hands and parted lip, it becomes unclear if such conviction might not refer more directly to the (unspeakable) queer eros shared by Grace and Violet. Reproduced here as the most principal memory Violet has (of Grace), the scene from “Five Generations Hence” can now possibly be read as one that seeks out melancholy and utopia (Grace’s conviction and message) to disguise the same-sex desire neither the two women nor the novel can contain. In “Melancholy Gender,” Butler asks of homosexual loss and love, “Or is it a love and a loss haunted by the specter of a certain unreality, a certain unthinkability, the double disavowal of the ‘I never loved her, and I never lost her’ uttered by a woman?” (249). Butler’s question can be used to emphasize the melancholic tone of Violet’s letter, a missive that captures the commingling of love and loss shared and experienced by both Grace and Violet. Violet’s missionary trip to Africa functions, then, both as an articulation of the novel’s emigrationist politics and as the requisite separation of Grace and Violet lest the queer eros they share threaten the novel’s heterosexual logic.

When the novel finally, in its last three pages, describes a kiss between Grace and a man - her husband Dr. Warner -, the kiss lacks the erotic electricity of both Grace and Violet’s kiss and Violet’s memory of that kiss. “Their lips met in a long, fond kiss,” relates the narrator, depicting a moment of physical intimacy that, while possessing affection and care, lacks the passion so clearly felt in Grace and Violet’s (94). This kiss ultimately leads to children and the novel’s concluding (though perhaps not conclusive) heterosexual logic. As the second section of this chapter argues, however, melancholy still haunts the novel’s final pages, and, with Violet still in
Africa, it can be argued that Grace still feels the gender melancholy that involves the double disavowal of homosexual love and loss. Importantly, this is not to say that Grace’s melancholy is no longer a racial melancholy. Rather, Grace’s melancholy is racial and gendered, a complex entanglement of multiple disavowals: the disavowal of the social loss as experienced by the racialized subject-object and the disavowal of same-sex love and loss. In this sense, Grace perhaps most acutely embodies the melancholy produced by white heteropatriarchy, a system of racial, gendered, and sexual dominion that Grace, as the persona utopia, critiques. As Fabi writes about *Five Generations Hence*, Jones emplaces Grace at the “center of her vision of a more secure and cohesive black community characterized by self-reliance, mutual support, intergenerational solidarity, the absence of class or intraracial color prejudice, greater professional and economic opportunities, individual commitment to the common welfare, more egalitarian gender relations, and the expanded social role and influence of women” (166). The utopianism, then, proffered by and through Grace, as intertwined with her melancholy, is a complex, multiple, and dynamic imaginative envisioning of an alternative Social Order wherein a queer black woman finds herself as that Symbolic’s fulcrum.

Looking ahead to Chapter IV, queerness and its relationship to utopia will take on a larger significance in this dissertation’s development of its feminist utopianism. Explicit in my readings of John Robertson’s pervasive feelings of queerness and of Grace’s lesbian erotics - as well as in my reading in Chapter I of the anti-Oedipal Epilogue to George Eliot’s *Romola* – is utopia’s potential for the exploration and expression of non-normative gender and sexuality. I. By reading the gender role reversals at the center of Annie Denton Cridge’s anti-patriarchal satire *Man’s Rights, or, How Would You Like It?* (1870) alongside the gender-bending heroics of Gloria Speranza/Hector D’Estrange in Lady Florence Dixie’s *Gloriana, or the Revolution of 1900*
(1890), my next chapter will move queerness from the periphery to the center of my feminist utopian theory, paying particular attention to the porous boundaries of gendered and sexual categories of identity. Satirical gender role reversals, heroic gender-bending, and same-sex fantasies all involve movement, and tracking these movements, like the modes of travel in Chapter II and the melancholy of traveling in Chapter III, will allow us to map the queer mo(ve)ments of feminist utopianism in women’s utopian literature.
4 FEMINIST UTOPIANISM AND THE DISRUPTION OF THE GENDER BINARY IN

MAN’S RIGHTS AND GLORIANA

As discussed in the Coda to Chapter III, queerness takes on multiple forms in women’s utopian literature. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911), John Robertson’s frequent feelings of queerness index his panic over the legibility of gender in the new utopian United States. The preponderance of “strange, masculine women and subdued men” in the Utopian States creates a problem for John: if women act like men and men behave in womanly ways, John’s desire for women can no longer be understood as categorically straight (13). John feels queer because the dissolution of rigid gender identities in the Utopian States renders imperceptible any distinction between hetero- and homo- sexualities. Horrified by these queer feelings, John asks at the novel’s beginning, “‘Aren’t there any women left?’” to which his sister Nellie responds mischievously, “‘There’s Aunt Dorcas… and Cousin Drusilla’” (13). By novel’s end, John marries Drusilla, a marriage that saves Drusilla from the antiquated antebellum society of her family farm and John from having to marry a woman who might not be a woman after all. The novel thus saves Drusilla for John, keeping intact her pure womanhood in order to ensure John’s heterosexuality—a final straightening out of the novel’s pervasive queerness.

In *Five Generations Hence* (1915), marriage again operates as a mechanism for concealing or erasing queerness, but queerness for this novel means something different. In my discussion of *Five Generations Hence*, I use queerness to signify not just the possibility of same-sex desire but the presence of such desire as shared by Grace Noble and Violet Gray. Right before Grace tells Violet her utopian vision, the two share a kiss with “parted lips” (47), a kiss that leaves Grace shaking with “convulsive gasps” in Violet’s lap (47), lodges itself in Violet’s memory (64), and contrasts with Grace and her husband’s “fond kiss” in the novel’s concluding chapter (94). That
such a contrast stands between these two kisses suggests an excess of feeling and desire the novel attempts to excise through Grace’s marriage to Dr. Warner. If, as Judith Butler argues, “Homosexual desire thus panics gender,” then it follows that *Five Generations Hence*, like *Moving the Mountain*, would quell that panic with a concluding, conclusive heterosexual union.

Lacking any such conclusion, George Eliot’s *Romola* (1863) instead ends with an alternative kinship alliance. In the novel’s utopian Epilogue, Romola acts as father-mother to her sister-wife’s two children, raising Lillo and Ninna alongside her sister-wife Tessa and cousin Monna Brigida. Contrasted against the masculinist violence of the religio-political uprisings of 1490s Florence, this filial configuration is a departure from normative dyadic heterosexuality, offering to the three women and two children a sense of security and opportunity for flourishing not found in the rest of the novel. The concern with such arrangements, Judith Butler points out, is the fear that “putative natural and cultural laws said to sustain human intelligibility” cannot be transmitted generationally by family units lacking a “real” mother and father (104). With Romola adopting the paternal role and serving as the children’s *second* mother, she and Tessa cannot provide the adequate parental points of sexual cathexis for Lillo and Ninna, disrupting the process through which the children would then become legibly gendered subjects. This disruption is the Epilogue’s queerness and its utopianism, an alteration in gender relations towards a better future for all those involved.

While queerness figures something unique in each of these three readings, the resonant thread between them is the ability of queerness to mark the moments when alterations to the gender binary impact or call into question the viability of heterosexuality. Other than in *Five Generations Hence*, in which queerness operates more clearly as explicit same-sex desire, it often arises as a potentiality set into motion by critiques of and alterations to gender categories.
Queerness thus denotes the denaturalization of gender, sexuality, and the presumed connections between them, as well as the utopianism that follows from this denaturalization. This is why novels such as *Moving the Mountain* and *Five Generations Hence* work so diligently to foreclose such possibilities with heterosexual marriages; they have, in their drive to rearrange gender relations, rearranged too much and transgressed their own utopian projects. This is also why reading women’s utopian literature matters: because gender and sexuality are co-constitutive sets of identities and practices lacking any essential or innate qualities, any attempt to rethink gender results in the unveiling of sexuality’s concomitant constructedness. Moreover, that authors like Gilman and Horace, whether intentionally or not, work to re-naturalize heterosexuality after deconstructing the gender binary only further denaturalizes it. In some ways, the feminist critique at the foundation of women’s utopian literature creates the very heterosexual panic that some authors then seek to cover over.

Chapter IV examines two more novels that challenge the gender binary, find heterosexuality in disarray, and then endeavor to reconstitute it as the only natural sexuality. Both Annie Denton Cridge’s *Man’s Rights; Or, How Would You Like It?* (1870) and Lady Florence Dixie’s *Gloriana; or, the Revolution of 1900* (1890) call into question the “natural” coherence of gender identities such as “man” and “woman” but retreat from the emergent queerness produced by their critiques. These texts, however, are not ultimately conservative; rather, each text’s emergent, contested queerness reveals the discursive constituveness of both gender and sexuality. In their critiques of gender norms, *Man’s Rights* and *Gloriana* stage gender’s Butlerian performativity and sexuality’s Foucauldian discursiveness. Serving as this chapter’s theoretical lenses, Judith Butler and Michel Foucault provide language for understanding how women’s utopian literature simultaneously resists and participates in the production of legible categories of identity.
Importantly, it is queerness - particularly queer desire – that repeatedly confounds this production. In Chapters I and III, queerness operated on the edges of the feminist critiques offered by women’s utopian literature. In this chapter, queerness becomes the modus operandi, an ever-shifting organizing principle for understanding the discursive operations of gender and sexuality in the nineteenth century.

Chapter IV begins with a discussion of Cridge’s *Man’s Rights*, a short collection of interlocking utopian dreams that satirizes and parodies nineteenth-century gender roles through a complete gender role reversal and inversion. Using Butler’s theory of performativity, Cridge’s satire will be read as a trenchant critique of the heteronormative gender binary. The second half of the chapter will focus on *Gloriana*, Dixie’s utopian novel of women’s political revolution in Victorian England. Staging quite literally a Foucauldian medico-juridical legislation of sex, sexuality, and gender, *Gloriana* will be read alongside Foucault’s discussion of the confession act in *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. Finally, Chapter IV concludes with a discussion of how androgyny can be used to conceptualize *Gloriana*’s feminist utopian politics. Androgyny, as a historically grounded yet endlessly shifting concept, offers a key to the novel’s queerness.

### 4.1 Men, Women, and Butterflies

Born in the United Kingdom, Annie Denton Cridge moved to the United States in 1842 at the age of 17 and became a noted suffragist, socialist, and psychometrist. Along with her husband Alfred and brother William, Cridge co-published the reformist magazine *Vanguard* between the years 1847-1848 in Dayton, OH. Along with this weekly magazine and *Man’s Rights*, Cridge penned her autobiography *My Soul’s Thralldom and Its Deliverance* (1856) as

---

113 Psychometry is the practice of discerning facts about a person or an event by handling an object associated with those persons or events. Cridge ran advertisements for her psychometric abilities in *Vanguard*.

114 Thanks to the International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals, 52 issues of this publication remain accessible.
well as a children’s book entitled The Crumb-Basket (1868) (Galant 178). Cridge wrote and published Man’s Rights five years before her death, living out her final years as a prominent member of a community of feminist and spiritualist reformers in Riverside, California (Taylor 201). As Galant, Taylor, and Braude (2001) have shown, Cridge left her home in Washington, D.C. in 1871 to move to Riverside, California, to live out the utopian precepts set forth in the ninth dream of Man’s Rights, hoping to demonstrate the viability of an agricultural revolution led by women. Cridge “died alone in Riverside, four years after arriving, due to overwork, isolation, and distance from the major, active spaces of political reform,” but not before impacting the Riverside community enough to have two main streets named after her, a lasting testament to her role in the community’s early years (Taylor 201-202).

Unlike the other works discussed in this dissertation, Man’s Rights relies almost entirely on satire and irony to produce its utopian message. In Man’s Rights, the satire plays out through the protagonist Annie’s nine interlaced dreams – visiting a Martian world in the first seven, a future New York in the eighth, and a future United States in the ninth that is distinct from the United States depicted in the eighth dream. The first seven dreams take place in what Annie calls “Dreamland,” a Martian society whose distinct feature is the reversal of

115 Lyman Tower Sargent (1994) defines “utopian satire” as “a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as a criticism of that contemporary society” (9). Sargent notes that Samuel Butler’s Erewhon (1872) is arguably the most famous example of this sub-genre.

116 It is difficult to separate entirely Annie the narrator from Annie Denton Cridge the author. The primary difference between the two would be the attitudes of each woman’s husband towards her writing. Cridge’s husband Alfred was not only an ardent supporter of Cridge’s writing but was also her co-writer and co-publisher in Vanguard. Annie’s husband in Man’s Rights, however, delivers the following screed to Annie concerning her late-night writing: “’Now I will give you a little of my mind: You are a dreamer, and nothing but a dreamer, and henceforth may rise fifty times in the night, or you may sit up all night to write your dreams if you choose; but you shall not do it at my cost. I believe in Individual Sovereignty. You shall go to some other room’” (47).

117 Sargent defines “the broad, general phenomenon of utopianism as social dreaming - the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live” (3). In part, Sargent defines
nineteenth-century gender relations. In this Martian Dreamland, women control the public sphere while men organize and agitate for voting rights and the elimination of unequal gender relations. Dreams Eight and Nine are disconnected narratologically from One through Seven and offer two possible futures brought about by women’s liberation. In Dream Eight, Annie and her husband watch as a thousand “Male Magdalens” are arrested for soliciting prostitution. This legislation results from women taking control of all three branches of the U.S. government, a reality both lamented and applauded by the men of this future New York. In Dream Nine, the most provincial of Annie’s dreams, Annie finds herself at the fiftieth anniversary of the Woman’s Agricultural Convention, discovering there that an Edenic United States followed forth from women taking up an agricultural revolution. Across the nine dreams, Cridge offers three alternative possibilities for women: a dystopia in which men face the same form of gender oppression women face in the real world, an alternate United States in which an all-women government reverses legislation historically used to oppress women, and an agricultural utopia predicated on women’s peaceful seizing of the means of production. Though each alternative vision includes a transformation of women’s roles, this chapter focuses primarily on the Dreamland sequence in Dreams One through Seven because its satiric reversal of normative gender behavior critiques most assiduously the concept of the gender binary.

In fact, this gender role reversal is the reader’s introduction to Dreamland. In Annie’s first moments in Dreamland, she looks from “house to house” and “kitchen to kitchen” to find utopianism in this way following the preponderance of utopian fictions organized as dreams. As discussed in Chapter III, Mary Griffith’s *Three Hundred Year Hence* (1836), considered to be the first utopian novel published by a woman in the United States, takes place as a dream. Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett’s *New Amazonia* (1881), another novel discussed in Chapter III, also unfolds as a dream. *Gloriana*, as well, is bookended by a poem entitled “Maremna’s Dream,” suggesting that the novel’s content is, in fact, a dream.

Galant (2018) considers Dreamland itself to be a dystopia. That Dreamland is a dystopia does not mean *Man’s Rights* is itself dystopic; rather, the gender critique that makes up Dreamland’s dystopia is the text’s utopianism.
that “everywhere the respective duties of man and woman were reversed” (1). Continuing, Annie writes, “In every household I found the men in aprons, superintending the affairs of the kitchen. Everywhere men, and only men, were the Bridgets and housekeepers” (1). These “men-Bridgets” and “gentleman-housekeepers” tend to the nursery as well, carrying around crying babies and attending to “unkempt, unwashed children” all while “[raking] the fire, [frying] the meat, and [setting] the table for breakfast” (1, 2). While the husbands attend to breakfast and the children, Annie notes “how quietly and composedly the lady of the house drank her coffee and read the morning paper; apparently oblivious of the trials of her poor husband” (2). Adding to this image of domestic bliss for women, Annie informs us that Dreamlandian men are “very pale” and “somewhat nervous,” full of “anxiety and unrest, a constant feeling of unpleasant expectancy” (1). They are “stoop-shouldered” with “weak and complaining” voices, and they cannot think past “the sewing that ought to be done, and only [their] own hands to do it” (1, 2).

On the other hand, Annie finds herself “profoundly astonished and intensely delighted” by the “almost angelic” beauty of Dreamlandian women, combined as it is “with intellect, and health brooded so divinely over” (2). Women, however, are not angelic in their behavior to their partners, as a burnt breakfast prompts the lady of the house to chide her husband, “’My dear, this breakfast is bad, very bad: you ought to attend to things better’” (3). Annie observes “how sad he felt at these words,” pitying “the poor fellow” his all-too familiar disparagement (3). Galant writes, “Men’s confinement to the kitchen and parlor is a source of distress for the sympathetic narrator” (188). Though a source of distress and sympathy, men’s confinement and the pain caused by it also serve as Cridge’ scouring critique of the drudgery of women’s domestic work in the nineteenth century.

119 “Bridget” is a derogatory US term for an Irish maid-servant. Its abbreviation, “Biddy,” is more commonly used (OED). More than likely the term is derived from “Saint Brigid,” one of Ireland’s patron saints.
This reversal of the terms of gender-based discrimination hinges on Dreamlandian men being, in Annie’s own words, “‘unsexed’” (1). As these opening pages reveal, however, Dreamlandian men’s unsexing is not an elimination of sex but rather a re-sexing, an adoption of the tropes and sartorial markers of man’s binary opposite. Dreamlandian men have become women, and this “becoming” should alert us not only to Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949) but to the questions Judith Butler asks of de Beauvoir: “How does one ‘become’ a gender? What is the moment or mechanism of gender construction? And, perhaps most pertinently, when does this mechanism arrive on the cultural scene to transform the human subject into a gendered subject?” (*Gender Trouble* 151). In a literal sense, Cridge constructs the genders of the Dreamlandians, and it is through her construction of Dreamlandian genders that we see the fundamental constructiveness of genders back on Earth. Additionally, just as Cridge builds the Dreamlandian genders, she builds the relations between them, revealing those relations to be as constructed as the genders themselves. Importantly, the construction and becoming of genders in *Man’s Rights* is a continuous process, one that unfolds over Annie’s seven-dream stay on Mars. This process, enacted by the narrative logic of the text, reflects Butler’s claim that “gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort” (152). Gender is thus a doing and not a being, a contingent set of actions that has no substantive foundation.

Because of this, gender cannot legitimize the fantasy of coherent identities, a fantasy that relies on gender telling the truth about the sexed/sexualized body. As Butler claims, “Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the

---

120 We should take Annie’s use of the word “sex” in “unsexed” to mean “gender.”
organizing principle of identity as a cause” (185). The acts, gestures, and desires comprising gender produce a set of fictions about an internal coherence or truth whose meaning is only ever found on the surface. “Such acts, gestures, enactments,” Butler continues, “are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (185). What the doing or becoming of gender expresses, then, is not an essential quality out from which gender emanates; rather, the doing and becoming of gender create the conditions of gender’s legibility and the subject’s coherence. Gender is performative precisely because the fictions of legibility and coherence rely on its incessant, repeated performance. Moreover, if the “reality” of the gendered body “is fabricated as an interior essence,” then “that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse” (185). Gender’s essential qualities are no more than the products of public and social discourses made over to be essential by the incessant, repetitive performance of gender.

Thus, gender’s performativity reveals who and what shapes and regulates the internal truth of the gendered subject. Crucially, for Butler, this “illusion of an interior and organizing gender core” is maintained by social and public discourse “for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality” (186). The myth of an essential gender exists in service of the regulation and reproduction of heterosexuality. Once the “political and discursive origin of gender identity” is displaced onto “a psychological ‘core’” in the subject, the mythos is established, and those political and discursive origins no longer require analysis (186). Recognizing gender’s performativity, however, offers us the opportunity to understand the mechanism of this displacement and its motivations; namely, the reproduction of the gender binary and heterosexuality as both natural and originary. This displacement seeks to
essentialize gender and sexual binaries and cast aside other genders and sexualities as unnatural and malformed copies of a mythic, pure original. Understanding gender as performative, however, allows us to see that no such original exists, that gender is “a copy of a copy” (Salih 91). Butler’s theory of performativity can be used to better understand how Cridge not only critiques gender tropes in *Man’s Rights* but reveals such tropes to have no natural, originary foundation.

For Cridge’s satiric inversion to work, she must convincingly make women out of the Dreamlandian men, and so must rely on the ability of gender tropes to communicate gender truths. Those truths are themselves nothing more than tropes, and tracing their use in *Man’s Rights* reveals them as such. In the first dream, men become women in the context of domestic labor and the discourse of separate spheres. In Annie’s second dream, the men are made into women with their clothing. Annie comes across gentlemen “dressed in calico suits, trimmed with little ruffles” with “little flat hats” decorated with “ribbon-streamers” and “feathers and flowers” (9). Annie passes other gentlemen “in red, green, yellow, drab, and black suits, trimmed in such elaborate and fanciful styles” (9). Some of the suits are “trimmed with lace: lace down the sides of the pants and round the bottoms; lace round the edges of the coat, and beautifully curving hither and thither as a vine,” while other suits are “almost covered with elaborate embroidery, or satin folds, or piping, or ribbon” (9). As well, these gentlemen wear head-dresses: “flowers, bits of lace, tulle or blonde, feathers, and even birds, were mixed in endless profusion with

---

121 While the men are not wearing crinolines, one of the most famous pieces of women’s fashion in the nineteenth century, their suits overflow with the same textures, fabrics, and accoutrement that women’s crinolines would feature. The crinoline, described by Lynda Nead (2013) as “a confection of fabrics and ornament,” was often made from “muslin, tulle, and chiffon” and was decorated “with flounces, fringes, and ribbons” (494). Cridge’s readers would have surely recognized Dreamlandian men’s ostentatiously decorated suits as their equivalent.
ribbon, tinsel, glitter, and (*ad libitum*) grease” (10). They also carry *portemonnaies* and fans “edged with feathers, or covered with pictures, or inlaid with pearl” (10). This deluge of fashion markers works to produce these men as recognizably women.

As with the scene of domestic strife in the first dream, Cridge uses the supposedly static gender marker of women’s fashion to re-sex the unsexed Dreamlandian men. In the process, however, the natural links between domestic roles and gender as well as between fashion and gender begin to dissolve. That these external discourses and items work to produce Dreamlandian men as women means they also work to produce the very category of woman itself. Fashion, like the rhetoric of separate spheres, emerges in *Man’s Rights* as a particularly effective discursive tool for making women out of men. Cridge accomplishes this by arguing that fashion is a byproduct of separate spheres. When Annie overhears these men obsessing over each other’s outfits, busying themselves with “embroidery, fancy knitting, and all the delicate nothings that interest only ladies in this waking world of ours,” she wonders to herself, “‘What means this degradation? Why have the lords of creation become mere puppets or dolls?’” (10, 11). Annie soon learns that the answer to men’s “‘pitiable condition’” is that “women, and only women, were the lawmakers, judges, executive officers, &c., of the nation,” and that every office, college, and literary institution “were all built for women, and only open to women, and that men were all excluded” from them (11-12). The implication here is that every contour of Dreamlandian men’s fashion results from their exclusion from the public sphere. Their fashion is not a natural extension of their masculinity; rather, men’s fashion is conditioned by their

---

122 As Marianne Van Remoortel (2017) demonstrates, head-dresses were frequently pictured in both “up-market women’s periodicals” and “affordable, lavishly illustrated women’s and family magazines” in the nineteenth century (269). Annie finds copies of a “Gentlemen’s Magazine of Fashion” in the homes of the fancy gentlemen she sees on the street, an artifact instantly recognizable to her contemporary audience as something that *should* belong to women.

123 An outdated French term for “purse.”
exclusion. “True gender,” Butler writes, “is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies,” and the interplay between men’s fashion and their exclusion from the public sphere can be read as a prevailing example of how and why that fantasy operates (186).

While Annie finds Dreamlandian men’s obsession with fashion a lamentable byproduct of their exclusion from political life, she finds the fashion itself quite funny. During her description of the ruffled and ribboned men, Annie stops to reflect, “It really makes me laugh at this moment to think of that comical sight” (10). Annie finds humor in the incongruent image of men wearing women’s clothing, and it is Annie’s laughter that most accords with Butler’s theory of performativity. Famously, Butler uses drag to explain performativity, and humor is a critical aspect of the drag performance. Butler suggests that “drag fully subverts the distinction between the inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity” (186). Drag, like cross-dressing, parodies “the notion of an original or primary gender identity” by “[playing] upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed” (187). This distinction leads us to see “three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” (187). In being contingent, these three dimensions are also each distinct “aspects of gendered experience,” discrete parts of what is “falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence” (187). The pleasure and “giddiness” of the drag performance, Butler claims, is in experiencing and watching these distinct aspects interact with and against one another in a way that denaturalizes their supposed unity.

If it is pleasurable to recognize in the drag performance the distinction between anatomy, gender, and performance, as well as their “radical contingency,” it is comical to discover that drag, in imitating gender, reveals gender itself to be imitative (187). It is not simply the case that
drag produces an imitation of an original; instead, drag parodies the notion of an original gender and exposes it as imitotional. “Gender parody,” Butler writes, “reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect – that is, in its effects – postures as imitation” (188). Once the notion of an original gender is displaced, this “loss of the sense of ‘the normal’… can be its own occasion for laughter” (189). This is especially true when “‘the normal,’ ‘the original’ is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that one can embody” (189). “In this sense,” Butler continues, “laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived” (189). What makes drag parodic, and what makes its parody humorous, is the revelation that drag imitates something that is itself an imitation of an imitation with no ontological or natural foundation. Like Annie, we laugh not because seeing men in women’s clothing feminizes or debases men but rather because we see “men” and “women” as categories of gendered experience that only ever imitate a mythic original, the ideal embodiment of which can only ever be fantasy.

Annie’s laughter draws us to the role of humor and parody in Butler’s analysis of drag, but the Dreamlandian men are not drag performers in this literal sense. This does not mean, however, that their fashion choices, as well as Annie’s laughter at them, fail to reveal gender’s performativity. While drag performance is an active, agentive decision made by the performer to subvert gender norms, it does not follow that performativity operates solely along those lines. As Sara Salih writes, “To cast gender in terms of ‘performativity’ is not to imply that it is a piece of theater staged by a knowing actor who selects her/his script at will” (91). For Salih, the confusion over Butler’s use of drag to exemplify gender’s performativity results from forgetting Butler’s proposition that gender is a doing and not a being. “If gender is a ‘doing’ rather than a
‘being,’ a verb rather than a noun,” Salih argues, “it is not an action that is done by a volitional agent who is free to select her/his gender ‘styles’… Instead, the subject is ‘done’ by gender; it is the effect rather than the cause of a discourse which is always there first” (91). Gender, as always already discursive, renders legible the subject and its identity. Thus, when Salih claims that “there is no actor who performs the sequence of gender acts which constitute its identity,” she means that the subject does not exist prior to the acts and gestures because those acts and gestures produce the subject as the coherent actor.

The Dreamlandian men Annie describes are not drag performers subverting gender norms. They are, however, reproducing gender norms, and Annie’s description of their fashion, her laughter at it, and her contextualizing of it as a byproduct of Dreamlandian gender relations allows us to recognize Butler’s claim that “gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes” (Undoing Gender 42). In Dreamland, what is masculine is reversed, but the mechanisms for producing and normalizing masculinity are exactly the same. In Dreamland, fashion serves as one of the primary norms that “operates within social practices as the implicit standard of normalization” and that “governs intelligibility” (41, 42). Thus, Dreamlandian men obsess over fashion: they read about it, produce it, wear it, and centralize it in their lives. Gender norms in Dreamland are mass (re)productions. As Butler claims, “The norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social practice and reidealized and reinstituted in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life” (48). In reversing gender norms in Man’s Rights and thus re-constructing them, Cridge places a distance between “gender and its naturalized instantiations” as well as “between
a norm and its incorporations,” making it possible to regard both gender and gender norms as public discourses that require instantiation and incorporation (48).

This is what makes Cridge’s utopian satire effective and feminist: placing a wedge between gender norms and their normalizing apparatuses to make apparent the operations of these apparatuses. On one level, Cridge’s reversal of gender norms asks her male audience to consider the plight of women from a more intimate, empathetic perspective. On another, this reversal lets Cridge critique patriarchal mechanisms and forms of control, highlighting men’s roles in perpetuating normative stereotypes about women in the nineteenth century. In these ways, *Man’s Rights* “brutally satirizes the mess men have made of things in order to justify the abolition of sexual difference” (Anderson 85). To be sure, Cridge stages a Man’s Rights revolution on Mars to advocate for women’s voting rights back on Earth and to make an argument for gender equality, but her satiric gender role reversal does more than critique gender relations. In fact, Cridge destabilizes the entire field of gender relations, revealing its fundamental constitutiveness. *Man’s Rights* resonates with modern feminist theory because the space placed between gender norms and their normalizing apparatuses allows us to see that there is nothing natural about either, and once gender is denaturalized, the entire “cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” is denaturalized along with it (Butler 189).

If Cridge’s denaturalization of the heteronormative cultural field is what makes *Man’s Rights* a feminist text, it is also what makes it queer. Cridge resists this queerness, however, by attempting to re-naturalize heterosexuality, a conservatizing shift that Angelika Bammer (1991) considers indicative of nineteenth-century women’s utopian literature’s slippage into ideology. While Bammer does not directly address *Man’s Rights*, her work on the genre can be used to make sense of these conservative shifts in otherwise progressive texts. In her reading of Mary E.
Bradley Lane’s *Mizora*, Bammer posits that “one way of defining the difference between ideology and utopia is to say that ideology depicts culture as natural… while utopia depicts nature as cultural” (34). When cultural constructs are defined “in terms of nature instead of the other way around, utopias… invert their own utopian impulses into an ideological legitimation of existing hegemonies” (34). In *Man’s Rights*, Cridge clearly views gender as a cultural construct and denudes it of its ideological trappings. Sexuality, on the other hand, emerges in *Man’s Rights* as an ideological battleground in which Cridge reifies its presumed originary heteronormativity. Cridge re-naturalizes heterosexuality for two interrelated reasons: because her deconstruction of gender norms de-naturalized it and because non-heterosexual desire permeates the text. My reading of *Man’s Rights* thus differs slightly from Bammer’s view of other women’s utopian novels. While I agree with Bammer that these conservatizing gestures legitimate existing and damaging hegemonies, I believe that they are in fact necessitated by the text’s more audacious tendencies. Specifically in *Man’s Rights*, the queerness that is inseparable from Cridge’s feminist project compels her conservative, heteronormative resistance to that queerness.

Cridge’s resistance to queerness plays out along lines similar to the utopian novels Bammer critiques. Bammer demonstrates that utopia’s slip into ideology in women’s utopian literature occurs most often across lines of class, sexuality, and race. In *Man’s Rights*, these particular social constructs are used to naturalize their attendant oppressive hierarchies and to re-legislate gender’s (and thus sexuality’s) originary coherence. In Annie’s seventh dream, which marks her final trip to Dreamland, she offers a horrifying depiction of the physical trauma undergone by a particular subset of Dreamlandian men before transitioning to the “saddening realization” of man’s inferiority (52). The inferiority that Annie finds is suffused with gendered, racialized, and sexualized politics. The following reading of Dream Number Seven demonstrates
that *Man’s Rights* makes use of these particular hierarchies to re-construct the gender binary in service of a mythic, originary gender equity. By way of concluding this discussion of *Man’s Rights*, Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* will be used to read the multiple instances of Annie’s queer desire as that which the text attempts yet ultimately fails to resist.

In her seventh and final Martian dream, Annie finds herself among a hundred men in a dressing room. Annie watches as this group of a hundred men proceeds into a large dressing-room, each “[carrying] in his hand a pair of corsets and a long, black *something* that looked to [her] very like a horsetail” (48). Those not carrying the horsetail-like objects “carried an armful of tow, or sheep’s wool, or what looked to [Annie] very like these substances” (48). The men’s skin is “spotted with yellow, and, as a whole, looked dark, dried, and unnaturally shriveled” (48). At the sounding of a gong, the men “[mount] on the tops and backs of their little heads” the “horses’ tails, also the tow, sheep’s wool, and several other strange, dark masses,” which makes “them look as if they had exchanged their own heads for those of horses” (49). At the sounding of a second gong, all one hundred men are corseted, inducing the men’s bodies into a “Grecian bend” which causes their “coat-tails” to project “at an angle of forty-five degrees” (50, 51). At the sounding of a third gong, false teeth are inserted into the mouths of the men (50, 51). Some of the gentlemen, Annie notes, wear a “foot-‘vice,’” while a special twelve of the men, each with “blotched, wrinkled, yellow faces,” are additionally painted to look like “little porcelain dolls” (51, 50).

---

124 For Steele (1999), the corset’s notoriety in the nineteenth century arose not just as a means of control but as an explicitly erotic piece of women’s lingerie. Davies (1982), in discussing the popularity of the corset in the nineteenth century, looks at it in conjunction with shifts in infant mortality rates in the middle classes.

125 The *OED* defines “tow” as “the fibre of flax, hemp, or jute prepared for spinning by some process of scotching” (2a).
Though it is difficult to discern exactly what Annie sees, the racialized contours of the dressing-room scene are quite clear. Annie’s repeated use of the words “yellow” and “gong” and the presence of a “foot-vice” conjure up a racist image of Asian peoples. In the context of these racist epithets, the twelve porcelain faces might also bring to mind the image of a geisha. Additionally, the various wigs the men wear might invoke any number of stereotypically Asian hair styles, from the geisha’s chignon to the Chinese queue. Attending these racist depictions is Annie’s dehumanization of the men, as she asserts that their hairdos make them look like horses “minus the dignity usually appertaining to those animals” (49). Annie also declares, “How I do hate a gong,” a ringing condemnation of the entire procession and a fairly direct denunciation of Asian peoples (50).

Concomitant with Annie’s displeasure with this procession of men is her sympathy with them. At the very moment the final gong sounds, Annie is granted “the power to see and examine the internal organs of every gentlemen present” (51). Looking inside these gentlemen, Annie sees the results of corsetting: “the five lower ribs were contracted… the air-cells in the lower part of the lungs were rendered inactive by compression, and… there was very observable either positive indications of disease or great weakness” (51). One gentlemen in particular, Annie discovers, “was paralyzed in his right arm, and very shortly would be paralyzed on one side of the body from the use of the foot-vice; and that the waist… was gradually approaching that of the wasp” (51-52). Annie’s graphic depiction of the havoc wreaked by corseting on the body critiques the popular fashion practice and metaphorizes the external enforcement of gender norms. Too, by aligning corseting with foot-binding as comparable instances of violence against women, Annie seems to sympathize with both Western and Eastern women.\footnote{Charlotte Perkins Gilman uses foot-binding in this same way in With Her in Ourland (1916). As discussed in Chapter II, foot-binding is viewed by the Herlandian Ellador as a cross-class marker of...}
sympathy for these corseted and bound men does not undo the blatantly racist imagery used to depict them, it does complicate this already incongruent image.

The text attempts to resolve this incongruence by letting Annie look even further into these men. While her first move inwards shows the physical trauma wrought by corsets and foot- vices, her second movement inwards reveals the damning mark of a natural inferiority. Annie looks into “the links connecting the body with the spirit” of these men and goes “back in time by means of these links through several generations of ancestors” (52). She compares “carefully and accurately past ancestral endowment – physical, moral and mental” with “those before [her]” to come to the conclusion “that those gentlemen, at least, were inferior to men” (52). These “poor, silly butterfly men,” as Annie calls them, bring her to the “saddening realization” that Dreamlandian men are in fact inferior to women (52). This is a crucial moment in the text, one in which Annie gives up her belief in gender equity and her support for Man’s Rights, doing so because these racialized/Orientalized butterfly men reveal to Annie an ancestral, and thus natural, inferiority. In a scene so devoted to revealing the internal ramifications of external pressures, it is a teleological and naturalizing past that undermines Annie’s commitment to social constructivism.

Coinciding with Bammer’s approach to other nineteenth-century women’s utopian novels, Annie’s revelation registers as the moment in utopian fiction when utopia slides into ideology, when race becomes the mechanism for naturalizing already extent social hierarchies. This moment also resonates with Butler’s discussion of the soul, as Annie’s connection of “the body with the spirit” re-naturalizes the coherence of the subject’s identity by collapsing the body’s surface effects into its mythic internal core. Critiquing Foucault for his insistence on the

women’s oppression in China, and Ellador seeks to use this image of women’s oppression to draw sympathetic parallels between Eastern and Western women.
soul’s materiality and interiority, Butler writes, “The figure of the interior soul understood as ‘within’ the body is signified through its inscription on the body, even though its primary mode of signification is through its very absence” (184). The body can then be understood as both the “vital and sacred enclosure” of the soul it lacks and as itself “a signifying lack” (184). In this way, “the soul is a surface signification that contests and displaces the inner/outer distinction itself, a figure of interior psychic space inscribed on the body as a social signification that perpetually renounces itself as such” (184). For Butler, the problem with making the soul both material and interior is that the “redescription of intrapsychic process in terms of the surface politics of the body implies a corollary redescription of gender as the disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy” (184). The fantasy produced by this redescription is one of compulsory heterosexuality: “The disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain” (184-185). Annie materializes the soul of Dreamlandian men and connects it to their bodies, naturalizing both in order to reify the subject as a coherent, stable entity.

Annie is saddened by this realization, however, because the naturalization of racial and corporeal discourses also naturalizes gender inequity. Annie’s revelation reifies Dreamlandian women’s dominion over men on the basis of men’s natural inferiority. This is certainly a moment of panic for a purportedly feminist text. The text’s solution is to attempt to re-denaturalize inequitable gender relations through the preservation of racial and sexual inequities. As Annie mourns her new realization, she is transported to the home of Mrs. Christiana Thistlewaite, one of Dreamland’s primary opponents to Man’s Rights. With Mrs. Thistlewaite are Mr. Johnny Smith and Mr. Sammy Smiley, Man’s Rights’ founding and leading activists. Upon arriving in Mrs. Thistlewaite’s home, she quickly learns “with great astonishment” that Thistlewaite is a
“‘convert to Man’s Rights’” (52). Thistlewaite’s conversion contrasts with Annie’s newfound belief in men’s natural inferiority, and Thistlewaite finds Annie less delighted than she expects her to be. Annie shares with Thistlewaite the dressing-room scene she witnessed, the “peculiar and diversified ancestral endowments handed down from generation to generation,” and “the conclusion forced upon [her] of the real inferiority of man to woman” (53).

Fortunately for Annie, Thistlewaite assures her that the inferiority of the “butterfly men” is not true of all Dreamlandian men. “‘You must know,,’” begins Thistlewaite, “‘that this is a very large country, composed of many races, some inferior but many superior. These you have visited are only one race, and a very small race – the fashionable race’” (53). Like the term “butterfly,” “fashionable” operates multiply. By calling them “butterfly men,” Annie might be referring to their gaudy or showy appearance, their frivolity or fragility, and/or their ability to undergo transformation. Similarly, “fashionable” might mean something that is in fashion or something that can be fashioned. As Annie and Thistlewaite make clear, these men are excessive and transgressive; they are queer.

Thistlewaite’s morbid denouncement of the butterfly men confirms their queerness: “‘I am glad, truly glad, of their foot-vides, their waist-vides, their cosmetics, paints, powders and porcelain, for they all form such powerful brain-vides and life-annihilators that in less than a century every one of their descendants will be swept from the face of our planet’” (53). This list of vices and annihilators metaphorizes queerness’s presumed incapacity for reproduction. Ignoring the multi-generational history Annie traverses to “prove” their ancestral inferiority or the descendants Thistlewaite predicts them to have, these fashionable butterfly men will be made extinct by their own depravity. These queered, racialized men mark an excess the text cannot tolerate, and they occasion Annie’s final discovery of the Dreamland sequence. After
condemning the fashionable race, Thistlewaite invites Annie to use her “‘soul-gift’” to explore the history of “‘the race of men and women’” to which she, Sammie Smiley, and Johnny Smith belong. Taking the same astral-ancestral journey as before, Annie finds in this race of Dreamlanders “no inferiority, no retrogression; but in characters ineffaceable were written, for both man and woman, possibilities and capabilities as far transcending the present as those of the present transcended those of the long ago, even a million of ages” (54). Thus, the text attempts to eliminate the difference attendant to sexual differentiation by producing originary equitable gender categories as different from and differentiated by the image of a gendered, sexualized, racialized alterity.

Ultimately, Cridge re-sutures the gender binary precisely when and where its sutured seams show. As discussed above, that this suturing occurs along lines of race, class, and sexuality marks the moment when utopia regresses into ideology. But there is also a resonance between Dreamland’s superior class of men and women and the Western bourgeoisie as critiqued in Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* (1990). According to Foucault, the bourgeoisie must be seen “as being occupied… with creating its own sexuality and forming a specific body, based on it, a ‘class’ body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race” (124). This is a matter of blood, Foucault argues, one that transitions from an early modern nobility to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois class. For the aristocracy, blood found its meaning in the “antiquity of its ancestry and of the value of its alliances,” while the “bourgeoisie on the contrary looked to its progeny and the health of its organism when it laid claim to a specific body” (124). For the bourgeoisie, its blood “was its sex,” manufactured under “the guise of biological, medical, or eugenic precepts” (124). Foucault then claims that the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie knotted together blood, sex(uality), and the body towards the goal of an “indefinite
extension of strength, vigor, health, and life” in/for/of its own class (125). This particular body becomes the figure of “the process of growth and establishment of bourgeois hegemony” because of what it “could represent politically, economically, and historically for the present and the future of the bourgeoisie” (124, 125). Sexuality, “made identical with the body,” is a utopian project of the bourgeoisie, one that insists on the production of a particular race of people. No wonder, then, that a utopian project like *Man’s Rights*, one arguing for the creation, distribution, and maintenance of equitable gender relations, can only think to do so through an inter- and intra-generational identity contrasted against the impurities of the racialized, queer Other.

Foucault calls this method of production and maintenance “a dynamic racism, a racism of expansion,” finding its origins in eighteenth-century works on “body hygiene, the art of longevity, ways of having healthy children and of keeping them alive as long as possible, and methods for improving the human lineage” (125). This is why Man’s Rights, an argument for men’s suffrage, begins by liberating men from the kitchen and then establishes children’s rights as its foundation. What Man’s Rights activists – and *Man’s Rights*’s author - hope to produce is a hygienic, longer-lasting, wider-spreading, more reproducible social body. Until the seventh dream, the method for producing this social body is an absolute deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference that have made for an unhealthy, imbalanced world. Rather than attempting to re-think a new social body along the disorderly lines produced in Cridge’s satiric gender reversal and represented by the butterfly men, *Man’s Rights*’s utopian project has to be reformulated to ensure that the only race that will reproduce itself is the one with the fittest physical, mental, and spiritual heritage whose very fitness is ordained by its blood. Voting rights, the ostensible goal of Man’s Rights at the beginning of the dream sequence, is never reached in *Man’s Rights*, but Annie’s time in Dreamland can come to an end because she can reassure herself, the
Dreamlanders, and her readers that only one specific race has the “possibilities and capacities” for utopia.

It is difficult to discern whether the conservatizing expurgation of a text’s more radical possibilities is ever fully successful. Perhaps this is why Cridge uses Dream Number Nine, a dream disconnected from both Dream Number Eight and the Dreamlandian sequence, to re-articulate, in no uncertain terms, points made in Dream Number Seven. In her ninth and final dream, Annie finds herself attending the semicentennial celebration of the first “Woman’s Agricultural Convention (71). Here, Annie learns that women were urged to move out of the cities and into the country to avail themselves of the dormant land and make of themselves farmers. This program was so successful, Annie discovers, that women were liberated from “poverty and privation” and were able to prove their equality with men (72). This gender equity leads to the triumph of Woman’s Rights, but even this accomplishment, rooted as it is in women’s work, requires some Other to provide its foundation.

An old man, bemused by women having “outwitted” men in their turn to agriculture and in their securing of Woman’s Rights, enlightens Annie as to how this has happened. “’You see,’” explains the old man, “’we have a numerous race of dandies and would-be nothings who prefer a good fit, morocco shoes, gloved hands, sidewalks and high brick houses to anything else in the world.” (74). With their “’fashionable mothers and equally silly fathers,’” they are, the old man continues, “little-brained dandies’” and “’shams of men’” (74). Moreover, these “miserable weaklings’” comprise “’the only surplus populations in our large cities to-day’” and “’have little ability and less disposition to perform useful labor’” (75). While the old man assures Annie that Woman’s Rights comes from women proving they could do “’what men could do,’” women can only do what some men can do and can do so only because some men will not (75).
Shams, dandies, birthed by fashionable and silly parents; thus an underclass emerges as the sublimated race of men upon which gender equity is built. It is not a coincidence that the old man attaches to these queer men (and their parents) the same epithets Annie and Thistlewaite attached to the butterfly men in Dream Number Seven. In both Dreamland and this future United States, such men represent a weakness to be ferreted out in order to ensure the propagation of a fitter, happier society. Foucault provides us with language for explaining why heterosexuality, and not voting rights, is *Man’s Rights* real *raison d'être*. In the nineteenth century, sexuality “was put forward as the index of a society’s strength, revealing of both its political energy and its biological vigor” (146). In this sense, the gender equity repeatedly sought in *Man's Rights* is an index of its own heterosexuality, an attempt to improve conditions for the reproduction of a sexuality that it stakes as the only sexuality capable of reproducing itself. This is how the liberalizing venture of equitable gender relations and voting rights transforms into a conservatizing method of production and control of bodies and identities; if women’s liberation only serves a heterosexual reproductive futurity, then these movements cannot abide (though they require) a class of peoples whose behaviors, follies, and histories call their sexuality into question.

Lee Edelman’s infamous polemic *No Future* (2003) can be used to better understand why women’s liberation in *Man’s Rights* might only serve an explicitly heterosexual future. In *No Future*, Lee Edelman names the obligatory framework of reproductive heterosexuality “reproductive futurism” and demonstrates the danger queerness poses to it. For Edelman, “reproductive futurism” designates the “terms that impose an ideological limit on political discourse as such, preserving in the process the absolute privilege of heteronormativity by rendering unthinkable, by casting outside the political domain, the possibility of a queer
resistance to this organizing principle of communal relations” (2). Reproductive futurism, Edelman argues, sets an ideological limitation on what is or ever could be politically viable. This means that the future can only unfold unilaterally towards a heterosexual future. The terms of political viability are figured by the image of the Child, and it is the “coercive universalization” of this figure that “serves to regulate political discourse… by compelling such discourse to accede in advance to the reality of a collective future whose figurative status we are never permitted to acknowledge or address” (11). In Edelman’s Lacanian language, the Child figures the intelligible limits of the heteronormative Symbolic Order. The Child, Edelman argues, “whose mere possibility is enough to spirit away the naked truth of heterosexual sex,” promises a future signification that would “close the gap in identity” brought about by the subject’s entrance into the Lacanian Symbolic Order (13). As such, the Child serves a dual function: it cloaks heterosexual sex in the divine purpose of reproduction and it promises a future and final coherence for the subject.

This image of the Child is the political and imaginative limits of what Butler calls the “cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” (189). In opposition to the image of the Child, queerness works to undo such hierarchies and compulsions. Queerness, Edelman writes, is “the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism” (3). Rather than participating in the reproduction of the image of the Child or in “the fantasy of meaning’s eventual realization,” queerness represents an alternative to heteronormative politics (4). In so doing, queerness takes on the mantle of death and figures “the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself” (13). Because of its supposed narcissism, queerness is set in lethal
opposition to the human species’ wellbeing and longevity. It also embodies that which makes the subject’s coherence both fantasmatic and impossible. Embodying the death drive and “the intransigent jouissance” always attendant to the Symbolic Order, queerness interrupts and negates the figural function of the Child (27). “By figuring sexuality’s implication in the senseless pulsion of that drive,” queerness reveals all sexuality to be meaningless (27). Thus, queerness not only celebrates non-heterosexual sex’s divestiture from reproduction but also rends apart the fantasy of heterosexual sex’s sanctification. Queerness proposes an alternative to heteronormative politics in its refutation of the social and political discourses that maintain the essential, internal purity of binary gender and sexuality.

In Man’s Rights, what marks the butterfly men as the queer Other is their suspected deviant sexuality, a sexuality that threatens to denude reproductive heterosexuality of its presumed sacrament. Because it offers an alternative to the heteronormative future, queerness must be expelled from the text.127 These queer men, however, are not Man’s Rights’ only instance of queerness. Another reason Cridge might work so diligently, if not excessively, to secure equitable gender relations in the name of heterosexuality is the text’s clear fascination with and desire for women’s bodies. Though it is true that Cridge devotes more time to men’s bodies and the traumatizing effects wrought on those bodies, her treatment of women’s bodies in Man’s Rights is as spiritual as it is orgiastic. In fact, Dreamlandian women’s bodies bring Annie to prayer:

Woman as I am, I love above all things to behold the beautiful face of a woman; but here was womanly beauty exceeding our highest conceptions; and in profound reverence I said, “Our Father in heaven, I thank thee for human beauty. Teach us

127 “Such queerness proposes, in place of the good, something I want to call “better,” though it promises, in more than one sense of the phrase, absolutely nothing” (5).
the laws of beauty, that we, thy children, may people this earth with beautiful beings. Homeliness is akin to ignorance and sin; while beauty of form and beauty of intellect constitute God’s best gifts to mortals.” (23)

As she entreats God to lend a certain aesthetic wisdom to human reproduction, Annie’s prayer calls to mind both Edelman’s reproductive futurism and Foucault’s purified, heterosexual bourgeois body. As well, Annie’s prayer cannot be separated from her self-reflexive same-sex desire. By beginning with “Woman as I am,” Annie recognizes the transgressive quality of her following statement, admitting to her readers that, though she knows she should not feel this way, she still does. Annie’s erotic attachment to women necessitates her prayer in an attempt to redirect her same-sex desires into a more appropriate channel.

An objection might be raised that since these are Dreamlandian women, their physiology must have undergone some fundamental alteration attending to the reversal of gender norms. Instead, the reversal of gender norms has augmented the idealized form of women’s beauty. In one of the texts more ingenious passages, one Dreamlandian woman compares women’s bodies to the cosmos as evidence of their natural superiority over men:

Does not Nature delight in curves as in lines of beauty? See how the planets as they revolve in their orbits delight in curves? It is Nature’s perfect method of form and motion. Now look at woman’s beautifully curved face and bust, and compare her form in its curved outlines with the angular outlines of man’s form, and tell me if Nature herself has not put the stamp of inferiority on man! Ah, woman’s face is enough! No mask of hair does she wear; but clear as the sun and fair as the moon shines clearly every feature, thus conclusively attesting her superiority. (24)
Cridge satirizes arguments about women’s bodies being naturally weaker than men’s but does so by re-emphasizing the essential link between women’s bodies and “Nature,” using this connection to argue for women’s “natural” superiority. Though she unfortunately essentializes women’s corporeal connection to Nature, Annie also reveals that her erotic desires are shaped by this traditionally feminine ideal. Thus, when Annie interrupts her censure of the parade of butterfly men to tell us that two of these men “were so grateful to [her] love of the beautiful that [she] lingered about” them, she does so precisely because they look like women (48). “The diameter of their waists,” writes Annie, “suggested the idea that they would form models for the men of that world as excellent as the Venus de Medici does for the women of this world” (48-49). In finding the ideal woman in multiple bodies and gender, queerness permeates Annie’s desires despite Annie’s essentializing gesture of linking women’s bodies to Nature.

This is desire operating at its queerest, refusing to adhere to one body and instead flowing freely between multiply gendered bodies. Annie’s desire travels from Dreamlandian women to Dreamland men to figures of women on Earth. That all three of these gender identities can become the site of Annie’s desire means the linkage between body and identity and between gender and sexuality is fundamentally denaturalized. This provides more context for Annie’s contempt for the butterfly men and why Thistlewaite hopes for their eventual extinction. The butterfly men, either in their “natural” or in their approximation of women’s beauty, reveal the gender binary’s inadequacy for reining in desire and making it heterosexual. Heterosexuality, *Man’s Rights*’s corollary for equitable gender relations, becomes its arch-utopian goal in order to dismiss the text’s lingering traces of non-hetero desires. What remains of *Man’s Rights*, then, is not the text’s utopian heterosexual program but rather its failing attempt at asserting such a program against desire’s immutable queerness.
4.2 Gloriana/Hector and the Queerness of Desire

Lady Florence Dixie née Douglas was born in 1855 in Dumfries, Scotland, to Caroline Margaret Clayton and Archibald Douglas, Eighth Marquess of Queensberry. A member of the Victorian aristocracy, Dixie flaunted gender norms beginning at an early age and spent her adult life working to loosen the strictures of women’s bondage. Like Cridge, Dixie was a noted suffragist and industrious author, publishing eleven books in her lifetime. Along with *Gloriana* (1890), Dixie published other women’s rights novels, a travelogue covering her time in Patagonia, her reports as a war correspondent in South Africa, interviews with African kings, support for Scottish and Irish Home Rule, an autobiography, as well as numerous politically charged children’s books. Dixie’s publications reveal an active, imaginative, and expansive political life. They chart Dixie’s widespread engagement with and support for multiple Victorian causes such as women’s emancipation, Boer, Zulu, and Irish independence efforts; and animal welfare. Though she did not live to see women’s emancipation, nor the culmination of the other liberatory causes she supported, Dixie embodied the precepts of feminist utopianism in her quest for a better world.

In *Gloriana*, Dixie imagines how women’s political liberation might lead to a utopian society. The plot of the novel imagines this possibility through its gender-bending hero. *Gloriana*

---

128 Dixie’s oldest brother, John Douglas, Ninth Marquess of Queensberry, was the infamous “Queensberry” in the *Wilde v. Queensberry* trial. His son Alfred being Oscar Wilde’s lover.
129 “When presented at Court, and much to the Court’s dismay, ‘[Florence] thought of herself as a boy… spoke of herself as a boy’” (Roberts quoted in McKenzie 36).
130 For essays on Dixie’s travel writings, see Stevenson (1982), Martin (2012), McKenzie (2012), and Sandoval-Candia (2018).
132 See McKenzie 37, 38.
133 James Gregory (2007) notes that, like other Victorian Aristocrats, Dixie gave up a long-standing interest in hunting and blood sport in favor of a vegetarian diet and animal rights (93).
is presented as the dream of a young Italian woman named Marenna and details a feminist revolution in fin de siècle England led by the novel’s eponymous hero. At the age of twelve, Gloriana de Lara convinces her mother Speranza de Lara to send her to a boy’s school. At Eton, Gloriana assumes the identity of Hector D’Estrange and distinguishes himself as an unrivaled athlete and academic as well as an ardent supporter of women’s rights. Hector earns considerable fame in influential London circles with his “Essay on Woman’s Position,” and he parleys this fame and his success at both Eton and Oxford into a seat in Parliament. With ever-growing political power and assistance from aristocrats such as Flora Desmond and Evelyn, Duke of Ravensdale, Hector leads multiple feminist endeavors such as founding numerous women’s educational institutions across England and Ireland and creating the Woman’s Volunteer Corps, a militant group of nearly 200,000 suffragists. Eventually, Hector is elected Prime Minister, but after a spurious murder charge, he is forced to reveal himself to be Gloriana de Lara. During a subsequent clash between Volunteer Corps British police, Gloriana/Hector escapes and goes underground. A reactionary government is established in an attempt to quell the rise of “D’Estrangeism.” Ultimately, supporters of Hector D’Estrange lead the D’Estrangeite party to a parliamentary victory, passing a bill for the “complete emancipation of women” (318-319). At this point presumed dead by all, Hector/Gloriana re-emerges and resumes the post of Prime Minister. After a failed assassination attempt, Hector/Gloriana leads the United Kingdom into utopia, a brief view of which is offered in the novel’s concluding chapter.

Dixie’s gender-bending plot is intended to argue that when women are given the same opportunities as men, they are men’s equals. In order to make this argument, the text must treat Hector as a façade and Gloriana as the character’s “true” identity,\(^\text{134}\) essentializing gender

\(^{134}\) The novel uses “Gloria,” “Gloriana,” and “Hector” to refer to Gloriana/Hector, though it favors Gloria and Hector. Nan Bowman Albinski (1990) argues that “Gloria” refers to Elizabeth I, while “Gloriana” is a
identity and the gender binary even as it critiques those constructs as artificial. Critics of the novel follow Dixie’s suit, insisting that Gloriana is the character’s “true sex” (Albinski 57). Readings of Gloriana have thus failed to consider that the novel’s hero is both Gloriana and Hector. Understanding this character as both Gloriana and Hector means concentrating on the repeated concealing and revealing of Gloriana/Hector’s genders and Gloriana/Hector’s relationship with Evelyn, Duke of Ravensdale. Each of Gloriana/Hector’s unveilings reveals the instability of gender identity, while Gloriana/Hector’s relationship with the Duke is suffused with the queer immutability of desire. It is in these moments of gender instability and queer desire that the text’s feminist utopianism can be found.

Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling takes place in Chapter IV and is for the sole benefit of Dixie’s readers. During a private conversation between Hector and Speranza, Hector abruptly calls Speranza “’Mother’” and Speranza responds by calling Hector “’Gloria’” (48). Gloriana’s narrator then claims that “the reader must have had no difficulty in recognizing” Hector as Gloriana, but the text works dutifully throughout its first four chapters to obfuscate this connection (49). This obfuscation takes three particular forms. First, the text uses Speranza de Lara’s personal history as a wedge between the introduction of Gloriana in Chapter I and the introduction of Hector in Chapter II. Second, the text spends all of Chapters II and III, as well as much of Chapter IV, cataloguing Hector D’Estrange’s masculine exploits. Third, ancillary characters speculate in Chapters III and IV on the potential romantic nature of the relationship between Hector D’Estrange and Speranza de Lara. Thus, despite the narrator’s protestations reference to Edmund Spenser’s The Fairie Queene (62). According to Qingyun Wu (1995), the name “Hector” refers directly to the Trojan hero Hector (56).

otherwise, the difficulty in recognizing Hector as Gloriana is explicitly manufactured by the text in order to stage this melodramatic moment.

These three forms of obfuscation also operate as important facets of Dixie’s treatment of gender and sexuality in the novel. Until the moment Hector calls Speranza “‘Mother’” and Speranza calls Hector “‘Gloria,’” Gloriana has not been mentioned since the opening pages of Chapter I. Set in 1885 on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, Chapter I begins with a twelve-year-old Gloriana imploring her mother Speranza de Lara to send her to “‘a boy’s school’” – Eton, to be exact (9). The text, however, immediately ends this conversation and transitions to a lengthy overview of Speranza de Lara’s personal history. Speranza’s backstory places distance between Gloriana’s desire to attend Eton and the emergence of Hector D’Estrange in Chapter II, and it also dramatizes the effects of oppressive marriage laws. Orphaned at birth and adopted into a wealthy English-Scottish family, Speranza de Lara is forced into marrying her adoptive brother Lord Altai. “Being a girl,” Speranza “had no chances thrown out to her” except this marriage (11). Speranza lives six years with the abusive Lord Altai, “sold by the law which declares that however brutally a man may treat his wife, so that he does not strike her, she has no power to free herself from him” (15). Dixie uses the metaphorics of slavery to argue that punitive marriage laws and a lack of opportunities to join the labor force create the conditions of women’s subjugation. In so doing, Dixie begins her argument that gender difference is socially and politically motivated.

---

136 While Gloriana and Speranza are living in Italy at the beginning of the novel, Speranza is of English descent and is adopted into an English/Scottish family as a child. Gloriana, born to Speranza and her lover Captain Harry Kintore, is also of English/Scottish descent.

137 To escape the horrors of this marriage, Speranza runs away with Captain Harry Kintore, Gloriana’s biological father. Lord Altai, who reappears in Chapter III as Lord Westray, hunts down the two lovers and murders Kintore. Because of the same oppressive laws that forced Speranza into the marriage, “the world declared it could not blame” Altai for murdering Westray, “and that is served Lady Altai right” (17).
Dixie critiques more than the social and political motivations of gender inequity; she recognizes that gender itself is a set of acts and accomplishments that has its origins in social and political discourse. Chapter II opens in the year 1890 and introduces readers to the previously unmentioned Hector D’Estrange. Hector is introduced as the topic of conversation between Lady Manderton (known as Dodo) and Mrs. de Lacy Trevor (known as Vivi). Dodo tells Vivi of a boy “‘simply too lovely for words’” who is “‘sure to break some of our hearts some day’” (19). Piquing Vivi’s interest, Dodo explains that this boy, Hector, is “‘taking Eton by storm’” and is a splendid batsman, bowler, oarsman, wonderful at racquets, undefeatable at books,” to which Vivi responds, “‘Oh, Dodo! I must meet this Adonis! I love pretty boys’” (19). Adding to this list of Hector’s masculine prowess, Dodo also tells Vivi that “‘a good many attempts were made to bully him, but he soon settled his tormenters, and gave one of them… such a drubbing that he never molested him more’” (20). A multi-talented, attractive, strong, brilliant, and brave man, Hector cuts the image of ideal masculinity and figures the proper object of Dodo and Vivi’s heterosexual desires.

At this point, readers do not know that Hector “is” Gloriana, though Eton might be enough for readers to make such an inference. Regardless of whether readers do or do not make this connection, Dodo and Vivi’s conversation about Hector reveals the performativity of gender. Whatever the “truth” about Gloriana/Hector, Hector’s acts, feats, and accomplishments while at Eton produce Hector as a man to Dodo, Vivi, and his classmates. They do so because gender is a set of discursive fictions and corporeal signs that manufacture and sustain the fantasy of identity. These fictions and signs are the norms that are reiteratively performed in the service of producing a legible, gendered subject. Because gender works to conceal its illusory core in

---

138 Chapter II also includes a discussion of Hector’s “Essay on Woman’s Position,” a tract published in *Free Review* concerning women’s voting rights and the dissolution of draconian marriage laws.
service of producing discrete, legible categories of identity, Butler claims that “genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (186). In *Gloriana*, gender operates precisely this way: Hector is a truth effect of an already established discourse with social and political origins.

This is why Chapter II involves a repetitive listing of Hector’s successful masculine acts and Chapter III reaffirms Hector’s masculinity. In Chapter III, Hector D’Estrange is now twenty-one, has graduated from both Eton and Oxford, and is a prominent member of British society. In this chapter, Hector wins six horse races, another grand declaration of his athletic prowess. Dixie uses this evidence of Hector’s athletic aptitude to reiterate his masculinity. For Butler, repetition is a critical component of gender’s performativity. Repetition, writes Butler, “is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established” (191). This repetitive action of gender’s performance “is a public action” with “temporal and collective dimensions” (191). Thus, gender’s performance produces the subject precisely because the reenactment and re-experiencing of publicly and discursively established norms means that the subject as such does not exist prior to those norms. Because of this, Gloriana/Hector cannot adopt haphazardly activities, tasks, and goals; rather, to produce himself as a legible, discrete subject, Hector must thrive in those activities that normatively produce masculinity. By thriving in various sports, excelling academically, and by violently asserting his dominance over other men, Hector consolidates his identity through the reiterative performance of already established sets of meanings.

This is Hector’s most significant accomplishment and the crux of Dixie’s feminist critique about gender norms. What makes Hector “Hector” is the successful and reiterative

---

139 Chapter III also introduces Flora Desmond, the woman who will become the leader of Hector’s Woman’s Volunteer Corps.
performance of those norms – not a mythic internal truth. This is something Dixie clearly recognizes. Before Hector wins all six races at Melton Hunt Steeplechase, the text presents Hector’s own thoughts for the first time:

Hector D’Estrange would marvel often at [his success] himself. He had gone out into the world in what was mere childhood, prepared to combat with the many difficulties which he knew must beset his path. He was over modest was this boy. He had not sufficiently estimated his great and surpassing genius, but it had shone forth, been recognized and approved of, because he was a man. (38)

This passage’s concluding conditional phrase “Because he was a man” explicitly acknowledges the public and political production of gender norms. It does so by making at least three interrelated arguments: that only men can succeed under the strictures of patriarchy; that success is a socially constructed idea predicated along gender lines; and that Hector is a man because of these successes. Hector’s infatuation with his own success imbricates success, gender, and identity as three contingent, constitutive, and socially established acts all granted legitimacy through their endless repetition. In the novel’s rhetorical strategy of repeating and insisting on the gender norms that produce Hector’s identity, Gloriana provides the stage for the drama of gender’s performativity.

Dixie also understands gender’s bearing on sexuality. In Chapter II, part of what confirms Hector’s identity is Dodo and Vivi’s shared desire for him. As a man, Hector figures the proper heterosexual object of desire for the two women. When Hector appears in Chapter III riding horses alongside Speranza de Lara, Dodo, Vivi, and others speculate on the nature of the relationship between them, presuming it to be romantic. Though none of the characters save one knows who Speranza de Lara is, they believe her to be Hector’s lover. “Hector D’Estrange, by
all that’s holy! And with a woman, too’” declares Jack Delamore when first espying the two riding horses side by side (40). Delamore continues, “‘Cunning dog, young Hector, to have kept her out of sight so long. Now we can understand why he is so cold to women. Of course that’s where his heart is, without a doubt’” (42). The presumed romantic relationship between Hector and Speranza both reiterates Hector’s male gender and continues to obscure the connection between Hector and Gloriana. Delamore’s comments, along with Dodo and Vivi’s conversation, demonstrate the co-contingency of gender and sexuality: each constitutes and confirms the other in order to produce the legible, heterosexual subject. Thus, even if readers know Hector “is” Gloriana at this juncture before the first unveiling, sexuality can still be seen as contingent upon gender’s ability to make it true. In Gloriana, legible gender identities thus function in the service of a compulsory heterosexuality.

It is the occasion of Hector and Speranza riding horses together at the Steeplechase in Chapter III that leads to Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling in Chapter IV. Perhaps more specifically, it is the presumption of a heterosexual relationship between the two that necessitates such an unveiling. The only character to recognize Speranza de Lara is Lord Westray. Formerly known as Lord Altai, Westray is part of Dodo and Vivi’s riding party and immediately recognizes Speranza as the wife he abused and divorced twenty-two years earlier (41). After seeing Speranza at the Steeplechase, Westray falls “prey to a consuming passion to regain that which he had lost” and seeks out his former bride (43). Westray confronts Speranza de Lara in her home and asks her to remarry him. Once Speranza refuses, Westray presses Speranza on the nature of her relationship with Hector, presuming that the two are lovers. Happy to “let him believe what he likes, so that he does not know the truth,” Speranza attempts to put off the villainous Westray herself before being rescued by Hector’s timely appearance (47). Hector “is
head and shoulders taller than” Westray and dispatches him with a “calm, disdainful look” (47, 48). Contrasting the shorter, cowardly Westray with the taller, braver Hector D’Estrange, this scene again confirms Hector’s masculinity while simultaneously emasculating Westray. Once the emasculated Westray retreats, the text reveals Hector “to be” Gloriana in the conversation cited above.

This might explain why Dixie decides to stage two separate unveilings of her hero. Ostensibly, the revelation of Hector as Gloriana allows Dixie to stake her claim that women can thrive in equal ways to men when given the opportunity to do so. It seems, however, that Dixie stages Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling as a direct response to multiple characters presuming that Hector and Speranza have a sexual relationship. Gloriana emerges from this unveiling as the subject that precedes gendering, a “real woman” simply masquerading as a man to prove the injustice of an imbalance in gender relations. As such, there can be no romantic relationship between Gloriana/Hector and Speranza not just because they are related but because it would be non-heterosexual. But if this is the case, then Dodo and Vivi’s heterosexual desire for Hector D’Estrange is really a non-heterosexual desire for Gloriana de Lara. In using gender to stabilize Gloriana/Hector’s identity, Dixie unwittingly reveals gender’s inability to accomplish this goal. As well, in attempting to ensure Gloriana’s and Speranza’s heterosexuality only to queer Dodo and Vivi, Dixie reveals desire’s ineluctable slipperiness.

Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling is thus more chaotic than anticipated because gender cannot “be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow” (Butler 191). Since there is no subject that exists prior to gender’s consolidation of the subject, there is no Gloriana free from gender’s discursive origins. Just as Hector becomes a legible subject through the consolidation of the repetitive performances of sedimented gender norms, so,
too, does Gloriana. No stability can ever materialize from unveiling Gloriana/Hector’s secret because the only secret unveiled by *Gloriana* is gender’s discursive, imitative, and contingent origins. As such, Gloriana/Hector’s identity is unmoored from any internal truth and continues to oscillate throughout the text. Dixie attempts to re-naturalize Gloriana/Hector’s fluctuating gender identity with a second unveiling, this time a public confession made by Hector D’Estrange in a court of law. While this confession also fails to confirm Gloriana as Gloriana/Hector’s true identity, it reveals why Dixie attempts to naturalize Gloriana as Gloriana/Hector’s true identity. This naturalization is done in service of a compulsory heterosexuality that is always co-constitutive and co-contingent with legible gender identity.

Gloriana/Hector’s second unveiling is again the result of Westray’s attempts to force Speranza into remarrying him. As well, Gloriana/Hector’s confession is in part a direct response to the prosecution’s insistence that Hector and Speranza are lovers. In this way, Gloriana/Hector’s confession can be read as indicative of the contingent entanglement of identity, gender, and sexuality. After the confrontation with Westray in Chapter IV, Speranza leaves her home and is relocated in secret. In order to make Speranza his wife again, Westray enlists the services of Mr. Trackem, who in turn hires two men to kidnap Speranza. Fortunately, Rita Vernon, an attendant of the Duke of Ravensdale, tracks the kidnappers to their destination. Rita then alerts Hector D’Estrange and the Duke, and the three set out to save Speranza. The three find Speranza lying gagged on a sofa in the derelict quarters of London with “that monster, that petted roue of society, that ‘fiend in human shape’” Lord Westray standing above her (115). Book I of *Gloriana* thus closes with the ringing of a shot fired at Westray by Gloriana/Hector.

Book II opens in 1900 with Hector D’Estrange having just been elected Prime Minister. Hector proposes a bill to Parliament that would grant women full access to serving in the House
of Commons, but the bill is resoundingly defeated. After this defeat, Hector D'Estrange is brought to trial by Mr. Trackem for the murder of Lord Westray. The prosecution maintains that Hector killed Westray in a fit of jealousy after finding his lover Speranza in the arms of Westray. Hector reveals that Speranza de Lara is his mother and not his lover, and he calls to the stand the doctor who attended his birth. Dr. Merioneth relates to the court that Speranza de Lara gave birth to a girl in Ancona, Italy. Following Dr. Merioneth’s testimony, Hector again claims that he is Speranza’s son and not lover, but this fails to sway the jury and they quickly return a verdict of guilty. When the judge inquires, “‘Hector D’Estrange, have you any reason to give why sentence of death should not be passed upon?’” Hector responds, “‘Has it never struck you, my lord, and gentlemen of the jury, that a girl could do what I have done in youth, a woman accomplish what I have accomplished in maturer years? No. I plainly see that this has not struck you, for you are men’” (172, 173). Hector concludes, “‘I confess my sex. In Hector D’Estrange, the world beholds a woman – her name, Gloria de Lara’” (173).¹⁴⁰

Hector’s confession causes confusion and excitement but does not undo his death sentence. Taken into custody by the police, Hector is then rescued by Flora Desmond, the leader of the Women’s Volunteer Corps. Emerging from the police van, Hector addresses an ever-expanding crowd of supporters and again makes his confession: “The time has come when I must confess myself. Before you, you see one of the despised and feeble sex, the unfitted to rule, the inferior of man. I am a woman! Henceforth I am no longer Hector D’Estrange, but Gloria de Lara”” (181). Unlike Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling, this second unveiling must bear the weight of truth in order to prove Hector’s innocence and that women are men’s equals. As such, Hector cannot simply tell or declare his sex; rather, he confesses it because confession bears the mark of avowal, revelation, and truth, bridging as it does religious and juridical forms of ¹⁴⁰ As in Man’s Rights, “sex” operates here to mean gender.
expression and knowledge. As well, Hector’s use of Dr. Merioneth’s testimony lends a medical legitimacy to his confession, yoking together body and identity through a medico-juridical discourse that seeks to establish the innate truth of binary gender and sexuality.

For Foucault, confession operates as a primary discursive tool of the scientia sexualis. As Foucault explains, scientia sexualis is one of “two great procedures for producing the truth of sex” (57). Some societies “endowed themselves with an ars erotica” in which “truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience” (57). In an ars erotica, pleasure “is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul” (57). Other societies, particularly Western societies, practice a scientia sexualis, a set of “procedures for telling the truth of sex which are geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful secret” (57). According to Foucault, this set of procedures is the confession. The confession is the West’s “main ritual… for the production of truth,” and the truth produced in confession is “the truth of sex” (The History of Sexuality 58). “It is in the confession,” Foucault claims, “that truth and sex are joined, through the obligatory and exhaustive expression of an individual secret” (61). Truth and sex are enjoined under the ritualistic parameters of the confession because the confession is a mode of subjectivization. Further, this subjectivization must take place in the presence of an authority figure that demands the confession and then legitimizes the subject at the heart of the confession. As Foucault writes, “The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence… of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession” (61). Along with legitimizing the subject, the confession provides a form of absolution for the
subject, because confession is “a ritual in which expression alone, *independently of its external consequences*, produces *intrinsic* modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation” (62 emphasis added). The subject that thus emerges from the confession is pure and wears its purity internally.

More than simply proof of his innocence in the murder of Lord Westray, Hector’s confession works to medically, legally, and publicly establish Gloriana as his true identity. This confession treats gender as something natural and original, open to some modification but closed to total deconstruction. This is the tepid undercurrent to Dixie’s critique: the revitalization of gender’s eternal truth in the face of its dissolution. It does not matter whether or not the judge reverses the guilty verdict; the stakes of the trial are more fundamental than that. If gender is presumed to have an innate, internal reality, then what Gloriana/Hector seeks is the legitimization of that intrinsic truth. As both the confession’s subject and Gloriana/Hector’s true identity, Gloriana is produced simultaneously alongside and within the absolution of Hector’s crimes against gender. In no uncertain terms, Gloriana is born again, making a medical, legal, and public fact of women’s equality with men. Perhaps more importantly, though, Gloriana/Hector’s confession also bears on Gloriana/Hector’s relationship with the Duke of Ravensdale. By essentializing Gloriana’s identity, Hector’s confession straightens out what is possibly a queer romance between them.

Evelyn, Duke of Ravensdale, is introduced to the novel following Gloriana/Hector’s first unveiling. The Duke is an influential member of the aristocracy and a vocal proponent of D’Estrangeite politics. Over the course of the novel, the Duke becomes Gloriana/Hector’s main confidant and eventually marries Gloriana/Hector after Gloriana/Hector becomes Prime Minister.
for the second time. What is perhaps most striking immediately about the Duke, however, is his name and nickname. While “Evelyn” was a name for both boys and girls in the nineteenth century, the nickname Evie is decidedly feminine. As well, both Evelyn and Evie evoke “Eve,” the Biblical first woman and the mother of the human race in Christian mythology. Unlike Gloriana/Hector, Evie is never shown gender-bending in the novel, but his nickname, particularly its reference to the Biblical Eve, inverts Evie’s masculinity.

What is also immediately striking about Evie is his love for Hector D’Estrange. We learn that Evie’s “heart has gone out to Hector D’Estrange, and he loves him with that devoted admiring love which some men have been known to inspire in others” (58). Evie’s name and love for Hector mark the beginning of the novel’s decidedly queer romantic subplot. Those observing the change in Evie’s countenance cannot decide whether this passion is political or personal but clearly presume it must be romantic. Lady Tabbycat remarks to her friend Mrs. Moreton Savage, “‘Just look at the duke… one would think there wasn’t a pretty girl in the room, or a heart aching for him, by the way he stands there doing nothing and saying nothing… He was all fire just now when he was telling us of Hector D’Estrange’s triumph; and now just look at him, my dear’” (58). As well, “men wondered at the change in the young Duke of Ravensdale. It was such a sudden one; they could not make it out; it mystified them altogether. Some put it down to love, and wondered who was the lucky one” (60). As the novel bears out, it is love Evie feels for Gloriana/Hector, an erotic love that finds its “correct” object in Gloriana but that nevertheless remains queer in the ultimate instability of Gloriana’s identity.

Gloriana/Hector’s confession legitimizes the intrinsic truth of Gloriana/Hector’s identity in order to produce the intrinsic truth of Evie’s heterosexuality. As in Man’s Rights, the project of transforming gender relations thus transforms into a project of heterosexualizing desire’s  

---

141 Evie as the Eve to Gloriana/Hector’s Adam will be more discussed in this chapter’s conclusion.
unruly tendencies. Evie’s love for Gloriana/Hector becomes an impetus for a fantasy made true by Gloriana/Hector’s grand confession. “‘Ah, Hector!’” exclaims Evie, “if you were only a woman how madly I should love you; for love you as I do now, it can never be the same love as it would be if you were a woman’” (123-124). Gloriana/Hector responds to Evie’s passionate outpouring with a question: “‘So I am your woman’s ideal, am I, Evie?’” (124). “‘Yes, Hector, you are,’” confirms the Duke, ”’Your face is too lovely for a man’s. You ought to have been a woman. And yet if you had been, the glory of Hector D’Estrange would be an untold tale’” (124). Assuredly, this scene functions as a piece of dramatic irony in which the audience knows about Hector D’Estrange what Evie does not. Thus, the only reason Hector ought or should be a woman is to straighten out Evie’s queer feelings for him.

However, like the set of acts that constitute gender, the confessional act operates discursively. This means, according to Foucault, that the subject produced through the confession is similarly discursive and hence not naturalized. This holds true for not only the subject and the subject’s gender but for the subject’s sexuality as well. As such, Gloriana/Hector’s confession cannot fully legitimize either Gloriana as Gloriana/Hector’s true identity or Evie’s heterosexuality. The confessional act also fails to offer any such stability because of its obsession with pleasure. While Foucault originally casts *ars erotica* against *scientia sexualis* as mutually exclusive and opposed categories, he eventually wonders if *scientia sexualis* “has not functioned, at least to a certain extent, as an *ars erotica*” (71). Foucault claims that “the production of pleasure” at the center of the confessional act “multiplied, intensified, and even created its own intrinsic pleasures” (71). This leads to a multitude of new pleasures:

Pleasure in the truth of pleasure, the pleasure of knowing that truth, of discovering and exposing it, the fascination of seeing it and telling it, of captivating and
capturing others by it, of confiding it in secret, of luring it out in the open – the specific pleasure of the truth discourse on pleasure. (71)

Foucault helps us point to the multiple nodes of pleasure Gloriana takes in Gloriana/Hector’s confessions, in Evie’s slippery queer desire, and in the irreducibility of Gloriana/Hector’s dual identity. The secret of Gloriana/Hector’s “true” sex/uality continuously ebbs and flows in the text, discovered and exposed over and over again as an endlessly repeatable act. This repeatable act finds it pleasurable expression in Evie’s queer desire for a person whose body and identity makes knowledge erotic. Importantly, this pleasure is not limited to Evie; it is the pleasure the reader takes in “knowing” Gloriana/Hector’s “real” identity even as the text refuses to stabilize that identity. This destabilization amplifies the pleasures of knowing, as the scenes of Evie’s queer desire intensify the reader’s need to know or hold on to the truth about Gloriana/Hector.

While Gloriana/Hector’s courtroom confession appears to rescue Evie from the perdition of homosexuality, the Duke cannot help but queer things. After receiving the death sentence and escaping from the police, Gloriana/Hector goes into hiding and attempts to leave England by way of ship. Because of the machinations of Westray, Mr. Trackem, and Mr. Trackem’s “human bloodhound” Leonie, however, Gloriana/Hector’s vessel crashes just off shore and Gloriana/Hector is presumed dead in the wreck. But before Gloriana/Hector’s subsequent resurrection, we find a melancholic Evie fantasizing about Hector: “What does Evie Ravensdale see in that flickering firelight which appears suddenly to arrest his gaze? It must be some cherished object indeed, judging by the happy smile which for a few brief moments lights up the otherwise sad face, on which melancholy has stamped its mournful features” (317). Above Evie’s fireplace “hangs the oil painting which represents his first meeting with Hector D’Estrange. It is only when alone that Evie Ravensdale draws those curtains aside, and then none
can see the emotion which the picture *arouses* in him” (317 emphasis added). Explicitly, it is *not* Gloriana arousing these private emotions in the Duke, returning us to his urgent insistence that Hector *ought* to have been born a woman. Even granting that Hector “is” Gloriana and that these emotions are meant for “her,” it is not just Gloriana that makes Evie feels this way: “It almost seems to him as though the figure of Hector D’Estrange portrayed therein, stands there in living life. He can hardly realize, as he looks at the beautiful face, that the spirit which made Gloria so noble in life, does not animate it now” (320). With a beautiful face, Hector stands inspired by Gloriana. Evie’s desire for Gloriana/Hector does not restrict itself to the correct instantiation of the subject; rather, the entirety of Gloriana/Hector, the subject that is both Gloriana and Hector simultaneously, enthralls him.

Thus, the queer immutability of Evie’s desire for Gloriana/Hector creates a tension the text seeks to simultaneously intensify and release. As such, this tension also finds its expression in the novel’s overlapping progressive and conservative attitudes. Part of this issue arises from the conservatizing gesture of making Gloriana/Hector “truly” a woman. Of course, this move is critical for Dixie’s feminist utopianism, as the entire revolution of *Gloriana* hinges on Gloriana/Hector’s ability to prove that women and men are equal. Such equality requires stability and thus the (re)sealing up of these categories. When we finally see the utopia brought about by Gloriana/Hector’s revolution, it is in the year 1999 with Gloriana/Hector and Evie in their graves. From the basket of a hot-air balloon overlooking utopian London, one traveler tells another, “‘There is a beautiful grave overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, on the shores of Glennig Bay. It is there where Gloria sleeps, by the side of her husband Evelyn’” (346).  

---

142 “Glennig Bay” is more than likely the Scottish city of Glenelg.
marriage and the grave, heterosexuality and legible gender categories lie together in national tribute to Gloriana/Hector’s revolution.\textsuperscript{143}

Perhaps, though, we should resurrect Gloriana/Hector one last time. By way of concluding this chapter, I will consider Gloriana’s androgynous impulses as a possible avenue away from the novel’s more conservative instincts. Alongside scenes of Evie’s desire for Gloriana/Hector, the conclusion considers the array of contradictory responses to Gloriana/Hector’s courtroom confession. These reactions frequently disregard the “truth” of Gloriana/Hector’s confession, replacing this singular “truth” with the potential of multiplicity. Rather than view Gloriana/Hector as “the woman’s ideal” as does Evie, I read Gloriana/Hector as an androgynous potentiality. Read in this way, Gloriana/Hector emerges as the \textit{persona utopia} not as a woman who legitimizes a conservative gender equity but rather as a possibly androgynous figure whose radical instability marks a space outside and against the rigid gender binary.

4.3 Androgynocracy

Though there is now a wealth of vocabulary to describe or categorize non-normative genders and sexualities, this does not mean that such lives were not being led in the nineteenth century. Nor does it mean that the nineteenth century did not have its own vocabulary that might still be of some import today. One such term, “androgyne,” was readily available and widely used in the nineteenth century and still holds value for describing the terms of gender in \textit{Gloriana}. It is unnecessary, however, to fit Gloriana/Hector into this category unequivocally;

\textsuperscript{143} The bodies of Gloriana/Hector and Evie in national tribute to “‘the triumph of Imperial Federation’” (347). Fundamental changes to gender relations have brought about independence for England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, as well as the end to poverty, but they have also led to a ‘peaceful’ colonizing project: “‘The Imperial Assembly is a wonderful sight. Therein we see gathered together representative men and women from all parts of our glorious Empire, working hand in hand to spread its influence amongst the nations of the world, with all of whom we are at peace’” (348). To be sure, Dixie aims to contrast this project against the violent colonialism of Victorian England, a final argument in favor of gender equity as a path towards peace and plenty. It is difficult, however, to dissociate any imperial project from its more conservative impulses.
rather, androgyny in *Gloriana* is a contested category that oscillates between openness and limitation and as a historically and culturally malleable term. As Johannes N. Vorster argues in “Androgyny and Early Christianity” (2008), androgyny “appears to acknowledge the possibility of a middle position, a transgression of boundaries, a blurring of genders” (97). Androgyny “refers to a dual sexuality and this dual sexuality may be simultaneous as in the case of intersexuality and/or the hermaphrodite or it may be successive when a man is changed into a woman or a woman into a man” (97). The term ranges, Vorster continues, “from a depiction of deviant sexuality to an idealized, utopian form of oneness” (97). It may “refer to a person who inhabits biologically two sexes, but it may also refer to a cultural inversion of gendered roles,” while “on the mythological level it may either take us into a primordial past where the oneness of humanity functions as a microcosm of the oneness of the wider macrocosm, or it may transport us to the future where oppositional differences may have been erased” (97-98). To be sure, androgyny travels.

To Vorster’s point, the term “androgyny” dates back to the Old English “androginem” and is an integral facet of both Plato’s *Symposium* and Early Christianity. As Aaron Shaheen demonstrates in *Androgynous Democracy* (2010), it also held a significant position in Western thought in the nineteenth century. In France, Pierre-Simon Ballanche “conceived of the mysterious male-female figure as an embodiment of emerging democracy and social equality” (Shaheen 2). His German contemporary Johann Gottfried von Herder argued that human development was a constant “movement away from a primitive androgynous harmony into a present world of division and sexual inequality” (2). In the United States, a panoply of influential voices progressed arguments made by Ballanche and Herder about androgyny and democracy, including John Locke, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Julia Ward Howe, Margaret Fuller, and Walt
Whitman, among many others (3, 4). According to Shaheen, this collection of philosophers, poets, and activists all use the androgynous figure to represent the as-of-yet-unrealized ideal American democracy, believing this historical construct figured a utopian future in which hierarchical differentiation no longer prevented national success.

The popularity in the nineteenth century of the term “androgyne” and its potential impact on feminist politics were probably not lost on Dixie, a committed suffragist and someone who “‘thought of herself as a boy… spoke of herself as a boy’” and throughout her life “‘rode astride her saddle like a man’” (McKenzie 35). We can see, too, how Gloriana’s conclusion, which features a representative and equitably federated United Kingdom, resonates with Shaheen’s overview of androgyny’s relationship to democratic ideals across the West. As the progenitor of the feminist revolution that leads to the concluding chapter’s future utopia, Gloriana/Hector can be read as the androgynous figure embodying those political ideals. Or, rephrased, the harmonious affiliation of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales as the Federated Empire is the politico-national instantiation of the androgynous Gloriana/Hector.

However, as Tracy Hargreaves argues in Androgyny in Modern Literature (2005), this idealistic harmony of androgyny “[comes] to seem naïve and misconceived” when androgyny operates simply “as the balanced equation of binary gender constructions” (3). Even so, Hargreaves argues that some “versions of androgyny… foreground the androgyne’s power to disrupt and disturb hetero-normative relationships, a power that seems at once desirable and to be feared” (9). One such post-confession moment disrupts not only hetero-normative relationships but the gender binary’s very legibility. This moment involves Lëonie, Mr. Trackem’s “human bloodhound” and “female Judas,” and a loyal D’Estrangeite named Miles Gripper (232). Following Gloriana/Hector’s escape from the London police, Mr. Trackem hires
Léonie to discover Gloriana/Hector’s whereabouts. Cross-dressing as a young man and disguised as a loyal D’Estrangeite, Léonie is able to convince Miles Gripper, a fellow D’Estrangeite, to divulge Gloriana/Hector’s whereabouts. Before exposing this information, Gripper exclaims, “‘Least they say Mr. D’Estrange is a woman. I don’t know, and I don’t care. I don’t see what it matters whether Mr. D’Estrange is a man or a woman, sir. He’s the people’s friend’” (242). Here, Gripper gives up the artifice of knowing the truth about Gloriana/Hector, going so far as to dismiss truth’s purport entirely. This appears to be one moment where the androgyne is not “always bounded by the binary categories it also seeks to challenge” (Hargreaves 9). For Gripper, Gloriana/Hector is unbounded from such categories entirely. While Gripper does use the masculine pronoun “he” to call Gloriana/Hector “the people’s friend,” his intention remains clear: Gloriana/Hector is something different, someone for whom neither “man” nor “woman” fits. That this momentary dissolution of the gender binary occurs while Léonie is cross-dressing as a boy only further makes the case against stability of gender identity.

An example of the androgyne that disrupts and disturbs heteronormativity can also be found in this other instance of Evelyn’s queer desire for Gloriana/Hector, this time coming just after Gloriana/Hector’s courtroom confession:

Often, when in loving commune with his friend Hector D’Estrange, the thought would flash through the young duke’s mind, that if Hector had been a woman, the great love of which he felt himself capable, would have gone out to her absolutely and without reserve. What was the subtle power that had attracted him to Hector D’Estrange, which had made him pause on the verge of pleasure’s precipice, and, casting to the winds his hitherto selfish existence, had made him body and soul the devoted adherent of the young reformer? (221)
Here, Evie reflects on the love he felt for Hector D’Estrange before learning Hector’s “true” identity. Evie believes that it is the truth of Gloriana/Hector’s identity that made him “pause on the verge of pleasure’s precipice”: “From the moment that he learnt that in Hector D’Estrange was embodied the person of Gloria de Lara, he understood that the influence of a noble, high-minded, and genuine woman… had given him an aim in life” (221). Clearly, the text itself pauses on the verge of pleasure’s queer precipice, pulling Evie back from “the false glare and glitter of the world,” but it does so in a way that avoids replacing Hector with Gloriana (221). Instead, the text presents an image of Hector housing Gloriana. The text has used this language before, as when Gloriana/Hector confesses in court: “‘In Hector D’Estrange, the world beholds a woman’” (173). As discussed above, Gloriana/Hector’s confession interiorizes Gloriana as Gloriana/Hector’s true identity that then subsumes Hector’s entire existence. Read as an androgynous figure, however, Gloriana/Hector cannot be reduced to either identity, nor can either identity be granted interior or exterior status. Rather, Gloriana/Hector is an allegorical duality, an indivisible and irreducible figure.

Allegorical and androgynous, Gloriana/Hector thus calls to mind other potentially androgynous figures such as Jesus Christ\textsuperscript{144} or Adam.\textsuperscript{145} While the novel makes it obvious that

\textsuperscript{144} As Bobbi Paige Hopkins argues in “The Bible as a Medium for Social Engineering” (2013), Jesus Christ has long been posited “as the penultimate androgyne” or “archetypical androgyne” (84). Androgyny, Hopkins argues, can be understood to represent a form of “balance and integration” or wholeness (84). Because of this, Hopkins posits that it is Christ’s androgyny that is the foundation for his admirable traits of “tolerance, compassion, non-judgment, non-bias, non-discrimination, [and] egalitarianism” (85).

\textsuperscript{145} As Carolyn Heilbrun demonstrates in her influential Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (1973), Adam’s androgyny held a significant position in mystic traditions that still operated in the nineteenth century such as Gnosticism, Jewish Kabbalism, and Christian Hermetics (xvii–xxv). Christian Hermetic lore, for example, believed “that when Paradise returns the new, the renewed man, will, like Adam, be androgynous” (Gelpi 152). In another example, Gnosticism used androgyny “as a metaphor for overcoming sexual difference” (Torjesen 87).
Gloriana/Hector is meant to be Christ-like,\textsuperscript{146} taking Gloriana/Hector to be the androgynous Adam provides more evidence for the queerness of Gloriana/Hector and Evie’s relationship. Simply put: if Gloriana/Hector is Adam, then Evie is the Eve his name so clearly references. Reading Gloriana/Hector and Evie as Adam and Eve participates in a long tradition of viewing androgyny as a critical aspect of the story of Genesis.\textsuperscript{147} In its concluding chapter, \textit{Gloriana} entombs Gloriana/Hector and Evie in a shared grave and celebrates them as the progenitors of utopia. As such, they are the Adam and Eve of a future paradise. \textit{Gloriana}’s Edenic couple, however, is decidedly queer, and this queerness impacts any understanding of the novel’s utopian politics. Rather than a relationship that stands as testament to the reproductive capacity of heteronormativity, Gloriana/Hector and Evie’s queered version of Adam and Eve antagonizes heteronormativity from beyond the grave.

\textsuperscript{146} The Judas to Gloriana/Hector’s Jesus, Léonie infiltrates Gloriana/Hector’s inner circle and eventually tricks Gloriana/Hector into boarding a ship helmed by Mr. Trackem and Westray. The ship, however, crashes just off-shore, killing Westray and strewing Gloriana/Hector and Léonie amidst the wreckage. Clinging to pieces of the ship, Gloriana/Hector endeavors to save Léonie’s life, offering the young Judas forgiveness for her misdeeds. Gloriana/Hector then “kisses the girl who has betrayed her on the cheek,” prompting Léonie to ask, “Why do you kiss me? Why do you speak so kindly? Why do you forgive me for betraying you?” (278). Gloriana/Hector replies simply, “Because I believe in God” (278). Gloriana/Hector’s forgiveness, tenderness, and willingness to help save her from drowning convert Léonie, as she declares “Then I love God, and I love you” (279). Léonie survives the shipwreck and Gloriana/Hector is presumed drowned. Gloriana/Hector, however, is rescued from the wreckage by a steamer bearing the name “The Maid of Glad Tidings” (328). From this Spain-bound steamer, Gloriana/Hector then flees to South America, only to return following the election of the second D’Estrangeite Parliament. As discussed previously, this is Gloriana/Hector’s resurrection. Gloriana/Hector’s resurrection heralds a new era of feminist reform in the United Kingdom and brings about the utopia briefly described in the novel’s concluding chapter. This final chapter, set in 1999, finds Gloriana/Hector and Evie in a shared grave overlooking a utopian United Kingdom. The inscription on their grave names Gloriana/Hector “the Saviour of her people” (348).

\textsuperscript{147} As Karen Jo Torjesen discusses in her essay “Martyrs, Ascetics, and Gnostics: Gender-crossing in Early Christianity” (1996), androgyny has long been treated as a metaphor for the end of sexual difference (87). In an androgynous accounting of Genesis, “both Adam and Eve, both male and female, must be reunited with their alter ego, their lost companion, in order to be restored to their original nature” (Torjesen 87). This view of androgyny, Torjesen makes clear, relies on a delimited binarism and aims for the reunification of two discrete gender identities.
These are the moments that exceed the explicit political project of *Gloriana*'s feminist utopianism precisely because they exceed the terms upon which the novel founds its revolution. Gender relations built upon a stable gender binary and compulsory heterosexuality can only transform so much. Once destabilized, binary notions of gender and sexuality no longer dictate a conservatizing utopianism. The androgynous possibilities opened up by the text create a fissure in the presumed harmony of *Gloriana*'s utopian order. Gloriana/Hector lives a livable life in *Gloriana* not because her “real” gender proves women’s transcendent equality to men but because *Gloriana* stages a livable life for a character whose “real” gender is as undiscernible as the mythic original that gender is only ever a copy of. In death, Gloriana/Hector’s is the Duchess of Ravensdale, but in life, Gloriana/Hector is a constantly shifting matrix of identities, bodies, and desires. *This* is the feminist utopianism that the text makes possible and tries but fails to delimit. Androgyny, an operable concept and ideal in the nineteenth century, and a term worth revisiting in the twenty-first-century, exhibits the already extent possibilities at work in feminist utopian novels that take aim at gender relations that make life unlivable for so many.
CONCLUSION

The idealized androgyne can be used as a productive framework for thinking through issues of gender and sexuality in other women’s utopian novels. In *Man’s Rights* (1870), for instance, the Man’s Rights activist Johnnie Smith quotes Galatians 3:28, a verse often read as evidence of androgyny in the Bible: “God never said those men were inferior to women; for in Christ there was neither bond nor free, male nor female… but all were one” (34). While Smith uses this passage to argue for equality between genders, scholars such as Norman O. Brown (1959), Carolyn Heilbrun (1973), and Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi (1974) demonstrate that Gnostics and Christian Hermetics frequently cited Galatians 3:28 to endorse androgyny’s divinity. Christ, for Johnnie Smith, Gnostics, and Hermetics, sublmates sexual difference and replaces it with a unified whole that is both male and female.

Jack Halberstam (1988) takes issue with androgyny precisely because it potentially figures this unitary, originary wholeness. Halberstam argues that androgyny is “figured as the perfect blend of the masculine and the feminine and the creation of gender harmony” (215). “Ultimately,” Halberstam continues, “androgyne always returns us to [a] humanist vision of the balanced binary in which maleness and femaleness are in complete accord” (215). For Halberstam, this focus on balance, harmony, and the binary cannot accommodate more disruptive, unruly forms of gendered alterity (215). Read in this way, the androgyne re-authorizes the same binary it purportedly seeks to undo. Johannes N. Vorster (2008) concurs with Halberstam about androgyny’s political limits, arguing that “it was a product of a masculinist signifying system and functioned as such to negatively valorize women and those outside the enclosed circle of free, adult males” (129). While Halberstam focuses on female

---

148 The full verse from the *King James Version*: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
masculinity and Vorster on effeminate men, both maintain that androgyny sublimates femininity to masculinity in order to produce and maintain a phallocentric gender binary. As Tracy Hargreaves (2005) notes, androgyny fell out of favor feminists in the late twentieth century because it “eschewed femininity in prioritizing masculinity” (3).

But as Hargreaves also notes, the androgyne possesses a “power to disrupt and disturb hetero-normative relationships, a power that seems at once desirable and to be feared” (9). Androgyny, Hargreaves continues, “has been pejorative, degenerative, embodied, projected, artistic, spiritual, regenerative” (9). As a category so open to interpretation and experimentation, androgyny provides a unique cypher for the heroes, heroines, and villains in women’s utopian literature. In Man’s Rights, what makes the butterfly men so abhorrent to Annie and Christiana Thistlewaite is their ability to transgress the idealized unity that Halberstam and Vorster critique. In their performance of particular fashion tropes and gender norms, the butterfly men exceed the boundaries of this version of androgyny and challenge the erasure of sexual difference. Instead, the butterfly men’s performance and costumes reflect gender’s unruliness, much like Gloriana/Hector. Though Gloriana/Hector is celebrated and the butterfly men decried, their roles as potential androgynes capture the multiplicity of that category.

Androgyny might also “be associated with melancholia, in Freud’s sense, as well as with mourning” (Hargreaves 13). According to Hargreaves, the androgyne “functions as a kind of melancholic figure in which the lost ‘lost’ other becomes incorporated, but often with traumatic effect, invoking a bleak neutrality or impasse” (13-14). If this is the case, additional work on androgyny and women’s utopian literature would consider how melancholic utopian figures, such as those discussed in Chapter III, might experience melancholy because they are androgynous. In Moving the Mountain, John Robertson’s response to the new women of the
utopian United States might be understood as a panicked response to androgyny, a panic that is then internalized as a concern over the status of his own gender identity. As well, Grace Noble, the melancholic protagonist of *Five Generations Hence*, might be read as experiencing both the melancholy of race and the melancholy of androgyny. This would be a useful expansion of the conversation in Chapter III’s conclusion about Grace’s queer desire for her friend Violet Gray.

In these ways, androgyny marks an important opportunity for further research. As a dissertation, this project has worked to rehabilitate a number of women’s utopian novels that have been either ignored entirely or deprecated as politically short-sighted. In particular, the four chapters of this dissertation have traced how these novels contended with issues of gender and sexuality in adaptive, dynamic, and modern ways. With further work on androgyny’s role in women’s utopian fiction, a future instantiation of this project would continue to demonstrate how women’s utopian literature from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can be read as presciently connected to issues of gender and sexuality today. Additionally, such research would work to rehabilitate the concept of the androgyne. Like women’s utopian literature written before 1970, androgyny is frequently read as invested in the same forms of gender inequity it purportedly critiques. Following this dissertation’s work push against such readings, a sustained analysis of the connection between women’s utopian literature and androgyny could work to recuperate both for modern readers.

Along with this additional work on androgyny and utopian literature, a future version of this project would return to the conversation that flows through Chapters I, III, and IV about queerness’ relationship to utopianism. In order to more fully contextualize feminist utopianism’s engagement with queer utopianism, this additional work would read Henry James’ “The Great Good Place” (1900) and H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895) along the anti-relational debate
still taking place in queer theory today. Using José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia* (2009) to read James’ short story and Lee Edelman’s *No Future* (2003) to read Wells’ novel, this work would begin to blur the lines between feminist theory and queer theory, relying less on categories of identity such as “man” or “woman” and more on reading any identity as a foreclosure on alternative possibilities of being. By bringing together queer utopianism as it operates in both Wells and James, this new research will argue that the anti-relational divide between scholars like Edelman and Muñoz is more aesthetic than substantial. By reading Wells’ Time Traveler’s plunge into the unknown future as queerly similar to James’ George Dane’s time spent in the Great Good Place, this work would contend that Edelman and Muñoz are both committed to making life more livable for queer subjects.

Beginning with James and Muñoz, this new work would read the “good place” of James’ utopian short story as a utopian aesthetic representation of Muñoz’s “queer utopian hermeneutic” (28). “Such a hermeneutic,” writes Muñoz, “would then be *epistemologically and ontologically humble* in that it would not claim the epistemological certitude of a queerness that we simply ‘know,’ but instead, strain to activate the no-longer-conscious and to extend a glance toward that which is forward-dawning, anticipatory illuminations of the not-yet-conscious” (28) The forms of knowing and being that take place in “The Great Good Place” are humble in that they make no claims on formal knowledge or knowable consciousness. Though over 100 years separates these two works of queer utopianism, each bears, in some way, the trace of the other, and putting these two works into conversation with one another can lead to a fruitful consideration of what reading utopian literature written in another century affords modern readers. Further, by tracing a queer lineage between James and Muñoz, this section would demonstrate that queerness, like utopia, is both always yet to come and always worth striving towards.
In the next sequence of that analysis, Edelman’s concept of sinthomosexuality will be used to read the time-traveling protagonist of Wells’ *Time Machine* as the anti-relational queer figure *par excellence*. For Edelman, the linking together of the “sinthome” with “homosexuality” as a cultural figure means elevating the demonization of queer sexualities as threats to the logic of meaning- and sense-making - *because* threatening to reproductive futurism - to the level of the subject’s singular access to *jouissance*. As Edelman argues, “Homosexuality is thought as a threat to the logic of thought itself insofar as it figures the availability of an unthinkable jouissance that would put an end to fantasy – and, with it, to futurity,” and the sinthomosexual embraces the “stupid enjoyment… the node of senseless compulsion” of the sinthome in its queer refusal of heterosexuality (39, 38). Thus, sinthomosexuality allows for access to a jouissance that rends the fantasy of futurism “precisely by *rendering* [its jouissance] in relation to [the death] drive” (38). For Edelman, the *sinthomosexual* embraces a “fatal, even murderous” jouissance and courts the death drive in a refusal to take part in the always already heterosexually determined and determining social reality of the Symbolic order (39). The Time Traveler’s time machine, both the machine itself and its capacity for time travel, offers to the Time Traveler a mode of pleasure that, like Edelman’s *sinthomosexual*, refuses the already determined and determining Symbolic order of the Victorian era while courting the death drive quite literally in his repetitive travels into human-less futures.

These additional lines of study, along with the current chapters of my dissertation, will provide a new resource for modern readers of utopian literature. As a book, this project makes implicit political arguments about twenty-first-century crises by returning to utopian literature written in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than treat women’s utopian literature as a separate genre, this expanded version of the project would see women’s utopian
literature and queer utopian literature as interlaced sub-genres. Feminist utopianism and queer utopianism bear significantly on each other and can be read in service of an integrated understanding of alterity politics in the nineteenth century. Feminist and queer, this future project will reflect both the stakes of nineteenth-century utopian literature and how that literature can inform conversations about today’s current political realities.
WORKS CITED


Bamber, Linda. “Self-Defeating Politics in George Eliot’s *Felix Holt*.” *Victorian Studies*, vol. 18,


“Mourning and Melancholia.” The Standard Edition of the Complete


Glasrud, Bruce A. “Southwestern Female Authors: Lillian B. Horace and Her Contemporaries.” Kossie-Chernyshev, pp. 139-150.


Horvitz, Deborah. “Hysteria and Trauma in Pauline Hopkins’ Of One Blood; Or, the Hidden Self.” African American Review, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 245-259.


Knight, Alisha Coleman. “To Be a Publisher: Lillian Jones Horace and the Dotson-Jones


