

Harmless Pleasure: Feminist Liberation and Whitenormative Conquest for the
New Woman Cyclist of the 1890s

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I enjoy bike rides for some of the same reasons I enjoy academic research and writing: it is often solitary, meditative, and slow. Retracing the same routes again and again, I am made to see, to read, to understand and navigate the landscape around me differently. It is easy—and often enjoyable—for me to get lost in the solitude of my writing and my rides. But both are so much enriched by the communities that encourage and challenge me to take a new turn. Another rider might suggest a new route; an adviser suggests a new reading—suddenly my world is changed.

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ABSTRACT

The New Woman cyclist of the 1890s has become an important symbol of feminist liberation. At the turn of the 20th century, she emerged as a figure that resisted traditional gender expectations, and, when paired with the new technology of the bicycle, gained unprecedented mobility. Yet, this liberation narrative fails to account for the white New Woman cyclist's participation in hegemonic forms of power *and* ignores the moments of resistance a queer and feminist reading of Other(ed) New Women cyclists makes visible. Building on feminist, critical race, and queer theories, my dissertation challenges the dominant story of feminist liberation by revealing how white women's progress relies on and contributes to whitenormative narratives of mastery, conquest, and empire, while also making space for a more nuanced reading of the New Woman cyclist's harms, pleasures, and resistance.

To explore this topic, I examine diaries, cycling guides, travelogues, newspapers, and bicycle tourism fieldwork. In chapter one, I read the diary of a woman cyclist from Leeds, England written between 1893 - 1896 and the historical context surrounding it against the grain to reveal an identity for the diarist that contradicts heteropatriarchal romance narratives in the historical archive. I then visualize recent maps of my own cycle tours alongside newly constructed maps based on the records she kept in her diary to explore the intimate embodiment and non-linearity of bicycle tourism, pushing the limits of the "queer object." In chapter two, I examine the relationship between the bicycle, 19th century white feminist reformers, and the tension between queer possibilities of socialist revolution and the protection of Anglo-Saxon empire. Focusing specifically on the language of conquest used in Frances Willard's instructional cycling guide, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (1895), I argue that Willard's speech acts upon her audience; her words are live and directly impact the political landscape of the New Woman. Thus, Willard's vision for a reformed civilization is one of celebratory conquest and confers serious harm upon those who are rejected from the moral modernity of the white New Woman cyclist. In chapter three, I offer a close reading of Elizabeth Robins Pennell's *To Gipsyland* (1893) to investigate the potentiality of her attachment to the Romany people, language, and culture to offer queer forms of knowledge production. I argue that rather than operate as an agent of queer knowledge production, Pennell's cycling adventure indulges in the violence of imperialist nostalgia to advance yet another narrative of modernity and empire. In chapter four, I consider the harmlessness of cycling's pleasures, arguing that pleasure is essential in resisting oppressive structures. Drawing on the stories of cyclists Kittie Knox and Annie Kopchovsky I highlight how pleasure, performance, and spectacle serve to offer moments of resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1895, the popular political satire magazine, *Puck*, published a cartoon of “The ‘New Woman’ and Her Bicycle,” featuring six varieties of the New Woman, including the “New” Salvation Army Ladies, the “New” Mother-in-Law, and the “New” Washerwoman, each riding a bicycle. In the center stands the quintessential New Woman: feet set wide apart, hands casually in the pockets of a mannish pair of bloomers, wearing a self-assured smirk on her face, and hardly noticing the mice at her feet that should—but don’t—frighten her.¹



Figure 1: “The New Woman and Her Bicycle,” PUCK, June 19, 1895.

¹ “The New Woman and Her Bicycle,” *PUCK*, June 19, 1895.

In the popular imagination of the 1890s, the “New Woman” came to represent early feminist resistance to traditional social, political, and gender roles for women.² Martha H. Patterson summarizes the myriad “incarnations” of the New Woman: “degenerate highbrow, evolved type, race leader or race traitor, brow-beating suffragette, farmer, prohibitionist, mannish lesbian, college girl, eugenicist, savvy professional woman, barren spinster, clubwoman, saleswoman, restless woman, bicyclist, anarchist, or insatiable shopper.”³ As the *Puck* illustration above and Patterson’s description both demonstrate, the New Woman was many women. She was invented to explain the category of women that represented (either by choice or by necessity) some form of unconventionality. Thus, the term evolved as a useful—and contradictory—shorthand for describing the rapidly changing expectations and possibilities for women at the turn of the 20th century.

Similarly, the bicycle represented new possibilities for mobility that was both exciting and controversial. For example, Frances E. Willard, president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, extolled the merits of the bicycle as a “vehicle of so

² The term “New Woman” was first used by novelist Sarah Grand, who wrote of the “new woman” as a figure that, after “years thinking and thinking” has “solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s Sphere, and prescribed the remedy” (Grand qt. in Marks 11). The New Woman’s remedy for the limited binary of mother/whore is a liberated version of womanhood that expands her domestic sphere to include the political and public. This myth was eagerly caricatured, criticized, and celebrated in the popular press. For a more comprehensive examination of the New Woman, especially as popularized by the press, see: Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1990); Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Marth H. Patterson, *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

³ Marth H. Patterson, *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 25.

much harmless pleasure” that would “help women to a wider world.”⁴ Willard saw the bicycle as a wholesome and strategic tool for women’s access to greater political power. Indeed, for Willard and many others, the New Woman and the bicycle epitomized liberation.

Neatly combining the metaphorical and literal force of the bicycle as a vehicle of unprecedented movement with the political and cultural momentum of the New Woman, this pairing is an inspiring visualization of change and liberatory power. But this representation ignores the ways in which the white New Woman participated in hegemonic power structures and empire-building. Even Willard’s progress narratives frequently relied on the rhetoric of conquest, using women’s mastery of the bicycle as a metaphor for their world conquest.⁵ Thus the bicycle in the hands of women—as simultaneously “harmless” and capable of “conquest”—highlights an important tension between the triviality and potency of the New Woman’s power. This leads me to question: how might the liberatory history of the New Woman and her bicycle be otherwise constructed?

Making the New Woman and her bicycle central to my analysis, I argue that this figure traffics in narratives of pleasure and harm; of feminist liberation and hegemonic conquest and imperialism. Existing scholarship on bicycle travel fails to sufficiently complicate the progress narratives that associate women’s mobility via the bicycle with their liberation. My project intervenes to argue that the texts and images pertaining to the

⁴ Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 13, 73.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

New Woman cyclist signal simultaneous participation in and resistance to an imperial and hegemonic world-ordering. Tracking this figure, I explore how classificatory systems and political logics of gender, race, class, sexuality, and empire function at the turn of the 20th century.⁶ Examining original sources like diaries, published primary sources, and bicycle tourism field work, I locate the rhetoric of harm and pleasure employed by, and about, the New Woman touring cyclist, and challenge the dominant story of feminist liberation by linking white women’s progress to metaphorical and literal imperial conquest. My project argues that the “harmless pleasures” of cycle touring in which the New Woman indulges largely participates in—but sometimes resists—a whitenormative, hegemonic world-ordering.

To make this argument, my research firstly contests a more traditional, liberatory reading of the New Woman and her role in cycling and feminist history. Situated within interdisciplinary feminist and queer scholarship, I read the archival histories of New Women cyclists against the grain. My work intervenes in both feminist and queer studies to analyze the trajectory of feminist progress and explore how the methodological and interpretative strategies of a queer approach to bicycle archives challenge established narratives surrounding both feminist liberation and disciplinary expectations about what objects of study may be analyzed through a queer lens.

⁶ Ability is notably absent here. There is much—too much for one dissertation—to examine with regards to the New Woman cyclist and (dis)ability. Although I do offer some discussion about the relationship between the New Woman cyclist and medical and moral discourses about the body, this conversation is focused again on gender, sexuality, and race. A careful analysis of ableism and narratives of disability pertaining to the New Woman cyclist would be an important avenue for future work.

Tracing the rhetorics of pleasure, harm, intimacy, and mobility used by New Women cyclists across a variety of bicycle archives, narratives of conquest enter and perhaps displace the more familiar associations of the New Woman cyclist with liberatory progress. This research contributes to feminist studies by critically examining celebratory narratives of feminist liberation, intervenes in queer studies by applying a methodology and interpretive frame to an unlikely object of study, and highlights the linkages between histories of empire, cycling history, and women's history to argue that the white New Woman cyclist was a powerful agent of whitenormative empire. Fundamentally, this research seeks to revise the history of white women cyclists at the turn of the twentieth century, replacing the persistent association of bicycles, New Women, and liberation with a messier consideration of how pleasure and harm mix and muddy narratives of the New Woman cyclist's participation in conquest, imperial expansion, and performances of resistance.

The Bicycle Boom

The bicycle boom of the 1890s was widespread, frenzied, and relatively short-lived. Sandwiched between the late 1880s invention of the "safety bicycle," the precursor to the contemporary bike with a drivetrain and two wheels of equal size, and the rise of the automobile in the early 1900s, the bicycle boom found its zenith in the mid-1890s.⁷

⁷ David Herlihy, *Bicycle: The History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 263-4. See especially Herlihy's chapter "The Bicycle Boom" (251 – 282) for a thorough account of the bicycle craze of 1890s.

British bicycle historian Nicholas Oddy clarifies that the craze began in earnest in 1894.⁸ This period of intense bicycle enthusiasm saw a proliferation of bicycle clubs, racing associations, touring parties, and bicycle manufacturing as the bicycle's popularity spread across the United States and throughout much of Great Britain, France, and Germany. Pervasive in urban centers and a common topic in newspapers and magazines, accounting for 10% of national advertising in the 1890s,⁹ the bicycle—as a technology of unprecedented mobility—attracted much excitement and controversy, specifically concerning how to respond to the growing ridership of women.

The Bicycle and the New Woman

During the height of the bicycle boom in the 1890s, women accounted for at least one third of the cycling population, making the presence of women cyclists “perhaps the most striking and profound social consequence of the boom.”¹⁰ The bicycle offered a form of freedom and mobility to the New Woman that had never before been so accessible. Patricia Marks writes of the options that the bicycle offered the New Woman:

the woman on wheels may decide where she wishes to go and what she plans to do when she gets there, regardless of a male companion, or lack of one. Her influence upon the world is more immediate; no longer confined to the home or hoping to escape from the vicissitudes of earning a living, she actively seeks new experience and intends to have some impact on the world around her.¹¹

⁸ Nicholas Oddy, “Rides on My Safety: The Diary of Emily Sophia Coddington,” *Cycle History 20: the proceedings of the 20th International Cycle History Conference* (2010): 29.

⁹ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 123.

¹⁰ Herlihy, *Bicycle*, 266.

¹¹ Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 175.

In turn, this New Woman offered the bicycle a place in politics and progressive reform efforts. Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke of the bicycle “as a tool of liberation,” Willard saw the bicycle as a vehicle of social reform in her crusade for sobriety, and many other feminist pioneers linked the bicycle with the “means to improve the general female condition.”¹² For these New Women, the essential mobility of the bicycle resulting in women’s movement through public space posed an unavoidable and direct challenge to established thinking about white, middle class gender relations that kept women in (their) place.

Scholars largely agree that the New Woman cyclist of the 1890s was typically white, middle-class, and located in urban centers in the U.S., the U.K., and Western Europe. Many of the first white women cyclists to take to the streets upon their steel steeds “were privileged, well-educated, and as cyclists engaged in public work and/or believed in the public efficacy of the ‘New Woman’: they rejected the sedentary domesticity of their mother and grandmother.”¹³ However, geographer and bicycle historian Glen Norcliffe is quick to argue, they did *not* reject the Victorian ideology of domesticity altogether. To the contrary, cycling offered itself to bourgeois women as a “feminized tool of domestication.”¹⁴ In the hands of elite women cyclists, the bicycle operated as a “freedom machine,” capable of liberating its rider from the spatial constraints of the home, while engaging in the project of “*embourgeoisment*, the desire to

¹² Lisa S. Strange and Robert S. Brown, “The Bicycle, Women’s Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton,” *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 31,5 (October 2010): 611; Herlihy, *Bicycle*, 266.

¹³ Glen Norcliffe, *Critical Geographies of Cycling: History, Political Economy and Culture*, (Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 161.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

make the moral and geographical world bourgeois.”¹⁵ Thus, the bicycle was utilized by its earliest lady cyclists “as a domestic vehicle [for]...the ‘domestic public.’”¹⁶

But not all New Women cyclists were allowed into the domestic imaginary. For example, the domesticity and femininity of Annie Kopchovsky, better known as Annie Londonderry, the first woman to bicycle around the world from 1894 to 1895, was consistently challenged by her own actions and by the newspaper reports that followed her adventure. Although it was largely a well-guarded secret, Kopchovsky was a married mother of three young children at the time of her bicycle journey. A public revelation of this truth would surely expose her blatant rejection of domesticity in favor of her passion for adventure and economic independence. Instead, journalist Peter Zheutlin describes how the press focused on Kopchovsky’s appearance—particularly the clothing she wore—which transformed her into an ambiguously gendered figure. Beginning her journey in full skirts and riding a lady’s bicycle, she ended it on a man’s bicycle wearing a masculine riding costume that consisted of a modified pair of boys’ pants, a tweed vest, and a cap.¹⁷ Kopchovsky’s transgressive gender presentation and escape from the domestic sphere confirmed what many people during this period feared in the New Woman cyclist: a figure unbound by the expectations of white, middle-class femininity.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, quoting Philip Gordon Mackintosh, 155.

¹⁷ Peter Zheutlin, *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry’s Extraordinary Ride*, (New York: Citadel Press, 2007), 50.

¹⁸ Although these narratives seem to resist the New Woman’s foray into cycling as an emblem of progress, today they participate in the narrative of feminist progress as the required counter to the victorious story of women’s inevitable liberation.

Discourses of Health and Morality

The bicycle in general threatened to disturb conventional expectations around health and moral behavior. Many weekly papers published alarming reports about freakish afflictions resulting from excessive physical exertion. For example, a writer for the *Christian Intelligencer* finds the opportunity to denounce the bicycle as a moral distraction from the restful duties of the Sabbath: “‘The ‘bicycle face,’ indicating extreme weariness and exhaustion, due to the severe strain of violent exercise on seven days of the week, will be followed, as surely as the Decalog is the law of God, with moral weariness and exhaustion in the wheelmen and in those influenced by them.’”¹⁹ Arguing that the relationship between a bicyclist’s physical exhaustion and his moral weariness is inextricable, the author fears that “[t]he bicyclists are doing much to destroy the Sabbath, and at the same time are injuring their own bodies and souls.”²⁰ Similarly, an article taken from the *New York Evening Telegram* and reprinted on the front page of *The Washington Bee* with the subtitle “Evils Alleged to Arise From the Riding of the Wheel,” alerts the reader to the dangers and increasing diagnosis of the “bicycle walk.”²¹ The symptoms of “these new physical deformities, which the extreme use of the bicycle is rapidly producing” are richly described by a doctor quoted at length in the article, who paints a picture of the excessive cyclist as a freakish creature:

‘[The bicycle walk] extends to the swing of the arms and carriage of the head. The elbows of a racing man bend out from the body, as a result of having to bear his weight as he leans far over the handle bars, and gives him the appearance of being bow-legged as to his arms. The neck and head are projected forward, too, and the

¹⁹ “The ‘Bicycle Face,’” *The Literary Digest*, September 7, 1895, 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ “The Bicycle Walk,” *The Washington Bee*, September 28, 1895, 1, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

face wears that strained, anxious expression of a man who wants to get there as soon as possible.’²²

The freakishness of this affliction is further racialized, as the doctor concludes:

‘The bicycle habit, if persisted in,’ he says, ‘will make us all knock-kneed and as pigeon-toed as our native red men. Pretty much everybody of the present generation rides a wheel, or is just about to begin. Therefore, pretty much everybody of the present generation will be knock-kneed or pigeon-toed, or will be affected with the bicycle walk.’²³

This horrifying, dystopian future in which civilized society is reduced to the image of the savage through usage of the bicycle combines the threat of physical deformity with an implied anxiety of moral and racial degeneracy.

Yet, just one week later, *The Washington Bee* offers a counter to this sinister view. Originally from the *Baltimore Sun*, this article uses evidence from French medical studies to portray a more positive account of bicycle riding. The article boldly concludes: “The bicycle does not, it is held, produce any of the various diseases that have been credited to it, but on the contrary, when used with due caution, has a beneficial effect.”²⁴ The important caveat here is *caution*. Any praise for the health of bicycle riding *must* be tempered with a serious call for moderation. The same article continues: “The discreet bicyclist, it is suggested, will have a solid, well-kept wheel; will avoid fatigue; will not ride soon after a full meal, and will ascend steep hills afoot. Excess is betrayed by loss of appetite and inability to sleep from fatigue.”²⁵ Policing the excessive behavior of cyclists,

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “Medical View of Bicycling,” *The Washington Bee*, October 5, 1895, 6, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

medical discourse surrounding the bicycle easily slips from a focus on the body to a focus on the morality of bicyclists.

(Im)Morality of New Woman Cyclists

The morality of female cyclists was of particular concern—thus came also the justification for scrupulous policing of women’s cycling behavior. For example, both the resistance to and the enthusiastic adoption of the bicycle costume were in direct response to the physical activities of women. Dress reform, like riding the bicycle, was more than a fashion statement or a physical activity; according to Marks, “rational dress” was “an expression of a philosophical stance about the relationship between the sexes and about women’s role in worldly affairs.”²⁶ Both cycling and the costume best suited for the sport suggested a kind of masculinity and self-possessed control. Indeed, cycling carried with it strong connotations of masculine adventure and physical ability. Ellen Gruber Garvey therefore argues that “Women’s riding posed a threat to gender definition” and to “women’s sexual purity.”²⁷ Fears about the masturbatory potential of the bicycle saddle linked anxieties about “both the bicycling woman and the masturbating woman” as “out of male control, possibly doing damage to ‘the race.’”²⁸ It is, therefore, unsurprising that the possibility for athleticism in leisure and the acknowledgment of women’s physical labor revealed deep-seated anxieties about her adherence to gender, racial, and sexual norms.

²⁶ Marks 160.

²⁷ Garvey 108.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

To deemphasize the potential masculinizing effects of the bicycle, medical and moral experts who encouraged women to cycle often used established reasoning derived from the doctrine of “separate spheres,” and especially focused on the importance of the woman’s role as moral guardian. For example, one article published in *The Literary Digest* dedicated to the subject of women’s cycling suggests that, because of women’s inherent and natural affinity to grace, balance, and harmony, women are in fact *superior* to men on the bicycle.²⁹ However, despite women’s natural abilities that make her well-suited to mastering this technology, she lacks discipline, which the French doctor Champonnière of Paris argues, the bicycle will help her to master: ““The spirit of discipline is greatly wanting in woman...Now in taking exercise regularly on the bicycle she sees very quickly the necessity of this discipline for reaching success.””³⁰ Thus, the discipline that the bicycle will teach women is both a discipline of the body and of the mind, further demonstrating “that exercise and morality were inseparable.”³¹ Indeed, Dr. Champonnière insists: ““This return action of the physical on the moral is seen at every instant in the study of physical exercise, and attentive educators do not neglect it.””³² This doctor praises a plethora of moral lessons that the bicycle may teach its riders, including “patience, endurance, and soberness,” an indication of why Frances Willard associates morality with the bicycle in service of temperance reform.³³ *The Washington Bee* reiterates the positive connection between moderate cycling and moral virtue, citing a Dr.

²⁹ “The Woman and Her Bicycle,” *The Literary Digest*, June 8, 1895, 27 – 28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

³¹ Marks 184.

³² “The Woman and Her Bicycle,” *The Literary Digest*, June 8, 1895, 28.

³³ *Ibid.*

Richardson, who confidently asserts that the bicycle “is an agent in the moral culture of individuals in pleurably diverting their demands for occupation, thus answering the place of crowded rooms where companionship is sought.”³⁴ The bicycle was even deemed capable of transforming barren and frail women into vigorous, (re)productive and civilization-saving mothers “in part by strengthening the uterus.”³⁵ In typical fashion, the bicycle offers itself as a promiscuous signifier, standing for a vehicle of sexual excess and/or healthy reproduction, moral degeneracy and/or purity, sending mixed messages about the New Women who rode.

Policing the Boundaries of Cycling Clubs

In addition to anxieties around the bicyclist’s health, morality, and gender, the bicycle club soon became a contested site upon which to police the boundaries of sociality among bicyclists. Mirroring established patterns of socialization and organization, the bicycle club of the 1890s functioned “primarily as a social organization,” hosting public and private cycling events, such as tours through the countryside, picnics, and large-scale parades.³⁶ These clubs were largely populated by cyclists of the middle and upper classes, and tended to be segregated along race, class, and sometimes gender lines.

The ability to purchase a bicycle and the opportunity to ride it on a leisurely tour was an unambiguous sign of status. In 1893, the average cost of a new bicycle was \$125,

³⁴ “Bicycle Riding and Health,” *The Washington Bee*, August 24, 1895, 2, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

³⁵ Garvey 120.

³⁶ Robert Smith, *A Social History of the Bicycle: It’s Early Life and Times in America*, (New York: American Heritage, 1972), 115.

with the average family income in the United States at \$1,000.³⁷ The cost of bicycles dropped throughout the 1890s, and “[b]y 1895, bicycles could be purchased on installment plans or through secondhand stores, expanding the market considerably.”³⁸ Even as the bicycle boom reached its height and expanded its reach, with four million bicycles sold in 1896 alone, the means to purchase a bicycle served to regulate who could hope to participate in the growing community of avid cyclists.³⁹

The largest and most influential bicycle club in the US was the League of American Wheelmen (LAW). Established in 1880, the LAW gained considerable political power as an organization dedicated to “promot[ing] the rights and interests of cyclists.”⁴⁰ The LAW is most well-known for its political work in the “Good Roads” campaign, focusing on passing legislation to improve road and highway infrastructure; however, the national League and its many local branches were also deeply involved in community bicycle events, tours, and races.

In the mid-1890s, many cycle clubs joined in the 100-mile century ride fad. The century ride offered ample opportunity for club members to socialize during lunch stops or long rests while on tour, however, “the very sociability of the century ride, with its extended stops for meals and camaraderie, challenged the cyclists’ liberalism.”⁴¹ The opportunity and risk of social interaction in bicycle clubs threatened the enforcement of

³⁷ Herlihy, *Bicycle*, 261.

³⁸ Strange and Brown 610.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 622.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 612.

⁴¹ Lorenz J. Finison, *Boston’s Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 164.

the color line, formally separating white and Black cyclists from connecting as equals. For social bicycle clubs across the country, the “possibility of black membership [alongside white members] implied a challenge, a social familiarity and proximity which was unacceptable to many whites, especially in the south, where deeply ingrained tradition forbade social, especially recreational, contact between blacks and whites.”⁴² As a result of the social policing that sought to prohibit racial interaction, many organized century rides and bicycle clubs began to systematically exclude Black cyclists from attaining membership.⁴³ The League of American Wheelmen’s 1894 decision to enforce a color bar, excluding membership to people of color, is the most comprehensive example of Jim Crow’s influence upon the bicycle craze of the 1890s.⁴⁴ The LAW’s authority over whom it chose to include and exclude from its membership rolls suggests that organized

⁴² Andrew Ritchie, “Major Taylor and the ‘Color Question’ in the United States,” in *Ethnicity, Sport, Identity: Struggles for Status*, ed. J.A. Mangan and Andrew Ritchie, (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 16.

⁴³ Finison 169.

⁴⁴ By 1893, southern members of the LAW, led by William W. Watts of Louisville, Kentucky, sought to amend the LAW’s constitution to formally exclude membership to Black cyclists. “This motion, which had to be carried by a majority of two thirds, split the convention almost exactly, 108 votes for and 101 against” (Smith, 163). The following year, on February 20, 1894, during the LAW’s National Assembly, Watts and his supporters succeeded in passing the color bar, 127 voting for the motion, and 54 against (Finison, 20). But the decision to formally exclude wheelmen of color from the organization was met with widespread resistance, particularly in Boston, where the League was headquartered and where Massachusetts State Representative Robert T. Teamoh authored a resolution passed by the state legislature condemning the LAW’s new racial exclusionary policy (Herlihy, 263; Finison, 10 -11, 20). The LAW’s magazine *Good Roads* published a short article in 1894 explaining its recent policy. (See “The Colored Man and the League,” *Good Roads*, Vol. 5, 1894, 102-103 for the full text.) For the League, like many other bicycle clubs across the country, “[t]he principle question underlying the main issue was: whether the League is a social or whether it is a political organization” (102). The author opines that were the League an exclusively political organization there would be no grounds upon which to justify a color bar; however, since the LAW is imagined as “a sort of fraternity, the different members of which are in some way definitely positioned with relation to each other,” the amendment banning Black members agrees with the racial logic of the time. Recognizing the white southerner’s antagonism “to the organization so long as the black man was permitted to enjoy the same privileges as himself,” the author demonstrates the thinking and justification behind racially motivated discrimination within cycling associations (102). The policy prohibiting cyclists of color access to membership remained despite consistent resistance to the color bar from mainly east coast chapters and banned riders.

cycling operated as a useful regulatory institution despite (or perhaps because of) the potential for bicycling to transgress traditional boundaries along gender, race, and class.

Toward an Interdisciplinary Critique of the New Woman Cyclist

The history of the bicycle boom and the New Woman cyclist highlights broader concerns of the era pertaining to femininity, health, morality, sexuality, and the preservation of whiteness. My project applies critical feminist and queer theory to these histories to encourage an interdisciplinary conversation about feminist liberation, imperialism, and queer approaches to archival research. In the following sections, I discuss the bodies of scholarship that I utilize to analyze the New Woman cyclist, from a critical look at white feminist histories to adventure travel. Drawing on a combination of foundational texts in their respective fields as well as new interventions, I build upon an interdisciplinary conversation about the politics of feminist progress narratives.

Bicycle Histories

Scholarship focused on the bicycle craze of the 1890s presents a small but growing body of literature. Fred C. Kelly's article "The Great Bicycle Craze," published in 1956, first introduced the topic to American scholars. Almost twenty years later in 1972, Robert Smith's *A Social History of the Bicycle* became the authority on bicycle scholarship in the U.S. Its status remained undisputed until David Herlihy's 2004 book, *Bicycle: The History*, was added to a still sparsely populated field dedicated to the history of bicycles in the U.S. and Western Europe. Since Herlihy's new history of the bicycle, several cultural histories of the bicycle craze and biographies offering details about some

of the era's cycling pioneers have widened the breadth of the field, calling attention to the proliferation of bicycle clubs, racing associations, touring parties, and bicycle manufacturing and geographies.⁴⁵ In many of these texts, the figure of the New Woman is primarily utilized as evidence of the bicycle as an agent of progressive history. Of notable exception are Patricia Marks's *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* and Ellen Gruber Garvey's *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*. These texts offer a feminist reading of the New Woman in relation to the press, specifically advertisements and magazines. While the bicycle features prominently in their analyses, it is examined primarily as a signifier of the New Woman's "newness." Thus, even despite Garvey and Marks's more careful feminist account of the New Woman and the bicycle, scholars largely gesture to the history of the New Woman and the bicycle as a progress narrative: the story of (white) women's mobility-as-liberation propelling them toward their new status as citizens.

Race, Class, Gender, and Civilization

Instead, the New Woman cyclist must be understood as simultaneously raced, classed, and gendered. In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, Anne McClintock instructs us to see race, class, and gender as articulated

⁴⁵ For example, see: David Herlihy's *The Lost Cyclist: The Epic Tale of An American Adventurer and His Mysterious Disappearance*; Peter Zheutlin's *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry's Extraordinary Ride*; Lorenz Finison's *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society*; Glen Norcliffe's *Critical Geographies of Cycling: History, Political Economy and Culture*; Robert J. Turpin's *First Taste of Freedom: A Cultural History of Bicycle Marketing in the United States*; and Evan Friss's *The Cycling City: Bicycles & Urban America in the 1890s*.

categories that “come into existence *in and through* relation to each other.”⁴⁶ She elaborates on the inter-dependence of these categories of identity in the context of the British empire: “the rhetoric of *gender* was used to make increasingly refined distinctions among the different *races*...Similarly, the rhetoric of *class* was used to inscribe minute and subtle distinctions between other *races*.”⁴⁷ The New Woman cyclist's particular version of white, middle-class femininity is integral to her ability to gain access to liberatory citizenship and to extend an imperial world-ordering to the places she travels.

Gail Bederman's *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* and Louise Michele Newman's *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* are two classic texts from which to draw insight about the relationship between race, gender, class, and the discourse of civilization at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Bederman, Americans during this period were familiar with the discourse of civilization as that which depended simultaneously on middle-class conceptions about “race, gender, and millennial assumptions about human evolutionary process.”⁴⁸ Civilization was thus an explicitly racial and gendered concept. But this discourse could be mobilized by different parties to different ends. Bederman points to a variety of case studies in her text to demonstrate how the discourse of civilization was used in contradictory ways. Indeed, she argues, “it was this mutability and flexibility that, combined with the powerful

⁴⁶ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5, emphasis hers.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55, emphasis hers.

⁴⁸ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25.

linkage of race and gender, which made ‘civilization’ such a powerful and ubiquitous discourse during these decades.”⁴⁹ Additionally, Newman demonstrates that the discourse of social evolution as integral to the progress of (white) civilization was an important touchstone for early feminist thinkers and activists. While not all white feminists were enthusiastic supporters of social evolutionary theory, the politics of feminist liberation were (and continue to be) always in conversation with the discourse of civilization. In fact, it was often through this discourse of progress through highly differentiated race and gender roles that white women gained access to political power as “effective civilizers” and “racial conservators.”⁵⁰ In this vein, the whiteness of the New Woman cyclist is central to her liberation and her ability to effectively participate in empire-building.⁵¹

The Language of Empire and Conquest

The language of discovery so often employed by traveling cyclists is another tactic of empire-building. Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* expertly investigates the ways in which travel writing reproduces the act of conquest through “estheticization, density of meaning, and domination.”⁵² Metaphors, adjectives, and the evaluative power of the seer over the seen is of great importance for

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁵⁰ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14, 17.

⁵¹ Let me acknowledge that, of course, not all New Women cyclists were white women. Lorenz Finison’s recent history about Boston’s bicycle boom emphasizes the presence of cyclists of color (see Lorenz J. Finison, *Boston’s Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society*, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). However, the simultaneous erasure of cyclists of color in conjunction with attempts to showcase an exceptional few demonstrates the strength of the association between the New Woman cyclist and her whiteness.

⁵² Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (New York: Routledge, 1995, 2008), 213.

the explorer and travel writer. According to Pratt, “Victorian discovery rhetoric” is particularly concerned with the relationship between discovery, seeing, and writing.⁵³ She explains:

While the ordeal required to make the discovery is unforgettably concrete, in this mid-Victorian paradigm the ‘discovery’ itself, even within the ideology of discovery, has no existence of its own. It only gets ‘made’ for real after the traveler (or other survivor) returns home, and brings it into being through texts: a name on a map, a report to the Royal Geographical Society, the Foreign Office, the London Mission Society, a diary, a lecture, a travel book. Here is language charged with making the world in the most singlehanded way, and with high stakes. As the explorers found out, lots of money and prestige rode on what you could convince others to give you credit for.⁵⁴

The discovery—the seeing—is concretized in the text, in the written evidence of the discovery. Thus is language a tool for world-making, and in the case of this imperial rhetoric, of world mastery.

Judith Butler’s *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* is useful for understanding how the rhetoric of conquest is ritually repeated and translated into enacted conquest with a history. The rhetoric Willard and other New Women cyclists use to describe their movement through space upon the bicycle relies upon histories of empire and the civilizing mission to communicate their meaning most effectively. This speech-as-action “echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices*. It is not simply that the speech act takes place *within* a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice.”⁵⁵ In

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 51, emphasis hers.

this way, the rhetoric of discovery, which draws upon histories of conquest, cannot, when employed by these New Women cyclists, claim the innocence of “mere” metaphor.

Instead, these texts perform the agency of the New Woman cyclist in service of progress narratives grounded in the language of conquest: in a powerful imperial mobility.

Mobility as Liberation and/or Conquest

The controversy, the liberation, the whitenormative, hegemonic continuation of empire—all this is made possible because the New Woman mounts her bicycle in order to move through space. To theorize the significance of this figure’s movement in relation to imperial expansion, I turn to Amy Kaplan’s *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* and “Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s.” Kaplan reminds us that at the turn of the 20th century, Anglo-American expansion and imperialism was newly understood as “disembodied—that is, divorced from contiguous territorial expansion. In the same period, and often the same breath, masculine identity was reconceived as embodied—that is, cultivated in the muscular robust physique.”⁵⁶ The bicycle, then, would appear to be the ideal instrument for accessing a disembodied American imperialism while asserting one’s embodied masculinity, whiteness, rugged independence, and physical strength. Cyclists—even, or perhaps, especially New Women cyclists—become exemplary models of embodied masculinity, and are able to access and incorporate foreign space into “America’s ‘New Empire’ ...[which] defined itself ideologically against the territorially

⁵⁶ Amy Kaplan, “Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s,” *American Literary History* 2,4 (1990): 662.

based colonialism of the old European empires” by virtue of their (and the nation’s) commitment to advancing power not through the occupation of space, but through the “spatially unbounded quality” of tireless mobility.⁵⁷

Connecting tireless mobility to a form of American imperialism, Kaplan complicates the association between mobility and liberation. The New Woman's claim to liberatory narratives of feminist progress are deeply connected to her newfound movement upon the bicycle. But Kaplan considers the precarity of mobility as an agent of freedom. In order to retain the unbridled power of imperial expansion, mobility-as-liberation must, ironically, be contained and properly directed. For example, Kaplan demonstrates how anxiety around the New Woman's newfound freedom, mobility, and liberated sexuality is redirected in early film, “putting the white New Woman under control...by leashing her new mobility to an imperial order.”⁵⁸ The association of liberatory mobility with the white New Woman is not destroyed, but displaced from the demand of liberation from systems of gendered oppression, for example, to participating in the liberation of the conquered Other, whether through the mobility of missions, marriage, or rescue. Thus, Kaplan reveals, “freedom from domestic restraints could be satisfied and channeled through the routes of empire abroad,” preserving rather than challenging whitenormative, hegemonic, imperial power.⁵⁹ Here, the freedom of mobility is recognized as the freedom of the empire to impose its will upon the marginalized

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 662.

⁵⁸ Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 159.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

Other. Through this lens, mobility is divorced from a simple conquest/liberation binary. Mobility can work in tandem with hegemony, just as it can resist it.

Anachronistic Adventures

In considering the theoretical importance of movement for the New Woman cyclist, I also turn to studies of adventure travel and tourism. Like Kaplan, this scholarship demonstrates that the New Woman cyclist's movement—and not just her body and rhetoric—participates in narratives of whitenormative hegemony and imperial conquest. For example, in *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, Bruce Braun interrogates how modernity-as-loss is expressed in the movements of adventure tourists. Braun argues that the adventure traveler's mode of engagement with nature—and with race—as anachronistic and as a form of mourning affirms the traveler's existence within and commitment to a stabilized modernity.⁶⁰ Braun offers an analysis of a “masculinist discourse of adventure” in which adventure travelers adopt an ambivalent relationship with modernity.⁶¹ He might describe the ambivalence that adventure cyclists experience toward modernity as an example of how “adventure travel turns on, gives spatial expression to, a discourse of *modernity-as-loss*.”⁶² For the cyclists I study, urban modernity threatens to rob cyclists of their authenticity; the adventure into nature serves as its recovery mission. In this construction, modernity is

⁶⁰ Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 135, 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶² *Ibid.*

imagined as the enemy to the rawness of nature—indeed, “modernity itself is coded as unnatural.”⁶³

Figured as outside the stranglehold of modernity, this frontier wilderness might also be understood as anachronistic space.⁶⁴ Removed from modernity, Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian argue in *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*, that “The temporal teleology that underwrote visions of ‘backward’ cultures also invoked a resonant notion of racial inferiority as a justification for European imperial rule.”⁶⁵ Thus, the adventure traveler’s invasion of anachronistic space is simultaneously an exercise of her rejection of modernity through accessing some authentic connection with nature while her (racialized and gendered) conquest of nature promises the inevitable and necessary modernization of this anachronistic space.

The anachronistic space of the adventure cyclists’ wilderness allows the cyclist to assert ownership, thereby conquering—indeed domesticating—the space. The steady march of modernity, which will improve and/or subjugate anachronistic wilderness and the abject others who dwell there “is precisely what enables it to become a privileged landscape of mourning.”⁶⁶ Here, Braun suggests that “mourning is an irreducible element

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ It is useful to recall McClintock’s terminology here: the concepts of *anachronistic space* as that which “do[es] not inhabit history proper but exist[s] in a permanent anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire,” and *Panoptical time* to describe “the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility” (McClintock, 30, 37).

⁶⁵ Donald S. Moore, Anand Pandian, and Jake Kosek, “Introduction. The Cultural Politics of Race and Nature: Terrains of Power and Practice,” *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

⁶⁶ Braun 120.

of *being* modern, and that this is tied less to the actual destruction of the premodern than to the sense of *temporality* that defines and pervades modernity.”⁶⁷

Finally, we see that conquest—whether through discourses of adventures in nature or domestication of urban public space—is an expression of the essential modernity of the 1890s cyclist. Moreover, race, gender, class, and spatiotemporal constructions of nature inform the nuances of how, where, and why the 1890s cyclist *moves* through and asserts dominance over space. The New Woman cyclist’s civilizing project of “domesticating” public space, and the embodied masculinity of risk-taking wheelmen and adventure cyclists’ claims to conquered wilderness are both fundamentally examples of spatialized conquest, and both depend upon racialized, classed, and gendered discourses of modernity, nature, and adventure.

Aligned with but Against a Whitenormative History

I analyze how racialized, classed, sexed, and gendered formations contribute to the progress narratives accompanying bicycle travel. As a result, my analysis of the New Woman and her role in feminist history is in conversation with Amy L. Brandzel’s critique of the “unified feminist subject of the past *and* for the future...[as] whitenormative citizen woman.”⁶⁸ Brandzel’s call to feminist scholars in “Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women’s Studies,” to reject the “unitary feminist history that is centered around white experience”

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶⁸ Amy L. Brandzel, “Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women’s Studies,” *Feminist Studies* 37,3 (Fall 2011): 505.

challenges the core of my project.⁶⁹ I am, after all, examining the history of white women cyclists that has so often been framed as a progress narrative of white women's liberation-through-mobility. Brandzel's critique requires that I consider how my project participates within and resists further celebration of "redeployments of the past, [and of] the white feminist female-citizen-subject...as the protagonist of women's studies" scholarship and curriculum.⁷⁰

And yet, the history of the New Woman cyclist participates extraordinarily well in the whitenormative citizen woman model that Brandzel critiques. For my project to examine the New Woman cyclist of the 1890s, I cannot entirely de-center her from the history I construct. My inability to do so puts me at risk of engaging in "redeployments of the past, [through which] the white feminist female-citizen-subject lives on as the protagonist of women's studies."⁷¹ Indeed, drawing on a rich tradition of feminist anti-imperial scholarship, Brandzel warns of the way that feminist histories become "complicit with US empire-building...through rehearsing the narratives of (white women's) citizenship."⁷²

Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar's classic "Challenging Imperial Feminism" borrows critiques from Angela Davis about the early white women's movement's complicity with racism, and calls for "true feminist theory and practice" to engage critically with imperialism and challenge racism, "elements which the current women's

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 507.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

movement significantly lacks, but which are intrinsic to Black feminism.”⁷³ Their suggestion that traditional, white feminist politics has been (and continues to be) complicit with racist and imperialist logics of oppression was controversial, but, according to Antoinette Burton, has since gained a significant following.⁷⁴ Feminist histories, such as Bederman, Newman, McClintock, and Kaplan’s, for example, linking racist discourses of evolution to empire and white women’s struggle for citizenship, are perhaps a response to this turn. And yet, Burton reminds us that “the chief purpose of Amos and Parmar’s 1984 essay was not to clear the way for a more politically accountable historiography of Euro-American women’s movements, but rather to make space for histories of black women, women of colour, and by extension, anti-colonial and nationalist women.”⁷⁵

This is, of course, the de-centering call that Brandzel echoes; the call which I can only partially answer, as my project responds to the turn in feminist studies to critically engage with white feminism’s complicity in histories of racism and empire, without, however, fully disengaging from the subject of white women’s history. Thus, in order to heed Brandzel’s warning, my project focuses on this problematic dynamic, and *not* on the New Woman’s claims to citizenship within a progress narrative. In examining the language and movements of several New Woman cyclists, I turn attention away from a progress narrative featuring the rights claims of citizens, and toward an analysis of

⁷³ Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, “Challenging Imperial Feminism” *Feminist Review* No 17 (July 1984): 5, 17.

⁷⁴ Antoinette Burton, “Some Trajectories of ‘Feminism’ and ‘Imperialism,’” *Gender & History*, 10,3, (1998): 560.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 562.

narratives of conquest, problematizing the chronology of feminist progress. While I demonstrate how the white New Woman's supposed liberation largely works to protect whiteness and hegemonic power, I also draw attention to Other(ed) New Women who find pleasure in ordinary moments of profound resistance to the status quo.

Methods

My methods blend a discourse analysis of primary sources, a queer approach to archival research, and fieldwork. My project treats queerness as an approach—as a methodology and interpretive strategy—rather than an identity. Here, I define queer theory as that which questions the production of knowledge and its relationship to power, resists bounded definitions of identity and normativity, and is committed to openness and political possibility. Although the New Woman cyclist is an unlikely object for queer analysis, approaching cycling history archives using queer archival methodologies has proved productive and revelatory. A recent issue of *Radical History Review* focusing on the queer archive urged scholars to “query what are sustained as the proper objects and subjects of the queer archive.”⁷⁶ This ongoing conversation about the possibilities and limits of what “counts” within the queer archive can be summarized by Kadji Amin’s “Against Queer Objects,” which asks: “why are we under the impression that queer scholarship should have queer objects; and, what, if not its objects, can be taken to characterize queer inquiry?”⁷⁷ Addressing the unlikely object of early cycling tourism I

⁷⁶ Daniel Marshall, Kevin P. Murphy, and Zeb Tortorici, “Editor’s Introduction, Queering Archives: Historical Unravelings,” *Radical History Review* 2014, 120 (Fall 2014): 4.

⁷⁷ Kadji Amin, “Against Queer Objects,” *Feminist Formations* 28,2 (2016): 101.

utilize queer theory as a methodological approach that allows me to explore my topic outside of traditional modes of knowledge production, making new interventions into the field possible.

Archives and Primary Sources

Unpublished and underutilized original sources in the archival collections housed at the University of Warwick and the Frances Willard House Museum & Archives contribute substantially to my research. In particular, one woman's cycling diary located at the University of Warwick records her nearly daily bicycle trips through Leeds and the surrounding countryside from 1893 - 1896. This diary is the focus of chapter one and provides me with evidence of not just a written record, but also of *movement*. I read the personal papers and diaries held within these collections through the lenses of interdisciplinary feminist, queer, and critical race scholarship. These records are not static; the bicycle performs a dynamic mobility that transcends the page. Thus, I argue, the information offered in cycling archives cannot simply be read, but, rather, experienced.

In addition, several published primary sources, including Frances Willard's book *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*; Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell's cycling travelogue, *To Gipsyland*; newspaper accounts about Annie Kopchovsky, the first woman to cycle around the world; and newspaper accounts about Kittie Knox, a biracial cyclist resisting the 1894 League of American Wheelman color bar provide important touchstones for my research. These authors and/or subjects of cycling history offer important case studies through which to trace the figure of the New

Woman cyclist. In my reading of these cases, I look specifically at how pleasure and harm are woven into the narratives that surround the New Woman, highlighting her experiences of liberation and/or conquest. Additionally, these archives provide me with evidence of the pleasures and politics of the New Woman cyclist's movement through space.

Field Work

Invested in this approach, I indulge in a “tactile historiography” to interrogate the temporal and spatial boundaries of bicycle travel.⁷⁸ I therefore utilize intersubjective and feminist approaches to fieldwork in order to analyze the first-person narratives of women cycle tourists alongside cycling tours of my own. In their book *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett define intersubjective methodology as that in which “the analyst...must think him- or herself into the mindset of another person and use the personal narrative evidence to develop a facility in understanding how the narrator sees the world.”⁷⁹ This concept asserts that “attention to self-positioning can enrich an analysis...and indeed becomes part of the knowledge produced through intersubjective research.”⁸⁰ The perspective of personal narrative researchers is significant and should be fully considered when offering or rejecting an interpretation. I engage in this research intersubjectively, constructing

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 109.

⁷⁹ Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 96.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

maps of New Women cyclists, and traveling along their routes to enhance my original source research with embodied travel. I thereby re-create the material and tactile experiences of these New Women cyclists to better understand their worlds.

A queer approach to bicycle archives allows me to explore how embodied movement held within cycling records has the potential to disrupt linear chronology, or the “straightness” of time, opening space for relationally produced historical knowledge that may allow for new world-making. I am specifically concerned with how a queer approach to the archive allows me to situate my subjective attachment to bicycle tourism within the inextricably linked desires for “love and knowledge.”⁸¹ In *How Soon Is Now?*, Carolyn Dinshaw explains the fundamental difference between amateur and expert knowledge: “In fact, not ‘scientific’ detachment but constant *attachment* to the object of attention characterizes amateurism.”⁸² Desire, attachment, even love forms the basis for amateur knowledge production. It is possible to concede, even, that this “[a]mateurism...is itself a bit queer, defined by attachment in a detached world.”⁸³

I must, therefore, acknowledge that my interest in bicycle tourism is not unattached. My interest in this history is personal, subjective, and embodied. My love affair with the bicycle began in 2005 out of necessity, my only form of transportation. This once-grudgingly assumed “only” form of transportation quickly became my favorite form of transportation, aligning my love of the outdoors, movement, and environmental

⁸¹ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), xiv.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 31.

justice with one another as I committed to living life without a car. But as I began to utilize my bicycle not just for daily commuting, but as a vehicle for leisure, travel, and long-distance touring, my thoughts turned toward questions of mobility and its multiple associations with liberation, conquest, pleasure, and harm.

The academic labor of this project is an intimate one—a queer labor “operating outside of regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality.”⁸⁴ And as I begin to explore the history of the New Woman cyclist anachronistically, I attach myself to my object of study in, to use Valerie Rohy’s words, “a critical intimacy with the past.”⁸⁵ Thus, my research joins original source research with embodied travel to explore how these bodies—mine and those of the past—move through the world as cyclists and as women.

Chapter Breakdown

To begin this interdisciplinary critique of the New Woman cyclist’s pleasures and harms, I begin with a discussion of feminist and queer approaches to archival reading practices. In chapter one, I offer a feminist intersubjective analysis of my own bicycle travel alongside a lady cyclist from Leeds, England based on the records she kept in her diary between 1893-1896. I read the diary and historical context surrounding it against the grain to reveal an identity for the diarist that contradicts heteropatriarchal romance narratives in the historical archive. I then visualize recent maps of my own cycle tours

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁵ Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 131.

alongside newly constructed maps based on the records she kept in her diary to explore the intimate embodiment and non-linearity of bicycle tourism, pushing the limits of the “queer object.”

In chapters two and three, I shift to an analysis of how the language of conquest and imperialism is embedded in the white New Woman cyclists’ pleasures and politics. Chapter two looks to Frances Willard’s instructional guide, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (1895) to examine the relationship between the bicycle, the woman’s movement, and (queer) possibilities of revolution and/or conquest. Focusing specifically on the language used in Willard’s text, I take my cues from Judith Butler to argue that Willard’s speech acts upon her audience; her words are live and directly impact the political landscape of the New Woman. I ask: what (queer) revolution is possible in Willard’s imagined good society? What empire does the bicycle help her to imagine?

Again testing the limits of queer possibility, I offer a close reading of Elizabeth Robins Pennell’s *To Gipsyland* (1893) in chapter three. Here, I investigate the potentiality of her attachment to the Romany people, language, and culture to offer queer forms of knowledge production. In conversation with Carolyn Dinshaw, Anne McClintock, and Edward Said, I consider how, despite Pennell’s claims to unconventionality, her investments in white supremacy and Orientalist logics of race, gender, and sexuality thwart the possibilities of queer amateurism. Moreover, I argue that rather than operate as an agent of queer knowledge production, Pennell’s cycling adventure indulges in the violence of imperialist nostalgia to advance yet another narrative of modernity and

empire. In this way, Pennell's *To Gipsyland* serves as an example of how even (or perhaps especially) the self-described unconventional white woman on an unconventional cycling journey fails—despite her desire for intimacy and attachment to Othered people—to meaningfully upend hegemonic power and white supremacy.

Chapter four makes a departure from analyses of conquest-as-harm to instead imagine how the New Woman cyclist might alternatively harm structures of oppression. Here, I consider the harmlessness of cycling's pleasures, arguing that pleasure is essential in resisting hegemony. Drawing on the stories of cyclists Kittie Knox and Annie Kopchovsky I borrow from Tera Hunter, Robin D. G. Kelley, Anne McClintock, and Ellen Gruber Garvey to highlight how pleasure, performance, and spectacle serve to offer moments of resistance. Finally, I engage with Donna Haraway's cyborg feminism to suggest that the New Woman cyborg-cyclist's pleasure is fundamentally about her survival, and is therefore decidedly—and productively—*harmful* to hegemonic whiteness, empire, and heteronormativity. Finally, I conclude that there is no pure liberation, no harmless pleasures; but this should not preclude the possibility of non-linear and anti-racist feminist resistance.

CHAPTER 1

READING SMART:

QUEERING AND CONTEXTUALIZING A CYCLING DIARY

On June 29, 2015, I came across the cycling diary of a young woman writing in the 1890s. “Came across” is perhaps the wrong way to describe my very deliberate and carefully planned visit to the National Cycle Archive at the University of Warwick’s Modern Records Centre.⁸⁶ Months before my visit, I searched the archive’s online catalogue, looking for journals and diaries written by cyclists during the bicycle boom of the 1890s. The “Commonplace book and diary,” which contains a small collection of stories and poems attributed to Emily Sophia Coddington, but is largely comprised of an anonymous “cycling diary of a young girl,” quickly rose to the top of my list.⁸⁷ So, my introduction to this particular cycling diary was not a happy accident, but more of a blind date: our face-to-face meeting had been arranged, but I had no idea what our future might be.

That future is still unfolding; and it brings to light not only new possibilities for how we construct the history of cycling in the 1890s, but also demonstrates the intersubjective nature of personal narrative research. In the historical detective story that follows, I identify the anonymous diarist as a twenty-four-year-old woman named Ada

⁸⁶ The National Cycle Archive housed in the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick is the largest collection of bicycle records to date, particularly pertaining to British cycling history and dating from the early days of the bicycle boom.

⁸⁷ National Cycle Archive, “Emily Sophia Coddington: Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850] – 1896,” Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, <http://mrccatalogue.warwick.ac.uk/records/NCA/1/9>.

Florence Smart.⁸⁸ I engage in a queer approach to the archive and employ feminist methods of reading against the grain to argue that Ada’s identity has long been obscured because of heteropatriarchal methods of reading and producing knowledge. Thus, this chapter has two objectives: (1) to explore the research and reading practices of personal narrative sources, and (2) to offer my own interpretation of the “Commonplace book and diary” and its contribution to the history of cycling and feminist knowledge production. Such an interpretation, especially one based on personal narrative evidence, requires a careful consideration of context, and of the intersubjective relationship between researcher and subject.

The historical context for the portion of the “Commonplace book and diary” that concerns my topic, the cycling diary of a young woman written between 1893 and 1896 in England, is bound to the history of the 1890s bicycle boom. As I outline in the introduction to this dissertation, the bicycle boom was a short-lived cultural phenomenon in which excitement for the bicycle proliferated in U.S. and European urban streets, advertisements, and the popular imagination, symbolizing a new kind of mobility for a modernizing globe. In particular, the bicycle was a potent symbol of the modern, New Woman, as it offered a real and symbolic promise of mobility to women. This dissertation investigates the multiple possibilities for harm and pleasure committed and enjoyed by the New Woman cyclist of the 1890s. In subsequent chapters, I argue that the bicycle’s promise of “harmless pleasure”—of temperate liberation and adventurous

⁸⁸ Throughout this text, I will use “Ada” when referring to Ada Florence Smart to reduce possible confusion in switching between her maiden name, Matthews, and her married name, Smart. Moving from one patriarchal family system to another, Ada’s first name remains constant.

mobility for the New Woman—is hardly separate from hegemonic whiteness, narratives of conquest, and nostalgic imperialism, while the final chapter acknowledges the possibilities for the New Woman to resist and take pleasure in the potential harm she may bring upon such oppressive structures.

But before I examine the language, travels, and performances of some of these women cyclists, I'd like to take a moment to consider the harms and pleasures of research methods and to examine how the New Woman cyclist is capable of confounding oppressive narratives (in this case retroactively imposed by the historical record). Thus, this chapter considers the harm that heteropatriarchal lenses can do specifically to the way historical figures are remembered. Rather than reproduce this harm, my love affair with Ada is decidedly queer. I seek to apply a feminist and queer approach to my archival reading practices, taking great pleasure in the intersubjective crossings of my path with that of my research subject. Such pleasure defies the rules of objectivity and dispassionate distancing; but I argue that it is only by becoming queerly intimate with our subjects and subjectivities that we can uncover an anti-heteropatriarchal past and future for historical figures.

I therefore turn to queer and feminist scholarship to read this archive as a personal narrative. With Kadji Amin and Gayatri Gopinath I wonder what “can be taken to characterize queer inquiry” or what “counts” as belonging to the queer archive?⁸⁹ I propose that, when read through the lens of queer theory and against the grain of heteropatriarchal reading practices, this anonymous cycling diary is given new meaning.

⁸⁹ Kadji Amin, “Against Queer Objects,” *Feminist Formations* 28,2 (2016): 101.

To hail this young woman and reinscribe her past in the service of the future of cycling history, I engage with Carolyn Dinshaw and Valery Rohy to explore the temporal and spatial limits of the “queer object.” My research and reading practices are further guided by Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett’s *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History* and Paul John Eakin’s *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. These texts offer a useful framework for analyzing the identity of my subject as deeply relational and embodied. In fact, a relational analysis of my subject is what ultimately requires that I acknowledge my own positionality to interpret the meaning of the “Commonplace book and diary” and interpellate a new future for its author, translating her personal text into an embodied identity and spatially dynamic map of her world. As we shall see, Ada Florence Smart was presented as impossible to know outside of a heteropatriarchal romance narrative, until, guided by a feminist and queer interpretive framework, I reinvestigated her history as embodied, relationally determined, and spatially constructed.

Reading Queerly

Bicycle travel is not, perhaps, an obvious topic for queer archival scholarship. But queer scholars have recently debated what constitutes the archive, and what constitutes queerness. In a recent special issue of *Radical History Review* on queering archives, Ann Cvetkovich suggests that: “The archival turn [in queer studies] ultimately requires the

thorough rethinking of what counts as knowledge and method.”⁹⁰ While many poststructuralists, most notably Foucault and Derrida, have long interrogated the knowledge produced within the “archive’s normative, normalizing power,” as “less depositories of documents than themselves historical agents” with the power to render subjects visible or invisible, buried or resurrected, the more recent attention within queer studies on the archival turn expands upon the destabilization of the archive.⁹¹ Within the context of this project, the definition of queerness is not limited to queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender bodies and subjects, but rather describes a theoretical and methodological approach to non-normativity and nonlinearity. Like Gayatri Gopinath, I use “queer” to “refer to a range of dissident and non-heteronormative practices and desires that may very well be incommensurate with the identity categories of ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian.’”⁹²

Gopinath locates the queer “impossible” subject in the “margins of what are considered legitimate sites of resistance or the ‘proper objects’ of scholarly inquiry.”⁹³ She understands the theoretical and methodological capacity of queerness as “an alternative hermeneutic, [and as] the particular interpretative strategies that are available to those who are deemed ‘impossible’ within hegemonic nationalist and diasporic discourses.”⁹⁴ Adopting the notion of queerness as an approach—as a methodology and

⁹⁰ Anjali Arondekar, Ann Cvetkovich, Christina D. Hanhardt, Regina Kunzel, Tavia Nyong’o, Juana María Rodríguez, and Susan Stryker, “Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Radical History Review* 122 (May 2015): 228.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁹² Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 11.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

interpretative strategy—it becomes possible to see the bicycle tourist as an impossible subject—fundamentally mobile and anachronistic, out of time and out of place—and the bicycle touring archive as that which can be queered.

My queer approach to this archive and Ada’s historiography demonstrates the ways in which even “unlikely objects” of queer study have the potential to disrupt linear chronology, or the “straightness” of time, opening space for an anachronistic production of historical knowledge that may allow for new world-making. Linking the multiplicity of queer time(s) to a study of history, Valery Rohy finds that queer time “reminds us that history is always ahistorical, progress is inextricable from backwardness, and that the time lines of the past live on in today’s difficult conversations.”⁹⁵ For Rohy, this queer time helps to explain and justify an anachronistic approach to history. Anachronism offers itself to me as a productive site for imagined alternatives and allows for an exploration of cross-temporal and intersubjective connections, in this case the knowledge produced about Ada’s history by examining the relations between her path and my own.

Whether invested in imagining alternative worlds and new possibilities, or resisting a stifling, heteronormative status quo, a queer, anachronistic, and relational approach to the archive and to time has proven useful. Carolyn Dinshaw argues that queer time plays an important role in the politics of new futures, as “participating in nonmodern ways of apprehending time[] can help us to contemplate different ways of

⁹⁵ Valerie Rohy, *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), xvi.

being, knowing, and world making.”⁹⁶ This trifecta of political possibilities—different ways of being, knowing, and world-making—born through a queer reading of the archive or history is a familiar set of political objectives for queer theorists interested in challenging a normative present with queer possibilities for a remade future. New world-making across temporalities gives life to another kind of political project: rejecting heteropatriarchal constructs and exploring collectivity and relational histories across time and space.

Personal Narrative Research

In addition to a queer approach to the archive, my project engages with feminist approaches to personal narrative research.⁹⁷ In the foundational collection, *Interpreting Women’s Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives* edited by the Personal Narratives Group, “the recovery and interpretation of women’s lives” due to a rigorous engagement with feminist personal narrative research are offered as among the “central

⁹⁶ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 24.

⁹⁷ In what follows, I outline a brief account of feminist personal narrative research. The emphasis on investigating the full context of the narrator, and the utility of intersubjective methodology is most relevant to my project. Although I do not elaborate on it here, the connection between feminist personal narrative research and queer and feminist approaches to narrative theory and narratology is worth pursuing in future work. For an example of this approach, see Robyn Warhol and Susan S. Lanser (eds), *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2015). While their focus is more broadly on a variety of narrative texts (not exclusively personal narratives), Robyn Warhol and Susan S. Lanser argue that “narratives are critical to constructing, maintaining, interpreting, exposing and dismantling the social systems, cultural practices, and individual lives that shape and are shaped by performative acts. Feminist and queer narrative theorists identify and demystify the workings of those norms in and through narrative, and expose the dominant stories keeping the binaries in place...The centrality of narrative in shaping heteronormativity and with it queer subjectivity has been acknowledged by virtually every major queer theorist from Roland Barthes to Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler to Lee Edelman” (Warhol and Lanser 7-8). This perspective is useful to recall as I demonstrate later in this chapter that Ada’s narrative had been bound by heteropatriarchal assumptions about her identity.

concerns of feminist scholarship.”⁹⁸ Making space for women’s stories can have the effect of changing the way we understand individual women’s lives and alters the historical record. According to the Personal Narrative Group, feminist personal narrative research attends to “the interpersonal relationships within which the life story emerges,” situates the narrator’s life within a historically specific moment, considers the “frameworks of meaning” employed by the narrator, and takes into consideration how “the interpreter’s own context shapes both the formation and the interpretation of a personal narrative.”⁹⁹ Encompassing all of the above, a full examination of *context* is crucial to feminist approaches to personal narrative. Indeed, Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett argue that “*analyzing personal narrative evidence demands attention to historical contextualization.*”¹⁰⁰ The emphasis on understanding context runs through the past thirty years of feminist personal narrative scholarship.¹⁰¹ In the more recent *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, Jo Woodiwiss describes the method and importance of amassing essential context about our research subjects and their stories:

Asking questions enables us to look beyond hegemonic stories and currently circulating narrative frameworks to explore the background and context to those stories and to open up other possibilities for women’s stories and women’s storytelling—multiple stories that not only reflect the complex, nuanced and intersecting contexts of women’s lives but which do not constrain their

⁹⁸ The Personal Narrative Group (eds), *Interpreting Women’s Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Mary Jo Maynes, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Barbara Laslett, *Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), 44, emphasis theirs.

¹⁰¹ See *Interpreting Women’s Lives* and *Feminist Narrative Research* for book-end examples of the continued centrality of context to conducting rigorous personal narrative research.

possibilities and which might also suggest new opportunities and challenges for further research on women's lives.¹⁰²

Asking questions that require a deep understanding of women's contexts has big implications for how we conduct personal narrative research and how we understand women's history in general. Situating our subjects within a historically contextualized place and time is, thus, critical for feminist personal narrative research and for telling the stories of women as expansively as possible.

But in addition to the importance of historical context, the *type* of personal narrative being analyzed is another aspect of context-building that matters deeply. Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett call attention to the specific limitations and expectations present within each genre of personal narrative text. For example, "diaries must recognize their rootedness in specific, and generally very limited social milieus and phases of the life cycle as well as the changing conventions that affected what they were expected to reveal and conceal."¹⁰³ The "Commonplace book and diary" likely resembles in form, content, and scope other diaries written by young American and European women in the late 19th century. In fact, as we shall see in following sections, the particular structure and content of the "Commonplace book and diary" behaves as a kind of bridge between two generic conventions: it is reminiscent of 18th century diaries in its attention to reporting on daily movements and the weather, and yet the diary also conforms to the expectations

¹⁰² Jo Woodiwiss, "Challenges for Feminist Research: Contested Stories, Dominant Narratives and Narrative Frameworks," *Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, eds Jo Woodiwiss, Kate Smith, and Kelly Lockwood, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 15.

¹⁰³ Maynes et al. 92.

of a 19th century diary, complete with intimate confessions and private observations.¹⁰⁴ For example, this entry from October 23, 1894 records the details of Ada's movement combined with an account of her personal frustrations: "Went by myself, started from Horse Shoes 12-[0]5 arrived Dynley 12-25 started back 12-40 arrived H. Shoes 1-[0]5—very good time but nobody believes it, so what is the good of talking."¹⁰⁵ Though brief, this passage reveals more about the diarist's subjectivity and community than it would have had it included only the times it took her to ride between her destinations.

Indeed, the promise of intimacy is part of what makes personal narrative evidence so powerful and unique. And yet, it is only powerful if allowed to be unique. Access to an intimate record of an unknown person's life carries serious risk of misinterpretation and false generalizability. Just like historical context is vital to a full interpretation of personal narrative sources, so are the personal histories of the narrators. For example, it is not inconsequential that the diary belonged to a woman. In conducting research on early women cyclists, diaries like this become one of the only ways I can access women's voices, offering me "the possibility at getting at the subjectivity and agency of an otherwise obscure woman."¹⁰⁶ Speaking of the potential merits of the "Commonplace book and diary," bicycle historian Nicholas Oddy allows that the diary offers "insight into how a female rider used her machine in the mid 1890s."¹⁰⁷ However, this insight is

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰⁵ "Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896," Reference Number MSS.328/N28/8/1, National Cycle Archive, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Oct. 23 1894.

¹⁰⁶ Maynes et al., 91.

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Oddy, "Rides on My Safety: The Diary of Emily Sophia Coddington," *Cycle History 20: the proceedings of the 20th International Cycle History Conference* (2010), 30.

necessarily limited, as he cautions: “In fact, the whole diary stands as an example of the difficulty of generalising...The problem is that any personal written record of this kind is exceptional; their rarity today is testament to the fact that their writers were few, but they get us closer to experiencing the wider context of cycling at the time of their writing than probably any other source.”¹⁰⁸ Here, Oddy recognizes the importance of the diary as a way to learn about women cyclists in the 1890s—especially because these voices are so rare; but in interpreting this source, we must remember the “uncommonness” of this “commonplace” document so that we can avoid the temptation of forcing her story to speak for others.

Julia Swindells also urges feminist scholars to appreciate the specificity of their research subjects.¹⁰⁹ In her essay “Liberating the Subject? Autobiography and Women’s History: A Reading of the Diaries of Hannah Cullwick,” Swindells cautions researchers against reading “liberation” into the histories of the women we study “as part of a project to liberate ourselves as women subjects.”¹¹⁰ To avoid this, “we should be asking questions about specific histories, specific texts.”¹¹¹ Shula Marks, in “The Context of Personal Narrative: Reflections on *Not Either an Experimental Doll*,” agrees that the specific context of the narrator is of utmost importance, as is the context and subjectivity of the interpreter. Marks writes about the value of personal narrative sources, in her case

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 33, emphasis his.

¹⁰⁹ Julia Swindells, “Liberating the Subject? Autobiography and ‘Women’s History’: A Reading of *The Diaries of Hannah Cullwick*,” *Interpreting Women’s Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives*, ed. The Personal Narrative Group, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 34.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

letters, that “provide an entry into a more intimate and personal world where women’s voices...are heard.”¹¹² But, she warns, “to contextualize [the letters] I had to find their authors,” a journey that led Marks to examine not only the historical and personal contexts of her subjects, but her own as well.¹¹³ This is an example of the role that intersubjective research plays in feminist approaches to personal narrative evidence.

Unlike other traditions of narrative theory, feminist personal narrative research highlights the importance of both the narrator’s and the interpreter’s “frame of reference” or subjectivities.¹¹⁴ This is part of the work of examining the full complexity and dynamism of the narrator’s context. Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett describe intersubjective methodology as the analyst’s practice of extending themselves “into the mindset of another person and use the personal narrative evidence to develop a facility in understanding how the narrator sees the world.”¹¹⁵ It is therefore imperative that I pause for a moment to introduce myself and acknowledge the ways in which my own positionality influences how I interpret the “Commonplace book and diary” and my relationship with its author.

Like the diarist, I am a white woman, a cyclist, and married to another cyclist. Also like Ada, most of my cycling is casual, daily, ordinary, and for pleasure. I ride alone, with my partner, and sometimes in larger groups. Like Ada, my cycling hobby is

¹¹² Shula Marks, “The Context of Personal Narrative: Reflections on *Not Either an Experimental Doll*,” *Interpreting Women’s Lives*, ed. The Personal Narrative Group, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1989), 41.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁴ The Personal Narratives Group 19.

¹¹⁵ Maynes et al. 96.

not self-consciously “political” except for in all the ways that it of course is—signally my race, class, and geographical privileges; my able-bodiedness; hinting at my environmental commitment to avoid transportation that relies on fossil fuels; making a statement—even if less dramatic today than one hundred years ago—about my mobility and independence as a woman traveling alone and experiencing pleasure. Occasionally I (and she) take longer, leisurely tours through the countryside where we encounter spectacular landscapes and bad weather. My affair with Ada’s diary began in the middle of such a tour, and my journey certainly influenced the way I read about her(s). My task, now, is to understand as best I can the full subjectivity of the diarist—a task that will require me to draw upon a feminist approach to personal narratives and a queer approach to the archive, as I read against the grain, against linear time, and consider the ways in which our paths cross.

Getting it Straight

Let me begin this task by disclosing all that I knew before showing up for my blind date with the “Commonplace book and diary.” Information posted online in the Modern Records Centre’s catalogue states: “The volume starts as the commonplace book of Emily Sophia Coddington, the entries probably being made about 1850 or a little later. The latter part of the volume is the cycling diary of a young girl, perhaps a Coddington or a daughter of ESC. She may have been the future wife of G. Herbert Stancer, later

secretary of the Cyclists' Touring Club."¹¹⁶ Another short description offers the additional detail that the first part of the volume "contained poems entered by friends" of Emily Sophia Coddington, while the cycling diary records an unknown woman's bicycle rides between 1893 and 1896.¹¹⁷ This description was useful to me as I attempted to locate examples of cycling diaries written during a particular historical period, the 1890s. The parameters of my search and the language with which the description for the "Commonplace book and diary" is written both reveal the importance of historical context to attaching meaning to this volume. Of course, there could certainly be merit and pleasure found in reading personal narrative documents for their own sake, but as Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett articulate, "their analytic value rests on their ability to reveal something new about a social position defined by and of interest to the analyst but more legible through an insider's view."¹¹⁸ My decision to travel to the National Cycle Archive to search for cycling diaries written in the 1890s was motivated by the belief that analyzing whatever personal narratives I discovered within the archive would enrich my understanding of the historical landscape I study. These documents, as forms of historical evidence, would interact with and become part of the historical context that my project about bicycle travel in the 1890s demands; and yet, for these documents to perform such a task, they too would require thorough contextualization.

¹¹⁶ National Cycle Archive, "Commonplace book of Emily Sophia Coddington, and later cycling diary," Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, <http://web.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/ead/328n28.htm>

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Maynes et al. 6.

Building a Story (or “Bad History”)

My search for the identity of the diarist began with a letter written in 1982 that accompanies the diary in the archive.¹¹⁹ Also intent on discovering the identity of the diarist, the author of the 1982 letter turns to the familiar heterosexual romance narrative for answers. The letter ascribes value to the diary due to the apparent close relationship between the diarist and her frequently mentioned riding companion, “G.H.S.,” sometimes called “Herbert.” For those with knowledge of English cycling history, the initials G.H.S. are familiar as George Herbert Stancer, a long-time cyclist and secretary of the prominent Cyclists’ Touring Club in the early 20th century, as stated in the National Cycle Archive’s catalogue.¹²⁰ The letter assumes (and desperately hopes) that G.H.S. can be proven to be Stancer. But before waiting for evidence, the letter’s author has already woven together a romance narrative featuring Stancer and the diarist as his future wife:

I imagine this girl of 1893 about 20 years, certainly robust + probably fairly attractive, but above all a sportive type full of enthusiasm...I would think that she was much more outward going than the average girl of the period—see her going out unescorted and in the moonlight too...I will guess that this girl attended some social gathering—a dance or a cycling club dinner—prior to June 1893 and there she singled out a fellow named Herbert who was very much a cyclist. She realised that she would not get very far with him until she could too ride a bike which art she learned...Herbert seems to have been a fast worker for they had only just got back to Leeds when with hardly time to ask her Mum + Dad they were off next day 19th August on a fortnight’s tour Leeds to Luton & back. Surely by that time our girl was wearing an engagement ring?¹²¹

¹¹⁹ The author of this letter is unknown. The signature is indecipherable and there is no record I could find that indicates the identity of the letter-writer.

¹²⁰ Oddy 29; National Cycle Archive, “Commonplace book of Emily Sophia Coddington, and later cycling diary.”

¹²¹ “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896,” Reference Number MSS.328/N28/8/1, National Cycle Archive, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Covering Letter.

The remainder of the letter is focused almost exclusively on speculations about G.H.S.: his racing history, his career, his introduction to the in-laws. With just enough reference to the text of the diary to seem grounded in fact, the author of this letter easily and eagerly fills in the missing information to create a familiar, heteronormative romance narrative. For the letter writer, the identity of this woman cyclist is only made legible through an imagined heteropatriarchal fantasy.

Indeed, this fantasy is compelling! Currently housed in the largest bicycle archive in the world, the diary's transactional life is closely bound to its perceived worth as a document containing possible evidence of the early life of G.H. Stancer. According to Oddy, the author of the 1982 letter likely gave the diary to Marion James and her husband Len, collectors of "Stancer memorabilia," urging further research and confirmation of her suspicions.¹²² Oddy traces the next transaction to the Phillips Auction in 2000, at which the diary was sold to the National Cycle Archive.¹²³ And, if we recall the short description offered on the National Cycle Archive's catalogue, a possible connection to Stancer is today one of the few pieces of information about the diarist that is offered: "She may have been the future wife of G. Herbert Stancer," "This girl may have married G. Herbert Stancer," and "Her frequent companion, Herbert and GHS, is perhaps George Herbert Stancer."¹²⁴ Even Oddy admits in an endnote to his article,

¹²² Oddy 29.

¹²³ *Ibid.* Despite Oddy's excellent detective work from 1982 to the present, the diary appears to have no "prior history" (29).

¹²⁴ National Cycle Archive, "Commonplace book of Emily Sophia Coddington, and later cycling diary," and National Cycle Archive, "Coddington; Emily Sophia (fl 1850); Commonplace book writer," Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, <http://mrc-catalogue.warwick.ac.uk/names/DS/UK/2027>.

“Rides on my Safety: The Diary of Emily Sophia Coddington,” that he happily accepted the potential connection between the diarist and G.H. Stancer when he wrote the diary’s catalogue entry for the Phillips Auction sale.¹²⁵

The legacy of this assumption, initially put to writing by the romantic fantasies of the author of the 1982 letter, and tentatively adopted by the Modern Records Centre archivists, found its way into the endnote of a recently published book, *The Bicycle: Towards a Global History*, by Paul Smethurst. In a chapter about the bicycle’s role in transforming gender relations within the public sphere, Smethurst suggests that: “For most women, bicycle mobility was an opportunity to find a marriage partner, rather than, or in addition to, a passport to greater independence and freedom from social constraints.”¹²⁶ While this statement may have merit, Smethurst offers the “Commonplace book and diary” as his evidence, closely echoing the fantasies and assumptions offered in the 1982 letter. His endnote reads:

See for example, ‘Common place book and diary of Emily Sophia Coddington’. National Cycling Archives, University of Warwick (MSS 328/N28). The cycling diary of a young woman who was a close acquaintance and probably the future wife of G. Herbert Stancer, later secretary to the Cyclists’ Touring Club. Her diary lists a series of rides, often unaccompanied, between 1893 and 1896. In 1895, she rode a total of 1,458.5 miles. Although sometimes meeting with the Coventry Cycling Club, many of her rides were solo from her home in the northern suburbs of Leeds. Probably about 20 years old, she seems to have been independent enough to ride out in the moonlight alone and attend Club meetings at pubs. Many of her entries record meetings with ‘GHS’ and other men.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Oddy 33. Despite this admission, Oddy is clear throughout his article that G.H.S. cannot, after all, be George Herbert Stancer.

¹²⁶ Paul Smethurst, *The Bicycle—Towards a Global History*, (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 95.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

When the Stancer romance is repeated often enough, even with the obligatory preface of “probably,” “perhaps,” and “may have been,” it amasses a certain legitimacy, and becomes easy to accept. Moreover, Woodiwiss warns that “the telling of one story informs the telling of others: being able to tell one story enables or prohibits the telling of another, and being excluded from one story might also enable or prohibit the telling of others.”¹²⁸ In other words, telling the diarist’s story in terms of her possible courtship with G.H.S. gave evidence to support Smethurst’s story, while simultaneously foreclosing other potential stories about women cyclists in the 1890s. Such foreclosures serve to reinforce dominant—in this case heteropatriarchal—narratives. Oddy’s article critiques the letter-writer’s imagined identity for the diarist and highlights the inadequacy of allowing guesses to become analysis, calling the courtship narrative “the stuff of bad history in the making.”¹²⁹ Acknowledging the temptation to create a narrative out of traces, Oddy reminds us that “None of this can be established through the content, although it can be easily read into it.”¹³⁰

Reading Practices: Unknowability and Positionality

To properly heed Oddy’s warning, we must think carefully about our reading practices. What do we “read into” the narratives we encounter? It is here that the limitations of knowability and the particular positionality of researchers must be closely examined. Paul John Eakin suggests that “We never really know why writers write what

¹²⁸ Woodiwiss 24.

¹²⁹ Oddy 30.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

they write, and this very unknowability can make any inquiry into an author's intentions seem fruitless if not impertinent."¹³¹ Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett concur that there will always be "specific gaps in 'knowing,'" which makes definitive interpretation impossible; rather, personal narrative sources "leave themselves open to a variety of interpretations."¹³² To make sense of personal narrative sources, the researcher must acknowledge moments of unknowability, and rather than puzzle over an author's mysterious intentions, think about their own. Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett usefully highlight that "attention to self-positioning can enrich an analysis...and indeed becomes part of the knowledge produced through intersubjective research."¹³³ In this way, the positionality of personal narrative researchers must be fully considered when offering or rejecting an interpretation because of how significantly it can contribute to our practices of reading and meaning-making.

We have seen this already with the 1982 covering letter. The letter articulates an imagined identity and life story of the diarist that conforms closely to heteropatriarchal romance narratives. The identity of the diarist is reduced to her participation in a courtship with a famous man, G.H. Stancer. Her worth, and the value of the diary itself, is quickly attached to his name—even if unconfirmed. As a familiar narrative, one that nicely complements assumptions about Victorian, upper-middle-class English society, this story has easily gained tentative traction, as we saw in the Modern Records Centre's

¹³¹ Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 149.

¹³² Maynes et al. 102, 90.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 102.

catalogue description, and Smethurst's recent endnote. While the full positionality of the 1982 letter-writer is unknown, it is clear that this author was aware of the reputation of G.H. Stancer. Such knowledge appears to have effectively erased the unknowable gaps in the diary's text and made possible the heteronormative romance narrative that has been allowed to perpetuate with caveats of "perhaps."

Identifying Smart

Although there will always be unknowable gaps in personal narrative research, not all gaps are filled with fantasy, nor must they remain unknowable. Upon closer examination, I have identified the diarist as Ada Florence Smart, a twenty-four-year-old cyclist, married not to George Herbert Stancer, a man who would only have been 14 or 15 when the diary began, but instead to a considerably less famous man named George Herbert Smart, who worked in the cycle trade.¹³⁴ Together, they participated in many local cycle tours with their bicycle club, a typical pastime for the white middle class in England during the bicycle boom. Here, finally, Ada Florence Smart emerges as a "situated sel[f], [a product] of a particular time and place; the identity-shaping environments...are nested one within the other—self, family, community set in a physical and cultural geography, in an unfolding history."¹³⁵

Ada's unfolding history had been insufficiently situated and has therefore led to misidentification. Eakin considers the process of identity formation as dependent upon one's interaction with others: "Identity formation, then, is socially and (more specifically)

¹³⁴ Oddy 31. Oddy, too, correctly identifies the diarist as "A.F. Smart" and confirms that G.H.S. could not have been Stancer, who was born in 1878, a mere 15 years before the diary began.

¹³⁵ Eakin 85.

discursively transacted: thus ‘the capacity to be addressed as a “you” by others is a preliminary to the ultimate capacity of being able to say “I” of oneself.’...[we] witness the ‘I’ at the moment it is ‘interpellated’ by the ‘you.’”¹³⁶ This should remind us of the importance of all forces acting upon one’s identity, including the people with whom one interacts. In life, the author of the cycling diary was likely surrounded by community that engaged with her in the constant work of interpellation and identity formation. But a diary is not a conversation—there is no “you” present. Because hers is the only voice, her “I” is self-less; there is no initial “you” to give the researcher direction on who the “I” is or will be. So, how can we understand the “I” without the “you”? Who can interpellate this long-dead diarist?

Recent readers of the cycling diary have, by necessity, entered this diarist’s world as the community capable of offering an interpretive “you.” Researchers, archivists, and imaginative collectors have hailed this diarist, even if tentatively, as the “girl [who] may have married G. Herbert Stancer.”¹³⁷ The trouble is, however, that she was given the wrong name. It is not unusual for names to be forced upon us. In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler posits that “Interpellation is an address that regularly misses its mark.”¹³⁸ The subject is not always capable of denying a name, or even to know that one is being named. The goal of interpellation is to organize and categorize the social world. Truth is not the objective, but rather certainty. Butler argues further that “Interpellation is an act

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, quoting Shotter, 63.

¹³⁷ National Cycle Archive, “Coddington; Emily Sophia (fl 1850); Commonplace book writer.”

¹³⁸ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 33.

of speech whose ‘content’ is neither true nor false: it does not have description as its primary task. Its purpose is to indicate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in space and time. Its relative operation has the effect of sedimenting its ‘positionality’ over time.”¹³⁹ Recalling the repetition of the Stancer myth in the archives, it is clear how the diarist’s subjectivity begins to settle around a positionality and social reality that is recognizable within dominant narratives about heteropatriarchal romance. But Ada is recognizable to me differently than she is recognizable to the 1982 letter writer, for example.¹⁴⁰ Butler reminds us again that the process of naming emerges within an “intersubjective context.”¹⁴¹ With additional historical and (inter)personal context, this diarist’s identity is no longer tangentially important to the legacy of G.H. Stancer. Instead, I have re-interpellated her—turned her into a “you,” into Ada Florence Smart.

By replacing the letter-writer’s imagined guesses about the connection to G.H. Stancer with evidence and intersubjective relationality, a new identity of the diarist is allowed to emerge. For example, despite the letter-writer’s insistence that “There is no indication of the girl’s name anywhere,”¹⁴² the diarist *does* sign her name once under an entry for the number of miles she rode in 1895: A.F. Smart.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5. Butler writes: “One ‘exists’ not only by virtue of being recognized, but, in a prior sense, by being recognizable” (5).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴² “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896,” Covering Letter.

¹⁴³ “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896,” Number of miles ridden in 1895.



Figure 2: A.F. Smart’s signature in the “Commonplace book and diary”

In his criticism of the 1982 letter, Oddy also points to this important signature and the evidence we may gain from it, which draws us further from the Stancer-hypothesis, and closer to a knowable identity for the diary’s author.

And yet, in the space of one sentence, Oddy relegates this newly identified woman, A.F. Smart, back to her primary role as a wife: “The ‘Number of miles ridden in 1895, 1,458 ½’, is signed ‘A.F. Smart’. This is certainly in the same hand as the main entries, which suggests that our rider was Mrs. G.H. Smart.”¹⁴⁴ At the moment that we learn who the author of the diary may be, the attention turns again directly to G.H.S. Why the fascination with this man, even after we can safely argue that he is not the prominent

¹⁴⁴ Oddy 31.

G.H. Stancer? Once again, it is imperative that we “reflect on how [our] subjective responses to the personae behind the narrative may ultimately influence [our] interpretation of a text.”¹⁴⁵ Oddy does not offer such a reflection, leaving his analysis open to the questions: does the 1982 letter’s original desire for a diary to center around a heterosexual romance carry over even for Oddy, who is otherwise rightfully critical of “reading into” fantasies without evidence? Or, in a more generous read, is Oddy looking for evidence in places he can find it, for example, in professional records in a man’s world, which requires him to think about the diarist through the masculine networks upon which she depended? Indeed, he is successful in locating records in White’s 1894 *Street and Trade Directory of Leeds and the Clothing District*, which identifies “Smart, George Herbert; Manager; 140 Woodsley Road” as the likely name and career of the diarist’s husband, and their possible address.¹⁴⁶ He concedes that “without further research we can only surmise that [Mrs. G.H. Smart] may have started life as Miss A.F. Coddington.”¹⁴⁷ But this is where Oddy’s interest in the identity of Mrs. G.H. Smart ends, and where my investigation into the full subjectivity of A.F. Smart is most urgent.

Constructing a Personal History: The Coddington Family Tree

Armed with the full name of the original owner of the “Commonplace book and diary,” Emily Sophia Coddington, and with A.F. Smart’s signature in the cycling record portion, along with date ranges, place names, and the occasional mention of another full

¹⁴⁵ Maynes et al. 106.

¹⁴⁶ “White’s Directory of the City of Leeds (Forming Part of the Clothing District Directory), Followed by a Trades Directory of the Whole of the Clothing District,” Fifteenth Edition, Sheffield: William White Limited, 1894, 922; Oddy 31.

¹⁴⁷ Oddy 31.

name, I sought to discover the link between the two women and to learn more about A.F. Smart in general.¹⁴⁸ For this task, I turned to the Civil Registration index of births, marriages, and deaths for England and Wales, along with census data and parish records. Slowly, I began to build Emily Sophia Coddington’s family tree and discover that A.F. Smart was Emily Sophia Coddington’s first daughter, born Ada Florence Matthews, in September 1869, in Poplar, England.

Ada and her mother, Emily, both grew up in pubs—Emily’s father, Edward Coddington, and later her mother, Elizabeth, were both Licensed Victuallers living and working at the Bricklayers Arms at 15 Fenton Street in London from 1853 until 1861.¹⁴⁹ In 1863, Emily married a Cheesemonger named James Arthur, but just nine months later, he died leaving her a childless widow.¹⁵⁰ In 1865, Emily married a widower, named Henry Matthews, with three adolescent daughters.¹⁵¹ He, too, was a Licensed Victualler and had held the license in 1862 for the Norfolk Hero, a public house at 16 Gates Street in Poplar until it passed to Elizabeth Coddington, Emily’s mother. In 1865, the same year

¹⁴⁸ For example, the archivists had identified the Coddington diary as initially used in the 1850s, with one entry signed by an “Eliza Alice Coddington.” The cycling diary was clearly written between 1893 and 1896 and makes mention of many locations clustered around Leeds. I researched the birth, marriage, and death dates of Emily Sophia Coddington first. While I was able to find a birth date and place and a marriage date and place, her record ended there. Moreover, without A.F. Smart’s maiden name, I could not find any birth or marriage records, and the death records accessible online do not extend into the 20th century. With more, yet still insufficient, information I turned next to ancestry.co.uk to access more detailed records that are not accessible through online public records. Here, I was able to utilize the information gathered from the diary, and from my initial record searching to finally establish the link between Emily Sophia Coddington and A.F. Smart.

¹⁴⁹ “1861 Census Data, Coddington,” *1861 England Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.

¹⁵⁰ “Emily Sophia Coddington and James Arthur Marriage.” *London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754 – 1921*. [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

¹⁵¹ “Emily Sophia Arthur and Henry Matthews Marriage.” *London, England, Marriages and Banns, 1754 – 1921*. [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

that Henry Matthews married Emily, the license passed again from her mother to Matthews and remained with the Matthews family until 1881.¹⁵²

Ada Florence Matthews, then, was likely born at the Norfolk Hero in 1869. The 1871 census lists her father, Henry, her mother, Emily, her three half-sisters, a general servant, and a potboy sharing the Norfolk Hero residence.¹⁵³ In 1872, a sister, Elizabeth, was born, and by 1880, the family had moved from Poplar to 128 Mount Pleasant Street in Hastings, where her youngest sister, Ethel, was born.¹⁵⁴ They no longer appear to live or work in a public house. Ada's father, Henry, died in Hastings in 1885.¹⁵⁵



Figure 3: 128 Mount Pleasant Street, Hastings, England

¹⁵² “Norfolk Hero, 92 Canton Street, Poplar,” *Pub History*, <pubwiki.co.uk>.

¹⁵³ “1871 Census Data, Matthews.” *1871 England Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004.

¹⁵⁴ “1881 Census Data, Matthews.” *1881 England Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2004.

¹⁵⁵ “Henry Matthews Death Index.” *England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

Ada Florence Matthews married George Herbert Smart in 1891 in Hastings, England.¹⁵⁶ Her mother, Emily, died the next year on January 30, 1892, also at her home in Hastings.¹⁵⁷ By 1897, one year after the “Commonplace book and diary” terminates, George Herbert and Ada Florence Smart had their first child, Margery Stuart Smart, born in October 1897 in Leeds, England.¹⁵⁸ This would confirm that sometime between their marriage in 1891 in Hastings and the birth of the couple’s first child, the Smarts had moved to Leeds. Combining these records with the information Ada offers in her cycling diary, the couple was already living in Leeds by 1893, the year the diary begins. Despite their relocation to Leeds, there is evidence in the diary that Ada identified the south of England as her home. For example, on June 1, 1894, she writes of a bicycle ride through towns and villages surrounding Leeds: “Passed the Asylum as large as small town there must be a lot of dotty people in Yorkshire, to keep up such a large place as that, our Asylums down South are about as large as one of the rooms in this one.”¹⁵⁹ Distancing herself from the “dotty people in Yorkshire,” she identifies “our Asylums down South” as more familiar, smaller, and, implicitly, more sane. She also makes a reference to attending a wedding in Hastings in early July, 1896: “First ride since the Wedding at

¹⁵⁶ “Ada Florence Matthews and George Herbert Smart Marriage,” *FreeBMD Marriage Index, 1837 – 1915* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006.

¹⁵⁷ “Emily Sophia Matthews Death Index,” *England & Wales, FreeBMD Death Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006. One year prior to her death, Emily Sophia Matthews is listed in the 1891 census as a “widow” “Living on own means.” This evidence supports the notion that the Matthews family was wealthy enough to ensure that none of the women in the household needed to work outside the home, even after Emily’s husband, Henry Matthews, died.

¹⁵⁸ “Margery Stuart Smart Birth Index,” *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

¹⁵⁹ “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896,” June 1 1894.

Hastings,” suggesting that she maintained a connection to the home of her youth.¹⁶⁰ Her in-laws also visit Leeds in June 1895; she records: “[G.H.S.] went on in front to meet Mr. + Mrs. Smart from Hastings.”¹⁶¹

According to the 1901 England census, the young family moved again to the outskirts of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew at 14 Lawn Crescent, Richmond, England by 1901.¹⁶² There, their second daughter, Ivy Mercedes Smart was born in April, 1905.¹⁶³ Ivy Mercedes died in April, 1914 in Fulham, England.¹⁶⁴ The 1901 census is the last available on-line record for the Smart family. From that record, we learn that G. Herbert Smart worked as a “Cycle Manufact[ure] Manager,” that Ada’s youngest sister Ethel Kate Matthews was living with them and working as a “Milliner,” and that the family employed a domestic Nurse, named Alice Marshall.¹⁶⁵ This neighborhood in Richmond, very near the Royal Botanic Gardens, was considered “simply, for the rich.”¹⁶⁶ And indeed, the Smarts’ home is an attractive three story semi-detached home on a tree-lined street boasting a shared central lawn.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, July 11 1896.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Jun 8 1895.

¹⁶² “1901 Census Data, Smart,” *1901 England Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.

¹⁶³ “Ivy Mercedes Smart Birth Index,” *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

¹⁶⁴ “Ivy Mercedes Smart Death Index,” *England & Wales, FreeBMD Birth Index, 1837-1915* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006.

¹⁶⁵ “1901 Census Data, Smart.” This information further suggests that Ada Florence Smart was part of a comfortable middle-class family.

¹⁶⁶ Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*, (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 29.



Figure 4: 14 Lawn Crescent, Richmond, England; The Smarts' residence was the left half with the red door.



Figure 5: Lawn Crescent, Richmond, England

Further records of the Smart family are inconclusive, including where and when Ada Florence Smart died, or any clues about who may have inherited her cycling diary, once belonging to her mother.

These genealogical records and information about the residences of Ada and her parents (and grandparents) shed light on her middle class and upwardly mobile status. Although she would never have been considered working class, the neighborhoods and homes in which Ada lived became increasingly suburban, private, larger, and eventually semi-detached, all indicating her move toward a solidly middle-class, perhaps even upper-middle-class position. Her first move from the Norfolk Hero public house in Poplar where she was born to the two-story terrace home in Hastings where she lived until she married signals an improvement in her family's fortune, as does the apparent retirement of her parents until both of their deaths.

In Leeds, where Ada lived during the time of her cycling diary, she and Herbert lived in a newly constructed two-story terrace house with third floor attic space, built sometime between 1888 and 1894.



Figure 6: 140 Woodsley Road, Leeds, England; the Smarts' residence was likely the one on the corner.

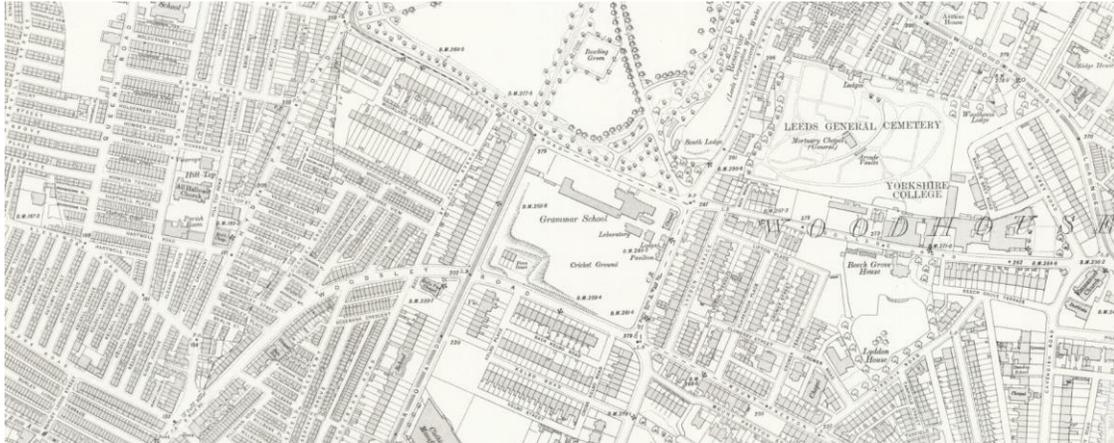


Figure 7: Woodhouse Neighborhood, Leeds, 1908. This section from a 1908 map of Leeds is the first to show the newly constructed home in which the Smarts lived. Here, we see the southern edge of Woodhouse Moor and the grounds of the old Grammar School. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

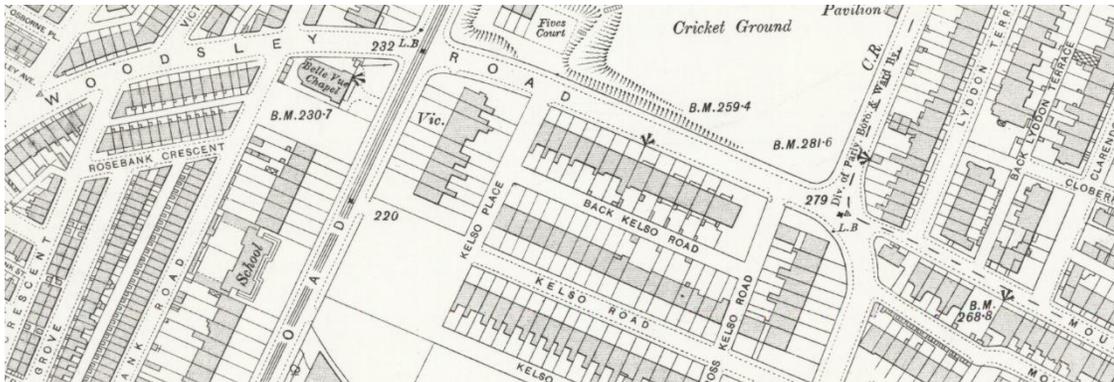


Figure 8: Woodsley Road, Leeds, 1908. The close-up shows the footprint of the Smarts' home on the corner of Woodsley Road and Kelso Place. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Located at 140 Woodsley Road, their home was on the northern edge of Leeds, across the street from the old Grammar School, next door to a Vicarage, and very near Woodhouse Moor, a public park. Further north, newly developed suburbs like Headingley, Burley, and Adel attracted the comfortably middle class. The second half of the 19th century was a period of rapid growth for Leeds, with “57,029 new houses built in Leeds between 1886

and 1914. Importantly, while most of these new developments were what is known in Britain as “back-to-backs” in which “[t]he front of the door opened straight onto the street, and the back wall of the house was the back wall of the house behind it,” the Smarts’ home opened into a back alley with ample space between it and the next construction, further indicating that this area was designed for wealthier residents in mind.¹⁶⁷ Theirs was a corner home, sharing the block with other members of a professional class: an excise officer, cloth merchant, two professors and one lecturer.¹⁶⁸ Neighborhoods then, like today, tended to support class homogeneity.¹⁶⁹

Ada and her fellow club members most often cycled through the “less polluted and more salubrious areas north of town,” such as Burley and Headingley.¹⁷⁰ Adel, Potternewton, and Roundhay, areas that Ada visits with increased frequency, “saw a series of expensive villas being erected for the wealthy and successful.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ David Thornton, *The Story of Leeds*, (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2013), 193.

¹⁶⁸ “White’s Directory of the City of Leeds...”, 922-923.

¹⁶⁹ Flanders, 24.

¹⁷⁰ Thornton, 192.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*



Figure 9: Creskeld Lane, Leeds, England; one of Ada's most frequent routes.



Figure 10: The road to The Dyneley Arms

By contrast, she avoided cycling through the more working-class and industrial centers of Leeds in the south and east, such as Hunslet:

Went with G.H.S. rode through muddy streets, disgusting (odours) nasty people, smoky air + black country, I won't go there any more, Hunslet, Hunslet, I won't go there any more,— It always makes me in a bad temper when I go that way + the machine knows as well it will not run half so easily.¹⁷²

Another clue to interpreting the Smarts' class position is the number of “new” cycling-related items she mentions in the four-year (35 month) span of her diary: a new riding costume, a new machine, a new handle bar, a new bell, a new mackintosh cape, and a new lamp. In addition, she mentions a pair of new skates, a new hat, and a new billiard table during this period.

Yet, perhaps the most convincing indicator of the Smarts' middle-class status is the leisure time available to Ada. In the spring and summer months, she tended to cycle several times per week, without any discernible pattern that would allow for a regular work schedule. In addition to frequent daytrips, she and Herbert took several week-long holidays, one to Scotland, one to Mid-England, and several trips to Hastings, presumably to visit with remaining family in the area. There are no records of her employment outside the home, her status as recorded by the census moving from “daughter” or “scholar” before her marriage while living with her parents, to “wife” while living with Herbert.

¹⁷² “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896, May 23, 1895.

Relational Identities

The historical and generic context surrounding the “Commonplace book and diary,” and the genealogical records of Emily Sophia Coddington and Ada Florence Smart that I have pieced together with the help of Nicholas Oddy’s research, the birth, marriage, and death records I collected, and the clues in the text itself, allow me to create a genealogy of the diarist, her personal history, and the shape of her social world. This knowledge fundamentally alters the ways in which the author of the cycling diary was previously imagined (“may have been the future wife of G. Herbert Stancer”) and opens up new ways to interpret her narrative and its significance to cycling history. However, Ada Florence Smart’s self, as written into her cycling diary, can only be fully understood if we consider the fundamental relationality of her identity.

Paul John Eakin understands the self in terms of “its relations with others.”¹⁷³ *All* identities, he argues, are fundamentally relational, and are subject to change.¹⁷⁴ Although Eakin is writing primarily about identity formation in autobiography and life writing, the “Commonplace book and diary” is an excellent example of how identity is lived relationally. In fact, as we have already seen, speculations about the diarist’s identity have always been in conversation with her relationship to Emily Sophia Coddington and especially G.H.S. While examining her relationship to G.H.S. initially led to misidentification, these relations remain, with a more careful read of her text alongside robust contextualization, crucial to understanding the self the diary presents us with.

¹⁷³ Eakin 43.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 40, 98.

Beyond the significance of Emily Sophia Coddington’s prior ownership of the diary, and the frequent mentions of G.H.S. in the cycling record, Ada Florence Smart has filled the pages of her diary with the names of fellow cyclists.

G.H.S. is by far her most frequent companion, mentioning him 103 times throughout the diary, though his presence is implied without being explicitly mentioned in many more rides and cycling holidays. Ada also appears to have one or two frequent women riding companions each year. In 1894, she rides with a Miss Straiton 6 times; 4 times in 1895; and 3 times in 1896. She rode with “the 4 girls” 3 times in 1895 (a group which includes Miss Straiton, Mary, and two others). In 1895, she accompanied Helena to her first riding lesson, and then rode with her a further 13 times, but not at all the following year, it would appear. S.C., whose gender is not explicitly revealed, but who (based on the context in which she is mentioned) I surmise is a woman, was Ada’s riding companion 17 times in 1895. But Maggie was Ada’s most frequent cycling partner in 1896, joining her for 25 rides. Most of these rides are short trips around town, however, many of these trips are part of larger routes through the countryside with several dozen—sometimes as many as 100—cyclists participating. Below are three examples of the companionship she recorded:

| Places | Miles | Date | Weather | Notes |
|--------|-------|--|---|---|
| Dynley | 12 | May 24 th [1894] 8-30 p.m. 10.0 p.m. | No wind. glorious evening but cold. | Met Mr. A. Armitage, and Miss Straiton, went up with them, came back...met 5 ladies out riding. |
| Dynley | 12 | June 13 th [1894] | Beautiful rather windy | Rode up by myself in 35 minutes, came back with Mr. Billington, and G.H.S. & |

| | | | | |
|--|----|------------------------------|---|--|
| | | 8-40 p.m. 10.0 p.m. | | another had a quick ride back in 25 minutes, into the house. |
| Barden Towers via The Chevin Otley, Burley, Ilkley, Bolton came back via Creskill Lane | 54 | July 29 th [1894] | Road in capital condition Rather windy & very hot. | Started with G.H.S. 20 past 10 met Mr. Coultas at the Dynley, rode on with him and saw Mr. Broadhead Mr. Wilkinson, and Mr. _____ who turned back at Bolton, had a picnic by the river side, then mounted, and rode to Barden Towers up and down hills like this \ / had tea there, then came back after one of the most enjoyable days I have ever spent. |

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Reading these selected notes from the summer of 1894, it becomes clear that she was part of a large cycling community, which appears to have met regularly at “the Dynley.”

Oddy offers some additional context about “the Dynley,” which was likely “The Dyneley Arms, a pub dating from the mid-19th century...It was a local meeting point for cyclists, and typical of the genre, it was in open countryside on a key junction within easy reach of large towns.”¹⁷⁶ Recalling Ada’s family history of living and working in pubs, it is perhaps no longer so surprising that she would venture regularly and alone to The Dyneley Arms. Moreover, the history of cycling clubs in the 1890s would further suggest that her participation in such a community would not have been unusual, and the cycling meets, picnics, and weekend rides through the nearby countryside with fellow members help us to make sense of the patterns of her daily life.

¹⁷⁵ “Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896.” Various entries, 1894.

¹⁷⁶ Oddy 31.



Figure 11: The Dyneley Arms; the pub where Ada often met fellow cyclists.

Indeed, Ada makes so many references to people within this large community of cyclists that it is sometimes difficult to keep track of her frequent companions. Eakin again helps to shed light on this relational dynamic: “‘You’ and ‘I’ and ‘she’ and ‘he’ and ‘we’—the dialogic play of pronouns in these texts tracks the unfolding of relational identity in many registers, in discourse with others and within ourselves. The lesson these identity narratives are teaching, again and again, is that the self is dynamic, changing, and plural.”¹⁷⁷

And yet, while the social aspect of cycling was hugely important to Ada, she also makes a point to note the trips she takes alone. In 1894, she rode at least a portion of her ride “by myself” 11 times; 21 times in 1895; and 11 times in 1896. She appears to take great pleasure in many of these solo adventures:

| Places | Miles | Date | Weather | Notes |
|---------|-------|-----------------|--|--|
| Dyneley | 12 | Feb 7 [1895] | Snow banks each side very rough strong N. wind | Went by myself G.H.S. away travelling, had a lovely spin beautiful day, sunshine, but very cold, road like a cattle |

¹⁷⁷ Eakin, 98.

| | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------------|---|---|
| | | | | track, had to get off every time I met a cart, but very enjoyable. |
| Dynley + Meanwood | 14 | April 20 [1895] | Roads nice rather windy | Went by myself, after the football match, had a beautiful spin. |
| Bramhope 1 mile beyond Ilkley via Chevin + Creskeld Lane | 11 35 | Sept 15 [1895] | Beautiful day lovely roads after Scotland Same day | Went by myself, G.H.S. being incapacitated, saw a few cyclists Went by myself Sunday afternoon met dozens of chaps, had a nice ride |
| Leeds Depot + Dynley | 16 | April 13 [1896] | Roads very good but windy | Went down to have my machine seen too + up to Dynley by myself had a jolly ride. |

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And yet, she also records her frustration at being apparently abandoned by her husband at times:

| Places | Miles | Date | Weather | Notes |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Meanwood Rd. | 2 | Dec. 17 [1894] | Fair | Went to meet G.H.S., never saw him. |
| Dynley | 12 | April 30 [1895] | Roads good came on to rain | Went by myself like I generally do (the result of having a husband in the cycle trade. |
| Dynley | 12 | Sept. 18 [1895] | Very windy roads good | Went by myself (as usual) very high wind |

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¹⁷⁸ "Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896." Various entries, 1895 & 1896.

¹⁷⁹ "Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896." Various entries, 1894 & 1895.

Intersubjective Connections

Having thus constructed a much more robust picture of Ada's history and daily life, what *irritates* me most about the false heteropatriarchal romance narrative between Ada and G.H. Stancer is not only its inaccuracy, but that readers of this archive were more concerned with the diarist's love life as a valuable piece of another man's life, than they were with her cycling life, the subject of the diary itself.

So, reading against the grain of heteronormative romantic fantasy, what *interests* me most about Ada's diary is the narrative structure through which her cycling identity is articulated. In the example above, we see that in addition to the proliferation of pronouns and names that pepper Ada's text, the narrative structure—or to be more specific—the way she chooses to literally structure the words on the page—contribute to a relational interpretation of her text and identity, and one that resonates deeply with my own experience of recording daily bicycle rides. The tables above are based upon the presentation of her text, and the images below are of her diary in its original form.

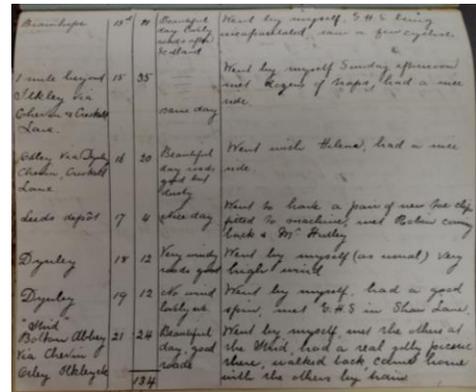
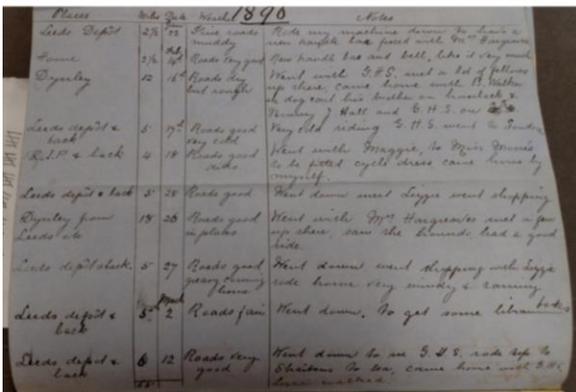


Figure 12: Ada's cycling diary, first page of 1896 Figure 13: Ada's cycling diary, 1895

She organizes her diary in rows and columns, offering details about each ride’s location, round-trip mileage, the date, the weather (which often morphs into commentary about road conditions), and her personal reflections about the ride. In studying the form and content of Ada’s diary, my positionality as a woman cyclist and researcher strongly influences my interpretation of her text.

Remember that blind date in the archives? When I “came across” this diary, I did not have the time to peruse each page. I was only visiting the National Cycle Archive for two days in the middle of a cycle tour of my own. By the time I arrived at the University of Warwick, I had already bicycled 1,121 miles through Scotland and northern England—much of the landscape Ada had cycled through, I would later learn—and I had another 2,379 miles to go before the end of my journey. My mission in the archive was to photograph the diary in its entirety and move on to the next source with the intention of reading them in full once I had returned home. When I opened the diary, though, I was immediately captivated. Thumbing through the entries, I was struck by the kinds of information she chose to record, and how closely it matched my own habits of journaling while on cycle tours. For example, in addition to the column designated for weather, Ada often comments in her notes on the weather, road conditions, and level of difficulty encountered on her ride:

| Places | Miles | Date | Weather | Notes |
|--------|-------|--------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Dynley | 12 | March 16 [1894] | Lovely moon light night | My first ride this year rather hard work at first rode half way up Reservoir Hill. bright as day, roads good. |

| | | | | |
|--|----|---|--|--|
| Bridlington to Leeds via Driffield 44 Mk Weighton 20 Holme Bubwith Selby 48 Monk Friston | 73 | May 16 th [1894] 10-30 a.m. 7.30 p.m. | Strong wind behind for 6[.]0 m. side wind, the remainder. rained fast for 20 miles. Very cold. roads very bad. | Found it very easy riding with wind behind us, but roads very rough, got on splendidly, 5 miles out of Leeds, roads very hilly, and dreadfully muddy, slipped about very much. |
|--|----|---|--|--|

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This narrative structure situates herself in relation to the spaces through which she travels. My own cycle diary, while structured somewhat differently, tends to contain very similar information. For example:

Day 50: July 27 [2015]
Freiburg to Strasbourg
63.9 miles, 12.0 mph

Another great day—cool, cloudy, a bit of rain, incredible cloud formations. We were sitting between dark cloud and bright sun as we finally found the Rhein. There, we also found a KICK ASS TAIL WIND. Amazing. So grateful it wasn't fighting against us. Definitely transitioning to a new landscape. Flat, windy, cloudy, river travel.¹⁸¹

In the blog entry my partner and I wrote during the same week we visited the archives, our focus—like Ada's—was often on questions of road quality and infrastructure. The resonances we felt between Ada's diary and our own lived experience of cycle touring prompted us to make the following post:

One young woman organized her cycle touring diary into columns: place; date; mileage; weather; and comments. She diligently recorded even the shortest rides, mostly through her hometown, with occasional longer tours throughout the UK. Over the years, the column labeled "weather" expanded to include not whether the day featured rain or sunshine, but instead her focus turned toward recording

¹⁸⁰ "Commonplace book and diary, [c.1850]-1896," March 16, 1894 and May 16, 1894.

¹⁸¹ Christine Bachman-Sanders and Ian Bachman-Sanders, "Bikers Errant," Private Diary, July 27, 2015.

the quality of the roads on which she cycled. This preoccupation repeats itself in other journals, and in our own experience as well.

Weather is weather. It comes and goes, more or less beyond our control. Roads, however, are of human design. When a road degrades, it has been neglected. If a road is weak, it was badly made. Perched on our bicycles, the nature of the road is transmitted to us, physically, wherever we go, and a rough day in the saddle often leads to a rough impression of the place.

The road tethers us to Town and Country, but also to the past—to the experiences of cycle tourists that complain about the dusty road, and to the labor and/or neglect of those who are left to maintain it. The infrastructure and the archive: this is what occupied our thoughts throughout this week of narrow gates, bumpy roads, and visits with family and an archive rich with cycle touring history.¹⁸²

Here, my relationship with the diary, and with Ada Florence Smart, begins to resemble the kind of intersubjective methodology that Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett discuss, in which “the analyst...must think him- or herself into the mindset of another person and use the personal narrative evidence to develop a facility in understanding how the narrator sees the world.”¹⁸³ Engaging (inter)subjectively in this research, I contribute to the constellation of relational selves that Ada’s community brings into being. My interpretation of Ada’s diary is made possible in part because of the knowledge I bring and make accessible to the intersubjective process of personal narrative research.¹⁸⁴ My positionality as a woman cyclist and diarist allows me to recognize the particular ways in which both Ada and I record our intimate, embodied connections with the weather, landscapes, and roads upon which we travel. As I read Ada’s diary, while immersed in my own cycle tour, space—and not heterosexual love—became the primary interpretive

¹⁸² Christine Bachman-Sanders and Ian Bachman-Sanders, “Infrastructure and the Archive,” *Golden Tandem*, <https://goldentandem.wordpress.com/>

¹⁸³ Maynes et al. 96.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

lens through which to analyze her experience, and the relationality of cycling histories more broadly.

Mapping Movement: Embodied Identity

Eakin is again useful as we think not only about identity as relational, but also as embodied. Eakin argues: “our lives in and as bodies profoundly shape our sense of identity.”¹⁸⁵ This statement is not difficult to apply to Ada Florence Smart; the identity we have access to through her cycling diary exists as a record of embodied movement through space. Her body (like her bicycle), though rarely mentioned explicitly, is always there—the vital instrument that behaves as the agent for all that she then experiences and records. In this way, Ada’s body and self are “intertwined and inseparable.”¹⁸⁶ Therefore, to engage fully with Ada’s identity, as both embodied and relational, it becomes useful to map the spaces through which she moves. Thanks to her meticulous record-keeping, it is possible to create such a map; the names of places she mentions, combined with the mileage she records, and the relatively static landscape and landmarks in the Leeds region allow me to approximate the routes she took upon her bicycle. Moreover, this exercise in mapping Ada’s bicycle movements joins together nicely with the intersubjective

¹⁸⁵ Eakin, xi. Eakin introduces the concept of embodied selfhood in response to a Cartesian disembodied subject that he critiques and rejects. His analysis brings him into conversation with scholars and autobiographies that consider the embodied experience of disability or injury. This literature has the potential to add to my analysis of Ada Florence Smart’s embodied identity; however, due to space limitations, I have chosen to focus on an abbreviated analysis of her identity as embodied and on how space and movement become important ways to understand her identity more fully. Similarly, I hope to engage more fully in further work with Ada’s embodied relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

methodology of “understanding how the narrator sees the world.”¹⁸⁷ In creating an estimated map of Ada’s routes, I attempt to recreate her world.

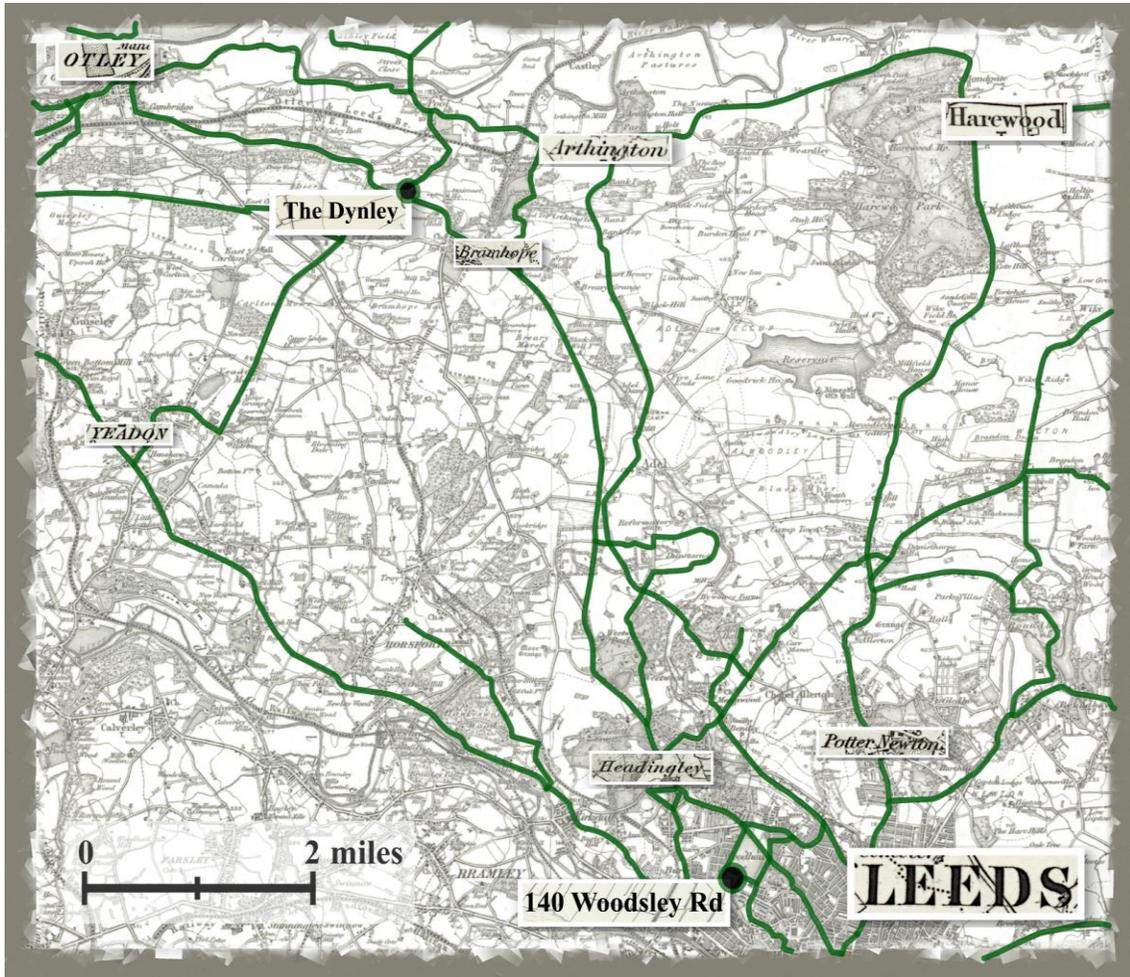


Figure 14: Northern suburbs of Leeds. This map of Leeds and nearby suburbs offers an intimate view of Ada Florence Smart’s local routes. The black markers represent 140 Woodsley Rd, the likely location of Ada Florence Smart’s home, and “The Dynley,” a popular bicycle club meeting location. The road between Ada’s home and “The Dynley” was her most frequently traveled route. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

¹⁸⁷ Maynes et al. 96.

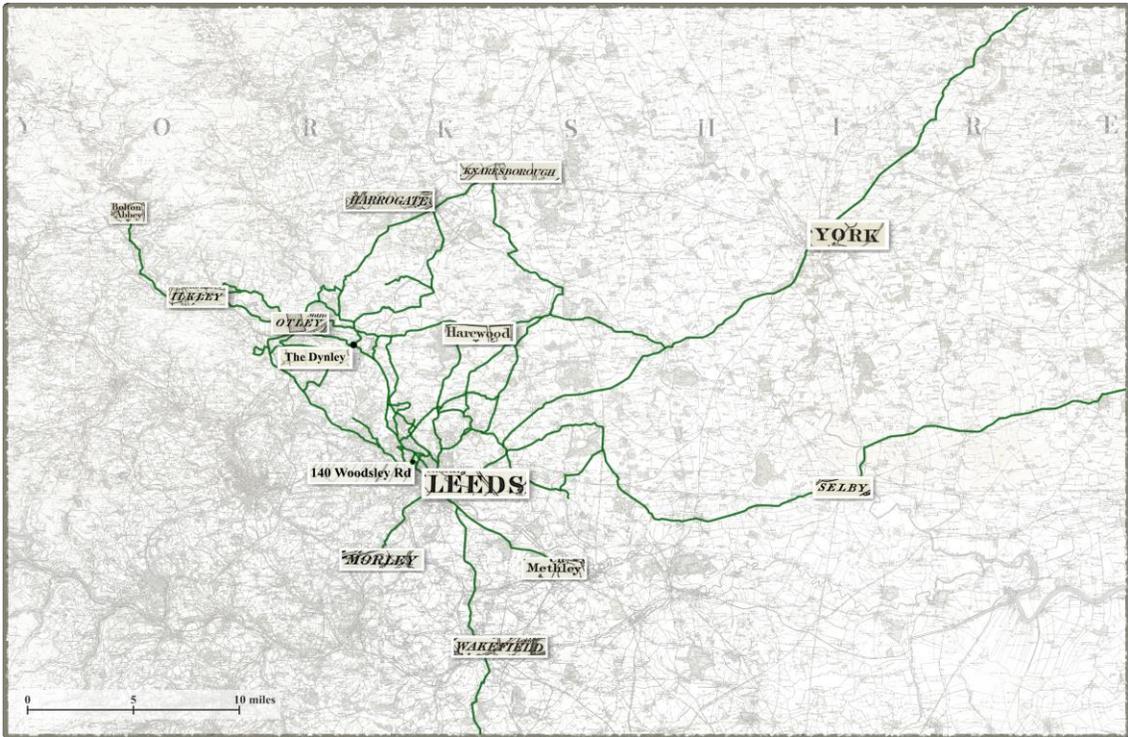


Figure 15: Leeds Region. This map of Leeds and the surrounding area illustrates all of Ada Florence Smart’s local and weekend bicycle routes between 1893-1896. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

This exercise highlights the patterns of her daily life, the club gatherings, the solo moonlit rides, the attraction she felt toward biking through rain, mud, and the pride she experienced when beating her own time along familiar paths. But in addition to seeing her movement, I connect my contemporary touring experiences in the UK to hers, incorporating the detailed spatial and temporal data I collect as part of a living archive with Ada’s cycling record archive. Creating a map of both of our cycle travels, I demonstrate how we touch one another’s routes. Indulging in a kind of tactical historiography, a feeling backward, a methodology of what Elizabeth Freeman calls “blind groping,” I suggest that the embodied connection between the researcher (me) and the narrator (Ada) certainly open up new ways of thinking about her history (and her

diary's contribution to cycling history).¹⁸⁸ Fundamentally relational, Ada's diary and my cycling tour become open to temporal hiccups, and to a kind of anachronistic analysis. Connecting to Ada's past is a kind of resurrection, a kind of time travel that forges relationships among subjects across temporalities.

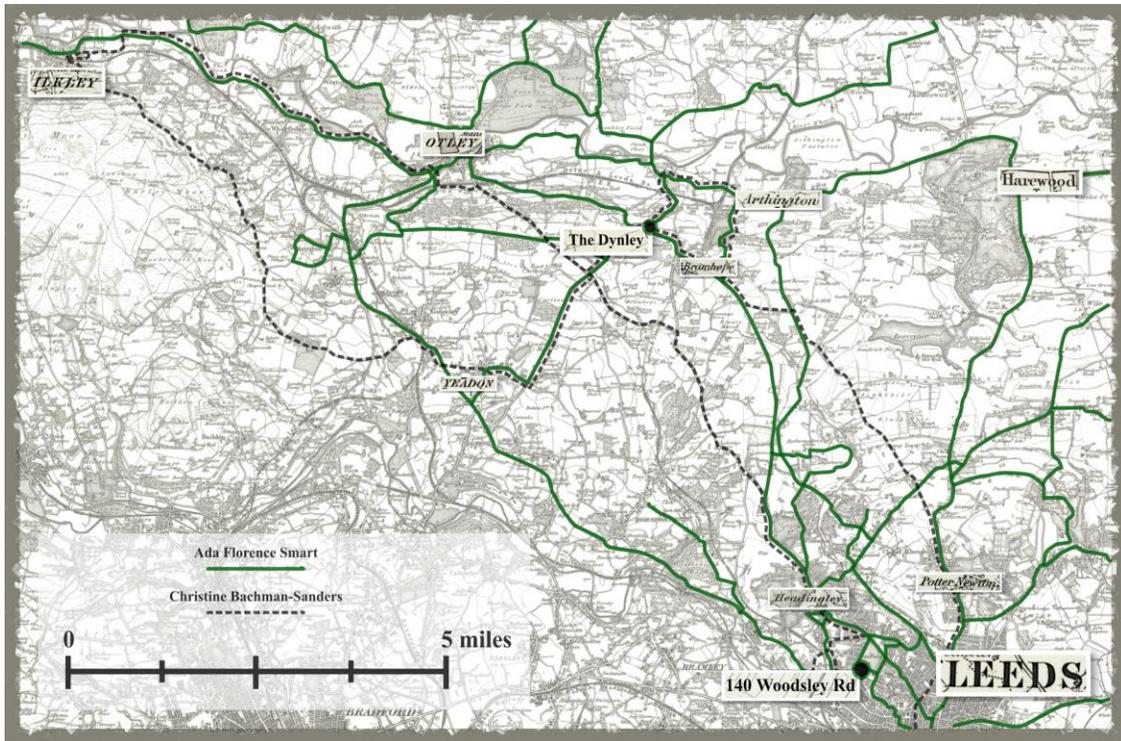


Figure 16: Temporal Crossings, Leeds Region. This map depicts the interaction between Ada Florence Smart's local and weekend rides (solid line) with a portion of my travels (dotted line). My GPS-tracked route from March 2018 weaves in and out of the estimated routes Ada Florence Smart took between 1893-1896. This map considers the relationality between Ada's and my own embodied travel through space. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Thus, I complicate a linear history of Ada's bicycle tours—and perhaps even the concept of a linear cycle tour itself—with a queer temporality that forces simultaneous

¹⁸⁸ Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 125.

consideration of past, present, and future. Borrowing Grace Cho's phrasing, our positionalities become "entangled with other bodies and unconscious experiences."¹⁸⁹ A queer approach to this diary allows me to consider how my positionality as a relationally determined, embodied identity moving through space upon my bicycle interacts with hers, and helps me to offer an interpretation of the "Commonplace book and diary" that focuses not on the heteronormative romance narrative and false identities that others have imagined, but instead seeks to offer a contextualized and embodied study of one woman's lived experience as a cyclist in the 1890s.

Conclusion

Over the course of the past five years, what began as a blind date with the "Commonplace book and diary" has blossomed into a queer love affair with Ada Florence Smart. The love and intimacy that I feel toward Ada makes space for otherwise excluded knowledge.¹⁹⁰ As I initially expected, the "Commonplace book and diary" has contributed meaningfully to my research about the New Woman cyclist of the 1890s; but more importantly, Ada's diary has highlighted the new kinds of knowledge that queer approaches to the archive, a feminist personal narrative methodology, and queer and feminist reading practices can bring to my (or, any) topic. Situating Ada's cycling diary within a historical frame, considering the specific conventions and limitations that

¹⁸⁹ Grace M. Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 45.

¹⁹⁰ See Carolyn Dinshaw's *How Soon Is Now?* for an analysis about the queer possibilities of new world-making in an "expansive now" that crossing temporalities and histories between attached researchers and objects of study.

surround the genre of diaries in the late 19th century, and researching the personal history of Ada and the community in which she lived, I have (re)interpellated her identity and the meaning of her text as a historical record. As Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett argue, it is, ultimately, the ability to “problematize intersections between individual life stories and larger historical dynamics [that] offer the most significant contributions to the reconceptualization of structure and agency, and their relationship,” which is why personal narratives can be such rich historical sources, and why such thorough knowledge of each of these dimensions is fundamental to the strength of my claims and to the “worth” of her text as a historical document.¹⁹¹

Guided by queer approaches to Ada’s archive and by feminist personal narrative methodologies, I have reinterpreted her story from one that featured a heteropatriarchal narrative and forced (false) name to one that offers context about her community and features the texture of the material and spatial experiences of her bicycle rides. This is only possible because of a commitment to intersubjective research. It is my hope that my (re)interpretation of this diary can stand as a reminder to consider the positionality of the researcher when interpellating our subjects, and to be willing to share as best we can the worlds in which our subjects live—to travel with them through space and time.

That is my intention throughout the next chapters of this dissertation. As a researcher, I aim to take pleasure in the process of discovery and analysis while avoiding the potential harms such contributions may make. In this chapter, I set out to correct a harmful error in the historical record. The research methods and frameworks I outlined

¹⁹¹ Maynes et al. 45.

here will continue to guide my analysis in subsequent chapters, as I investigate more closely the complex and intertwining narratives of hegemony and resistance in which the New Woman cyclist of the 1890s contributes. Like each chapter, differently, warns, the relationship between harm and pleasure—for both researcher and subject—is rarely straight-forward. In fact, it's all pretty queer.

CHAPTER 2

BICYCLE REVOLUTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF CONQUEST AND LIBERATION IN WILLARD'S *A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL* (1895)

"...sighing for new worlds to conquer, I determined that I would learn the bicycle."

Frances E. Willard, 1895



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"'Ise Gwine ter Give You Gals What Straddle dem Wheels a Good Talkin' to at Nex' Sunday's Meetin.' 'Indeed! What you call it, de Sermon on de Mount?'"

Figure 17: "Gals What Straddle," Edward Kemble, 1899

¹⁹² Kemble, Edward. "Ise Gwine ter Give You Gals What Straddle," *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894 – 1930*, edited by Martha H. Patterson, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 80-81. Originally published in *Life*, September 8, 1899, 255.

In this caricature by Edward Kemble, a white artist famous for his racist illustrations in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a Black woman with a bicycle is being scolded by a Black reverend who promises to give these “gals” a moral lesson against straddling the bicycle. Printed in *Life* in 1899, this drawing and caption serve to highlight the moral, racial, and sexual panic associated with the bicycle in the white popular imagination, and also to ridicule the hopeless attempts of Black people to behave morally or in a modern, civilized way. In this image, bodies and words depict that which is less than human. Occupying a sort of anachronistic space, these characters present us with an uncomfortable scene in which atavistic bodies attempt to access the modern via the woman’s use of the bicycle, where the bicycle is an important symbol of technological and social progress—particularly women’s progress.

Writing in the midst of the American bicycle boom of the 1890s, prominent temperance reformer and suffragist Frances E. Willard understood the ways in which the bicycle was seen as a great democratic vehicle for civilized and moral forms of leisure, and as an example of innovative industry and progress. With a woman in its saddle, the bicycle’s political and moral message became intertwined with the politics of the New Woman. In her book *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned To Ride the Bicycle* (1895), Willard skillfully utilizes the power—real and symbolic—that can be accessed through the bicycle, and hopes to introduce women through the bicycle to “a wider world.”¹⁹³ Her crusade to sing the praises of the bicycle as a political and morally

¹⁹³ Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 73.

pleasurable extension of the suffrage and temperance movements raises questions about the relationship between the New Woman, her bicycle, and notions of pleasure and conquest.

In her book, Willard wrote about the bicycle as a “vehicle of so much harmless pleasure”; but in that same text, she also describes the bicycle as a machine that both requires and extends the promise of mastery and conquest to its riders.¹⁹⁴ There is a tension here between the bicycle offering itself as a symbol of both “harmless pleasure” and of conquest. In Willard’s text, and in the popular understanding of the bicycle’s meaning, pleasure and conquest sit uncomfortably alongside one another, requiring a careful examination of how and for whom the bicycle operates as harmless, pleasurable, and/or a vehicle of imperial power.

When we read Kemble’s caricature in conversation with Willard’s moral praise for the modern bicycle, we are forced to question which populations Willard—or, more importantly, her readers, and U.S. popular opinion in general—grants access to the natural, wholesome bicycle as a signifier of “harmless pleasure” and moral modernity.¹⁹⁵ Relying on an analogy of the bicycle-as-life, Willard reflects on the ways in which learning the bicycle illuminates the “law of progress...it moves along a spiral rather than a perpendicular; we seem to be actually going out of the way, and yet it turns out that we

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 26.

¹⁹⁵ “Moral” and “modern” do not often share the same side of a binary opposition, but for Willard, the two concepts are very much in alignment with one another. Willard is able to access a truly moral society (temperance reform) only with the help from a modern, politically engaged community of reform-minded women. Kemble’s illustration captures the subtleties of the clumsy intersection of the “modern” Black woman, and a failed religious Black morality.

were really moving upward all the time.”¹⁹⁶ And yet, contrary to Willard’s vision of perpetual progress, this is an image of *failed* progress—a comic representation of how race, here, serves to alter the sexual and gendered connotations attached to this woman and her bicycle. This image reveals the racially policed boundaries of Willard’s spiral of progress. What we see here is not an example of the New Woman enjoying the “harmless pleasure” of the bicycle; rather, this Black woman is simultaneously *unnatural and* atavistic (incapable of reaching moral modernity) and is therefore unable to conquer the bicycle as “harmless pleasure.” In this way, race, gender, and sexuality enter the contested zone of categorization, and together articulate and differentiate the harmful from the harmless forms of expression and experience. The image thus represents a critical failure in the 19th century’s white feminist vision of utopian social reform to meaningfully address the womanhood—indeed, the full humanity—of Black women. This particular feminist vision is one that utilizes the bicycle to earnestly celebrate the pleasures of conquering a “wider world” while fiercely protecting the boundaries of morality, civilization, and whiteness.

In this chapter, I offer some personal and political context about Frances Willard to better examine the language she uses to inspire women to “gain the mastery” of the bicycle and thereby “help women to a wider world.”¹⁹⁷ I explore how the (white) New Woman atop her bicycle interacts with the civilizing project of accessing and “conquer[ing] the universe.”¹⁹⁸ More specifically, I focus on Willard’s reliance on

¹⁹⁶ Willard 28-29.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28, 73.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

metaphors of “conquest” to describe the racialized politics of the bicycle and the New Woman, and draw on Judith Butler to examine the speech acts that “conquest” performs. Amy Kaplan, Louise Michelle Newman, Ian Tyrrell, and Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo help me to situate and theorize the histories of white women’s reform politics and empire. Finally, I examine how the “wider world” that Willard accesses via her bicycle suggests the potential of both a queer vision of social revolution, and an extension of Anglo-Saxon civilization. This revolution/conquest is inspired by philanthropy, and a quest for pleasure; and yet it is bound by a particular vision that is contingent upon upholding moral ideals and attaining progress for (white) civilization and protecting whiteness. I look to Ellen Gruber Garvey, Anne McClintock, and the pages of the African American newspaper, *The Washington Bee*, to examine how the bicycle opens and forecloses revolutionary possibilities for its riders, depending on the intersecting relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Ultimately, Willard’s metaphors of conquest prevent the bicycle from operating as a symbolic (or real) vehicle of “harmless pleasure,” or, indeed, queer revolution.

Frances Willard: Influencer, Reformer, Cyclist

To better understand how race, gender, and the bicycle contribute to imagining and foreclosing the possibilities of a social utopia, let’s first talk about *influence*. The power of influence, and influencing power. Influence differs from power, of course, in that it begs something of power—it hopes to shape power. It suggests, it does not demand. In the 19th century, influence was a decidedly “womanly word;” as influencers,

women could indirectly access power without compromising their socially acceptable roles within the domestic sphere.¹⁹⁹ And yet, influence is not innocent or satisfied with the status quo. Influence was one of the most essential tools for gaining women's suffrage, a political feat that would—or should—move women from their roles as *influencers* to *decision-makers*.

Frances Willard, among the most influential women of the 19th century, was a master at wielding this power. By the 1890s—the last decade of her life—Willard had grown to become one of the most famous women in the world.²⁰⁰ In particular, her name and image were well-known in the United States and Great Britain as the leader of the largest women's organization, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), with nearly 150,000 members.²⁰¹ As president of the National and World WCTUs, Willard had extraordinary influence upon the political reform efforts of the late 19th century. She is, therefore, a useful case study through which to explore the relationship between the bicycle, the politics of the (white) New Woman, and the ways in which empire and rhetorics of conquest become the foundation of white feminist reform.

First employed as a teacher, Willard's initial dedication was to women's education, and she quickly rose in the ranks to become Dean of Women at Northwestern University; but rather than commit to a specific cause, Willard's approach to political power—or influence—was pragmatic and promiscuous. Orbiting always around “the

¹⁹⁹ Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 134.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Woman Question,” Willard eventually found tremendous power within the temperance movement.²⁰² By 1879, she had become president of the National WCTU, reigning as its beloved leader and president until her death in 1898.

Willard’s political pragmatism allowed her to skillfully combine an adherence to the traditional values of woman’s domestic sphere with radical reform in the public sphere. Indeed, biographer Ruth Bordin suggests that “Willard’s devotion to home and womanliness was paired with radical social ideas.”²⁰³ Rather than stick to the single (and arguably conservative) issue of temperance reform, Willard’s vision of a grand coalition of reform efforts included:

Temperance, women’s suffrage, the eight-hour work day, the expansion of women’s access to financial independence through education and free choice of occupation (including ordained ministry), health education in the schools, physical fitness, reform of the political system to root out corrupt machine politics, dress reform, peace and international arbitration, social purity and reform of the double standard, vegetarianism, and even animal rights.²⁰⁴

From her winning slogan of “Home Protection” in the 1870s to “Do Everything” in the 1880s, Willard’s political ambitions grew throughout her tenure as president, but she was always careful to frame these ambitions within the realm of womanliness. Her political campaigns were deliberately centered around the moral values and virtues of the home, but she argued that women, as protectors of this sacred domestic space, were essential

²⁰² The “Woman Question” pertains to the question of women’s political, social, and economic equality, and concerns especially women’s suffrage. By 1868, Willard was privately devoted to the Woman Question and women’s suffrage, but it would take her until the summer of 1876 before she made her commitment to women’s right to vote public in a speech at Old Orchard Beach in Maine. See Bordin’s *A Biography*, 52 & 98 for more.

²⁰³ Bordin, *A Biography*, 10.

²⁰⁴ Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and Amy R. Slagell, eds, “Introduction,” *Let Something Good Be Said: Speeches and Writings of Frances E. Willard*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), xxxviii.

voices in the public sphere to right the moral wrongs of society. In this way, she extended—without dismantling—the domestic sphere for women who desired to influence policy. She thus contributed significantly to the widespread politicization of white women at the close of the 19th century.²⁰⁵

In addition to her focus on reforms such as temperance and suffrage, Willard dedicated much of her last decade to Christian socialism, the Fabian Society, and other more radical “fads” such as vegetarianism, theosophy, and the bicycle. While Willard was given a tricycle in 1886 by the famous manufacturer of bicycles, Colonel Alfred Pope, it wasn’t until the 1890s that Willard first rode the safety bicycle.²⁰⁶ After her mother’s death in 1892, Willard’s emotional and physical health failed. Desperate to regain her strength, and “on the recommendation of her physician,” she decided to learn to ride the bicycle in 1893.²⁰⁷ While Willard did not regain the health she lost, she found instead in the bicycle a “pleasure far more enduring, and an exhilaration as much more delightful as the natural is than the unnatural.”²⁰⁸ She writes: “So as a temperance reformer I always felt a strong attraction toward the bicycle, because it is the vehicle of so much harmless pleasure.”²⁰⁹ In other words, she found in the bicycle a literal and metaphorical tool with which to *influence*, persuade, demonstrate, and enact her vision for a perfected, reformed society.

²⁰⁵ Bordin, *A Biography*, 11.

²⁰⁶ Willard 14.

²⁰⁷ Bordin, *A Biography*, 208.

²⁰⁸ Willard 12.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

Part of Willard’s success as a leader and political change-maker was her skill with the written and spoken word. In 1895, she published *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, an instructional guide for women cyclists and an effective treatise about the moral and physical benefits of the bicycle to individuals—especially women—and the political potential of the bicycle in the well-intended hands of reformers. Willard was not alone in her love-affair with the bicycle, but she was in a singularly influential position of power, as a widely read author and orator. As such, *A Wheel Within A Wheel* was a best-seller and was eagerly read “on both sides of the Atlantic.”²¹⁰ Despite her literary success, according to Bordin, Willard “saw herself not as a literary figure but as a propagandist, expediter, mover and shaker...Nonetheless, Willard could use words with rare precision and vividness.”²¹¹ Indeed, in their edited volume of Willard’s most influential speeches and essays, Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and Amy R. Slagell concur that “Willard understood the power of the spoken and written word to shape opinion and belief.”²¹² So what *did* Willard say about—or around—the bicycle with such precision, vividness, and power? What words were chosen to communicate to her substantial readership the capacity of the bicycle to be a change-making agent for a reformed society? How might Willard—as *the* influencer of the 19th century—shape the way we understand the power, pleasures, and harms of the bicycle then—and perhaps even now?

²¹⁰ Bordin, *A Biography*, 208, 118.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

²¹² DeSwarte et al., xxv.

Metaphors and Histories of Conquest

The first time Willard mentions the bicycle in *A Wheel Within A Wheel*, she presents it as an implement of conquest: “sighing for new worlds to conquer, I determined that I would learn the bicycle.”²¹³ Here, the bicycle is imagined as a vehicle that requires conquest. It is also, simultaneously, imagined as a vehicle capable of world conquest. In other words, the bicycle must first be mastered, and then it will allow for the mastery of the world. Willard, no doubt, is speaking metaphorically. But this rhetoric is not mere metaphor (when is it ever?); instead, these words perform agency. Drawing on J. L. Austin, Judith Butler theorizes hate speech and performative speech within Austin’s speech act framework. While I do not claim that Willard’s rhetoric engages in hate speech, I do want to suggest that her use of metaphors of conquest “*enacts* domination, becoming the vehicle through which that social restructure is reinstated.”²¹⁴ Her rhetoric, her particular reliance on repeated words of “conquest” and “mastery,” deserves close attention.

Through her text, Willard conquers lots of things: herself, her bicycle, whom she names “Gladys,” and even the universe. It may be helpful to recognize the registers within which Willard’s metaphor operates. On a basic level, Willard “conquers” the bicycle, by which she means “masters” it, by which she means learns to ride. But this conquest seems to *require* that she first “conquer” herself, by which she means control her will, exercise discipline, and behave according to high moral standards. Thus, having

²¹³ Willard 11.

²¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 18, emphasis hers.

conquered the bicycle Willard has mastered the self, and may set forth to master the world, the universe and life. For example, she writes: “she who succeeds in gaining the mastery of such an animal as Gladys [the bicycle], will gain the mastery of life, and by exactly the same methods and characteristics.”²¹⁵ And “we conquer the universe in conquering ourselves.”²¹⁶ Willard’s conquest of the bicycle becomes a literary vehicle for self/universe/world conquest. She effectively equates the bicycle with the world, explaining: “As I have said, in many curious particulars the bicycle is like the world.”²¹⁷ She offers “a whole philosophy of life in the wooing and winning of [her] bicycle,” in which “myself plus the wheel equaled myself plus the world, upon whose spinning-wheel we must all learn to ride, or fall into the sluiceways of oblivion and despair.”²¹⁸

While Willard focuses on the power of metaphors of conquest, she also rejoices in “acquiring this new implement of power and literally putting it underfoot.”²¹⁹ The bicycle is a powerful symbol of conquest, yes, but it is also a vehicle that simultaneously requires physical power from its rider and offers the power to literally move individuals across great distances. In explaining her reasons for learning to ride the bicycle, Willard calls attention to both the symbolic and literal expansion that is possible with the bicycle, proclaiming: “I also wanted to help women to a wider world.”²²⁰ This wider world is

²¹⁵ Willard 28.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

accessed through the literal mobility of the bicycle, and it is also a metaphorical widening of women's spheres.

Butler's concept of citationality is useful for understanding how the ritualized repetition of *conquest* in Willard's writing transforms the word into an action with a history. This speech-as-action "echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices*. It is not simply that the speech act takes place *within* a practice, but that the act is itself a ritualized practice."²²¹ These words—this "utterance...is never merely a single moment [or single meaning]. The 'moment'...is condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance."²²² In other words, Willard draws upon both a past and a future of "conquest" when she uses these words to describe her relationship with the bicycle (and/as world). In electing to describe her "conquest" of the bicycle and the "wider world" in these terms of domination, Willard draws upon the accumulated histories and contexts of this language. Butler argues: "no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force."²²³ In this way, Willard's text cannot claim the innocence of metaphor. Her rhetoric of conquest draws upon and reproduces the histories within which narratives of conquest circulate.

Indeed, by the 1890s, the rhetoric of conquest might be easily borrowed from and applied to the U.S.'s political, economic, and cultural imperial projects overseas. Amy

²²¹ Butler 51, emphasis hers.

²²² *Ibid.*, 3.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

Kaplan links American continental expansion to global empire-building, arguing that the “much-heralded close of the frontier...was inseparable from the call for open doors abroad. With the end of continental expansion, national power was no longer measured by the settlement and incorporation of new territory consolidated into a united state, but instead by the extension of vaster yet less tangible networks of international markets and political influence.”²²⁴ As a reform powerhouse and political player, Willard’s brand of self, machine, and metaphorical world conquest was not disconnected or irrelevant to the American conquest of foreign peoples and lands. Instead, Willard established the World’s Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WWCTU) in 1885 in part to support the missionary conquest of vice on a global scale.²²⁵

According to Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, American Protestant religious and moral reform missionary work was “central to...American imperial culture from 1812 to 1960.”²²⁶ Reeves-Ellington, Sklar, and Shemo argue alongside Amy Kaplan, that American expansionism and American overseas imperialism are inextricably linked and involve far more than formal routes of political and economic dominance of one nation-state over another. Rather, these scholars challenge us to consider “new definitions of empire” that consider “transnational networks of moral expansion” and an empire “based on cultural institutions rather than

²²⁴ Amy Kaplan, “Romancing the Empire: The Embodiment of American Masculinity in the Popular Historical Novel of the 1890s,” *American Literary History* 2,4 (1990): 662.

²²⁵ DeSwarte et al., xix. Technically, the World WCTU was established in 1876, though it remained “dormant” until 1885.

²²⁶ Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo, eds., “Introduction,” *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

on military and economic might.”²²⁷ Highlighted within this expanded understanding of empire is the role that moral reformers played in American empire-building. Historian Ian Tyrrell analyzes the “imperial connections to the WCTU,” particularly during Willard’s reign as president.²²⁸ Strategically pursuing an alliance with the United Kingdom, Willard and her World WCTU missionaries sought to gain access not only to American global power, but to Britain’s massive empire as territory for moral conquest. Tyrrell argues that “Willard tied the ascendancy of Anglo-American culture to her spiritual vision of a global regeneration. The medium of this triumph would be imperialism and colonialism.”²²⁹ Implicit in and intrinsic to this Anglo-American alliance was the assumed racial and moral superiority of Anglo-Saxon whiteness.

Louise Michelle Newman’s classic *White Women’s Rights* usefully demonstrates that white women’s claims to citizenship in the early feminist movement relied upon racist, evolutionist discourses of imperialism. According to Newman, “evolutionist discourses specified that the sexual differences between (white) women and (white) men were both the cause and effect of bourgeois patriarchal gender practices and the key to white racial advancement.”²³⁰ White women, therefore, were in privileged racial positions as “conservators of the race” and of the progress of civilization, but their power was circumscribed by the need to adhere to the importance of separate spheres for men

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7, 8, 13.

²²⁸ Ian Tyrrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 27.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

and women.²³¹ Women like Willard thus relied heavily on the importance of the domestic sphere to women even as they insisted on women's political value and rights in the public. This was accomplished by linking women's political interests (such as temperance, childcare, labor rights, sexual purity) to the home. Indeed, Newman asserts:

Suffragists like Frances Willard argued vehemently that (white) women should extend their activities explicitly to encompass politics, believing that women's special womanly virtues would be well suited to solving urban problems of poverty, crime, the assimilation of foreigners, urban mismanagement, and so forth ('municipal housekeeping').²³²

"Municipal housekeeping," like Willard's rallying cry of "Home Protection" allowed women to gain access to political power without disrupting their allegiances to the domestic sphere or compromising their contributions to the advancement of (white) civilization.

Theories of social evolution, therefore, offered white women a perversely empowering role within the nation and perhaps especially within the emerging empire. Newman argues "that imperialism provided an important discourse for white elite women...as they staked out new realms of possibility and political power against the tight constraints of Victorian gender norms."²³³ For example, white women's participation in "civilization-work" and "civilizing missions" granted them a kind of "social authority" when other forms of institutional power were difficult, if not impossible, to access.²³⁴ So, although social evolutionist thinking dictated strict

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²³² *Ibid.*, 71.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

adherence to gender roles and separate spheres, it nevertheless allowed space for white women to emerge as “racial conservators” and civilizers, thereby entering positions of racial superiority and political authority.²³⁵ The rhetoric of evolutionist theories of racial progress gave women a language with which to argue for the necessity of their role as “effective civilizers,” and assert their equality with white men as citizens of the civilized world “because of a shared evolutionary history.”²³⁶ Thus, the question of white women’s citizenship is closely tied to questions of race, gender, and empire.

Recalling the racist illustration by Edward Kemble, it is worth emphasizing that although the white New Woman upon her bicycle might be chastised and her citizenship challenged, her humanity rarely was. Instead, the white New Woman cyclist was often depicted as a strong (if stubborn and unruly) example of self-sufficiency and independence. The image below of Willard accompanied by two cycling teachers is visually reminiscent of Kemble’s drawing. But here, Willard is well-supported by her companions, a stern and determined expression on her face, as she balances upon her bicycle.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.



Figure 18: Willard on her bicycle “Gladys”

Conversely, the Black woman in Kemble’s cartoon is an embarrassment even to respectable members of her own race. Her body, dress, and behavior mimic the white New Woman’s, but fail even to threaten—let alone seriously upend—the social order. This Black woman is incapable of accessing the bicycle as a vehicle of (self, citizenship, world) conquest; instead, her racialized body reminds the viewer that she *is* the conquered object.

Therefore, as we consider the language of conquest (which cites other forms of conquest as performative speech) it is also essential to examine the work that Willard’s body accomplishes as the actor and author. Butler acknowledges, again specifically

speaking about performative hate speech, that “a statement may be made that, on the basis of a grammatical analysis alone, appears to be no threat. But the threat emerges precisely through the act that the body performs in the speaking of the act. Or the threat emerges as the apparent effect of a performative act only to be rendered harmless through the bodily demeanor of the act.”²³⁷ The language of conquest is an inherently violent one, but depending on the position of the actor, “conquest” acquires a victorious or, conversely, a subjugated tone. Willard speaks from the position of the victor. She celebrates her ability to master machine and world with the power (real and performed) of her body. So, what is this body?

Willard was a white, middle class, highly educated and influential woman who chose her words with precision and commanded the attention of massive audiences with her speeches. She was frequently described as an “attractive” (but not beautiful) woman with a “slight, elegant figure,” light brown or blond hair, and “bright light blue” eyes behind her pince-nez glasses.²³⁸ She was, however, despite her gender and her “slight” stature also “a towering figure, respected, listened to, and loved by countless thousands of followers throughout the world.”²³⁹ She was, indeed, master of herself—and a great many others, too. She had a thoroughly captivating, magnetic personality that attracted—perhaps romantically as well as politically—many of her fellow women reformers.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Butler 11.

²³⁸ Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*, (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 67.

²³⁹ DeSwarte et al., xxiiv.

²⁴⁰ Much has been speculated about Willard’s sexuality and her romantic life. She never married, though was briefly engaged in 1861 to Charles Henry Fowler, prominent Methodist and later president of Northwestern University. Instead, she formed intimate relationships with several women. Her mother remained an important source of support throughout most of her life, but Willard also formed attachments

Willard was a successful conqueror in late 19th century reform circles. She was used to being a victor. She was also part of a larger genealogy of victorious conquerors, in that she was a white woman descended from some of the earliest settler-colonists in the American colonies and determined to shape the future of a perfected Anglo-Saxon, Christian civilization.²⁴¹ Thus, from Willard's perspective, the language of conquest is celebratory, effective, and morally good. But what does Willard's mastery of the bicycle-as-world bring us?

Visions of Reform: Home and World Conquest

Willard's vision for the good society was for comprehensive reform to political, economic, and gendered systems of power. She wove together philosophies of philanthropy, Christian socialism, and a deep trust in big government to imagine a world united in its quest for broad social justice. She was an optimist, but also a pragmatist, and believed that with proper strategy and organization, a perfect society was achievable, all human problems solvable.

The bicycle was an integral—not incidental—symbol of the kind of change Willard wished to see and to enact.²⁴² In *A Wheel Within A Wheel*, Willard writes: “as a

to Mary Bannister, Kate Jackson, Anna Dickinson, Francis Murphy, and most notably, her long-time secretary Anna Gordon, and her closest and last devoted relationship to Lady Henry (also known as Isabel Somerset). Willard's biographer cites Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in explaining Willard's female intimacies as “homosocial” relationships (Bordin, 44). Naming Willard's intimacy with other women “lesbian” would be anachronistic; and while it was not uncommon for women of Willard's position to form close bonds with other women, I think it would be fair to call Willard's romantic life “queer.”

²⁴¹ Bordin, *A Biography*, 14.

²⁴² And she wasn't the only one in 19th century reform circles for whom the bicycle was a natural extension of radical and progressive ideologies. Edward Carpenter, author of *The Intermediate Sex* and fellow member of the Fabian Society, a British socialist group, refers to the bicycle as a key piece of evidence for

temperance reformer I always felt a strong attraction to the bicycle, because it is the vehicle of so much harmless pleasure, and because the skill required in handling it obliges those who mount to keep clear heads and steady hands.”²⁴³ Not only do the physical and material conditions of the bicycle suggest the need for sobriety, but the bicycle lends itself expertly to a range of symbols useful to Willard’s broader reform goals. In the following section, I examine how Willard’s symbolic use of the bicycle in *A Wheel Within A Wheel* fits into her broad vision of a reformed society.

In addition to functioning as a symbol for women’s liberation via the conquest of a wider world the bicycle, in Willard’s text, is saddled with metaphors of humanitarian reform. Willard consistently compares the political process of policy-making to the process of learning to ride the bicycle. She writes: “It is the same with all reforms: sometimes they seem to lag, then they barely balance, then they begin to oscillate as if they would lose the track and tumble to one side; but all they need is a new impetus at the right moment on the right angle, and away they go again as merrily as if they had never threatened to stop at all.”²⁴⁴ The bicycle gives Willard an amusing and concrete example of how to approach reforms *indirectly* with caution, balance, determination, and will-power. Progress, she warns, is not always linear or obvious; but with steadfast

changes to gender roles and relationships between men and women. See Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, (New York and London: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912).

²⁴³ Willard 13.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

commitment, there is always movement.²⁴⁵ These are lessons Willard spent her lifetime learning and perfecting—lessons she gleaned from her philanthropic work.

Today we may call Willard’s political work lobbying, community organizing, or activism. In the context of 19th century middle class and elite circles, Willard’s work fell under the large umbrella of philanthropy. Philanthropic work was one appropriate avenue through which women could enter politics.²⁴⁶ Willard’s brand of philanthropy called upon the New Woman, with an emphasis on Christian charity, to join together a broad range of related reforms, all of which would address the “human question.” Willard “envisioned an army of women imbued with the ideal of service to others, pursuing a ‘new and magnificent profession for women, now being brought to almost scientific accuracy and completeness: PHILANTHROPY.’”²⁴⁷ By 1891, Willard used her largest annual platform, the WCTU’s national convention, to describe her philanthropic vision, “declaring that ‘women’s mighty realm of philanthropy encroaches each day upon the empire of sin, disease and misery that has so long existed we thought it might endure forever. But there remains an immense territory to be possessed.’”²⁴⁸ Once again, Willard utilizes a particular language of conquest to describe her reform work. This is not an accident.

By the end of her life, Willard’s philanthropic work was global. Her efforts toward conquest of the world was accomplished via the World WCTU missionaries,

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

²⁴⁶ Bordin, *A Biography*, 192.

²⁴⁷ DeSwarte et al. quoting Willard (from *How to Win: A Book for Girls*), xxxv.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, quoting Willard’s 1891 presidential address, xxxvi.

where representatives of Willard's reform army entered over forty countries. Willard writes: "But for the intervention of the sea, the shores of China and the Far East would be part and parcel of our land. We are *one world* of tempted humanity...We must no longer be hedged about by the artificial boundaries of states and nations,' and we must declare 'the whole world is my parish and to do good my religion.'"²⁴⁹ Willard's relationship to missionary work was not, however, straightforward. According to her biographer, she "linked missionary activity to capitalism, warning that Americans should not forget that 'It is the Christian nations that illustrate the wage slavery carried to its extreme conclusion of sin and misery, the reign of capital, and the enforced serfdom of labor.'"²⁵⁰ In the 1890s, Willard embraced Christian socialism, which sought to bring Christian morality together with a socialist critique of capitalism; this became her solution to most of the myriad problems her reform work sought to correct. So, while she may have looked upon missionary work with some skepticism and (correctly) noted its problematic attachments to capitalism and colonialism, she nevertheless supported a global (and Christian) solution to humanity's problems.

By the late 1880s, Willard's famous WCTU slogan, "Do Everything" was meant literally. She saw the importance of tackling a huge range of interconnected humanitarian problems with a broad range of reforms. Bordin describes Willard at this stage of her reform career as a "preventive reformer." She defines the term:

The preventive reformers believed society could be made rational and its problems solved...In the last quarter of the nineteenth century social critics felt

²⁴⁹ Bordin quoting Willard (from Anna Gordon's *The Life of Frances E. Willard*), *A Biography*, 190, italics in Bordin's text, not original.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, quoting Willard's 1893 presidential address, 159.

preventive reform was realizable through everything from personal hygiene and public sanitation to industrial schools and the eight-hour day. The free kindergarten, scientific temperance education in the public schools, cheap lodging houses for working girls, even cremation found a place under this capacious umbrella. By 1888 Frances Willard had embraced the whole reform cornucopia.²⁵¹

The answer for preventive reformers was in a centralized and all-powerful benevolent state. For Willard and other women's rights reformers, a powerful and just state promised the possibility of equal status for women; "the state was quite capable, if not always so motivated, of being the instrument of the good society."²⁵² These reformers "saw none of the evils of statism, only Utopia."²⁵³ It is here that Willard's ties to global missionary work and her belief in the philosophies presented in the Fabian Society relating to imperialism might be usefully articulated.

Willard was attracted to the Fabian Society because of its adherence to a brand of socialism that fully embraced temperance and the woman's ballot as part of its reform platform. The Fabian Society, like Willard and other preventive reformers inspired by Edward Bellamy's "National" solutions to humanity's ills, invested the state with tremendous power.²⁵⁴ Core members of the Fabian Society such as Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw wrote about their utilitarian faith in a benevolent British empire as

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 146-147.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 147.

²⁵⁴ This global, Christian, and socialist approach to reform was inspired initially by Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel *Looking Backward*. The book describes a future utopia taking place in the year 2000 that might only be achieved by large-scale, state-based "National" reform. Bellamy calls this approach to government-enforced socialist reform Nationalism in part to differentiate itself from other forms of socialism. The novel inspired many late 19th century reformers, including Willard, who channeled her socialist zeal into Christian socialism and her involvement with the British Fabian Society. See Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, (Boston: Ticknor & Co, 1888).

“a means of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number.”²⁵⁵ And indeed, Ian Tyrrell offers ample evidence that, although complicated by her critique of capitalism, Willard and the World WCTU shared in their enthusiasm for a utopian, Christian empire.²⁵⁶ For these reformers, the vision of a perfected world began with the home. Willard found that women’s firm connection to the home and to discourses of women’s moral responsibility for and protection of the domestic sphere offered significant potential for philanthropic and political work on a global scale.

And it was the bicycle, in fact, that facilitated the connection between the home and wider world, offering itself as a liberatory vehicle for social change *and* a machine capable of securing domestic bliss. It importantly signaled the New Woman’s departure from convention, without dismantling her heteronormative connection to the home. Indeed, many feminist reformers consistently sought to draw the machine back into the realm of domesticity, while still appreciating the widened spheres its mobility allowed. Willard utilized and delighted in the bicycle’s reputation as a liberating vehicle for women, writing:

...the bicycle...was just then our [Willard and her cycling companion’s] whimsical and favorite symbol.

We rejoiced together greatly in perceiving the impetus that this uncompromising but fascinating and illimitably capable machine would give to that blessed ‘woman question’ to which we were both devoted.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Lauren Arrington, “St John Ervine and the Fabian Society: Capital, Empire and Irish Home Rule.” *History Workshop Journal* 72 (Autumn 2011): 56-57.

²⁵⁶ Tyrrell, 5, 27.

²⁵⁷ Willard 38.

Willard understood the power such a whimsical symbol of movement, physical strength, independence, and camaraderie with men would lend the Woman Question. In fact, one of the bicycle's greatest benefits for the Woman Question, according to Willard, was its ability to offer a new version of manhood and new womanhood—together as the New Pair—a common activity and experience.²⁵⁸ The companionate marriage was a key element of Willard's overall vision for “the joint rule of a joint world by the joint forces of its mothers and its fathers.”²⁵⁹ She firmly believed that shared experiences and a recognition of equal capabilities would foster stronger and more egalitarian partnerships, which would in turn strengthen the home—the foundation and *raison d'être* of Willard's political career.²⁶⁰ She made this argument by emphasizing the bicycle's positive role in supporting a new kind of heterosexual courtship.²⁶¹

Ellen Gruber Garvey demonstrates the familiar narrative in magazine fiction that aligned women's cycling with the “new expectations of heterosexual sociability in courtship and marriage.”²⁶² She argues that “the desire for the freedom of the bicycle...[is frequently] subsumed into romance” in bicycle fiction.²⁶³ In Willard's ideal, however,

²⁵⁸ DeSwarte et al., xxxiv.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, quoting Willard's 1895 presidential address, xxxiv.

²⁶⁰ Willard 73.

²⁶¹ For more on the history and construction of the “companionate marriage” see Christina Simmons, *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Pamela Butler, “Marriage,” *The Routledge History of American Sexuality*, ed. Kevin P. Murphy, Jason Ruis, and David Serlin, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020). Citing Simmons, Butler suggests that “companionate marriage” was an attempt of reformers like Willard to “translate radical critiques” of a traditional (and decidedly non-feminist) Victorian marriage “into more palatable reforms that...would save American marriage” in part by making space for modern women to enter a more egalitarian institution (215).

²⁶² Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 126.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 125.

men and women will ride upon their industrious, wholesome bicycles, ready to conquer “a wider world, for I hold that the more interests women and men can have in common, in thought, word, and deed, the happier will it be for the home.”²⁶⁴ Thus, key to Willard’s vision of new womanhood and her ability to access a wider world via the bicycle is her commitment to the home and to improving the human condition. She uses the symbolic power of the bicycle and the road to communicate to her readers her vision of the companionate marriage and the means by which to achieve it:

We saw with satisfaction the great advantage in good fellowship and mutual understanding between men and women who take the road together, sharing its hardships and rejoicing in the poetry of motion through landscapes breathing nature's inexhaustible charm and skylines lifting the heart from what is to what shall be hereafter. We discoursed on the advantage to masculine character of comradeship with women who were as skilled and ingenious in the manipulation of the swift steed as they themselves.²⁶⁵

Here, Willard describes a vision of new womanhood and new manhood that promises wholesome, collaborative, and progressive partnership. It bears emphasizing that the project of marriage has historically (and continues to be) a useful “instrument of social control...[and] a tool for racial formation and regulation.”²⁶⁶ The companionate marriage was a (more) feminist version of a patriarchal institution, but it was hardly radical, and it largely participated in efforts to preserve and control whiteness. In Willard’s vision of the New Pair, the New Woman was not a social outlaw. Instead, she describes the New Woman as “one who possessed the courage and will to define herself, refusing to accept

²⁶⁴ Willard 73.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶⁶ Pamela Butler, “Marriage,” *The Routledge History of American Sexuality*, ed. Kevin P. Murphy, Jason Ruis, and David Serlin, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 215.

being defined by societal expectations, whether those of her family, community, religious tradition, or government.”²⁶⁷

As I have discussed in the introduction to my dissertation, the New Woman—perhaps especially when paired with her bicycle—was frequently seen through a more critical lens, a perspective to which Willard was also clearly aware. She recalls in her text:

that when, some ten or fifteen years ago, Miss Bertha von Hillern, a young German artist in America, took it into her head to give exhibitions of her skill in riding the bicycle she was thought by some be a more of semi-monster...she was considered to be one of those persons who classified nowhere, and who could not do so except to the injury of the feminine guild with which they were connected before they ‘stepped out.’²⁶⁸

Rejecting this version of new womanhood, Willard defends the New Woman cyclist as a hopeful vision for humanity. Rather than monsters, or members of the unthinkable “third sex,” Willard’s New Woman is full of “self-determination and self-confidence,” a powerful moral force and an excellent companion to both the bicycle and to a husband.²⁶⁹ In so doing, Willard also distances the bicycle and the New Woman cyclist from queer potentialities. It is a delicate line separating the New Woman of Willard’s imagining—who, although more adventurous and free in body and spirit, is nevertheless committed to the domestic wellbeing of her family and husband—from the New Woman-as-semi-monster—who delights in the unconventionality of her escape from traditional expectations of womanhood.

²⁶⁷ DeSwarte et al., xxxii.

²⁶⁸ Willard 13, 15-16.

²⁶⁹ DeSwarte et al., xxxiii.

Navigating this line, Willard cites medical doctors at length in her text to offer evidence that not only would the bicycle prove harmless to female riders, but that, in fact, it promises to cure a slew of common physical ailments and psychological neuroses, including “dyspepsia, torpid liver, incipient consumption, nervous exhaustion, rheumatism, and melancholia...[and] ‘goes to the root of [women’s] nervous troubles.’”²⁷⁰ Willard’s inclusion of medical discourse to support the moral and healthy use of the bicycle for women was not at all unusual. Garvey demonstrates that both pro- and anti-bicycling advocates used medical discourse to support their respective positions with regards to the threat or benefit of cycling to women’s bodies—particularly their sexual innocence. Indeed, both camps appear to agree that “medical pronouncement on women’s bicycling was necessary and called for, that pleasurable physical activity undertaken by women should come under medical authority.”²⁷¹ Thus, with the help from her chosen authoritative figures, Willard continues throughout her text to insist that the bicycle is one of those rare and prized “harmless pleasures” for women, and for men, too.

How, we might ask, can the home feature so prominently in the story of the New Woman and her bicycle—the symbolic vehicle of escape and liberation? For Willard, liberated new womanhood was by no means disconnected from the home. And she was not alone. For example, Margaret Murray Washington, Booker T. Washington’s wife, was dedicated to the “uplift” of Black women as a means through which to combat racial oppression more generally. While a more radical rejection of the popular discourse of

²⁷⁰ Willard, quoting Dr. Seneca Egbert, 55.

²⁷¹ Garvey 114.

“separate spheres” was inspired and fueled by the bicycle, the credibility of feminine domesticity remained central to debates surrounding the New Woman—particularly for women of color.

In her efforts toward racial advancement, Washington did not challenge the relationship between women and domesticity. For her purposes, the New Negro Woman must be wholly committed to the doctrine of “separate spheres,” with her focus on the home and motherhood: “Thus it is with the struggle to uplift the negro woman there is a starting point, and this I believe to be the home. The two words, home and woman, are so closely connected that I could not, even if I desired, separate one from the other.”²⁷² In addition to identifying women’s social and political contribution as that which is contained within the home, Washington insists that “[l]essons in making home neat and attractive; lessons in making family life stronger, sweeter, and purer by personal efforts of the woman; lessons in tidiness of appearance among women; lessons of clean and pure habits of everyday life in the home...thus [bring] to the women self-respect and [get] for them the respect of others.”²⁷³ With these lessons of domesticity and cleanliness, Black women—indeed the whole race—would gain access to power and respect, and, Washington predicts, with Black women’s attention focused on the domestic sphere, “a seed is being sown which will bring forth a better wifhood and motherhood.”²⁷⁴

Advocates for Black women’s rights were well aware that their reforms required approval

²⁷² Mrs. Booker T. Washington, “The New Negro Woman,” *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894 – 1930*, ed. Martha H. Patterson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 55 – 56. Originally published in *Lend a Hand*, October, 1895, 254 – 260.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

and participation from establishment powers. Moreover, many feminists of this era, along with the women and men these reforms were designed to help, were themselves convinced of the moral goodness and practical utility of “separate spheres.”

Woman’s advice columns within the Washington, D.C.-based African American newspaper, *The Washington Bee*, betray a similar adherence to feminine etiquette, suggesting that traditional femininity for this community of editors and readers was closely linked to racial uplift.²⁷⁵ And yet, these advice columns signal a deep ambivalence with regards to Black women and the bicycle. Although at times rejecting the appropriateness of the bicycle altogether, the advice offered more often attempts to incorporate the proper etiquette of the lady into her use of the bicycle. This is especially true concerning the suitability of the bicycle costume, particularly the modern and controversial knickerbockers or bloomers, which were associated almost exclusively with women cyclists during this period. For example, in October of 1895, the column titled “Pointer on the Side” warned: “Girls, do remember that at your best you do not look graceful on the wheels, so if you ride upon the steel avoid all conspicuousness of gay dress.”²⁷⁶ One month later, the column “Woman’s World” further reveals the assumed connection between the New Woman and the bicycle, and the resulting disruption to traditional femininity that the bicycle costume represents: “The New Orleans Picayune

²⁷⁵ For more on Black women and racial uplift in Washington D.C. during the late 19th century and early 20th century, see Treva B. Lindsey, *Colored No More: Reinventing Black Womanhood in Washington, D.C.*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

²⁷⁶ “Pointer on the Side,” *The Washington Bee*, October 26, 1895, 7, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

declared that woman's first duty to man is to be beautiful; but if she insists upon her rights she can be as ugly as she pleases to be, and wear the dizziest of bloomers."²⁷⁷

Of course, not all Black women cyclists were so committed to the doctrine of "separate spheres" and female domesticity as the primary strategy for racial uplift. Segments from the column "Fashionable" published in the same year, and in one case even the same issue as columns denouncing the ladies' cycling costume, encouraged the fashionable young woman with tips to design the latest bicycle outfit: "An economical woman can take any last year's thick cloth skirt made in the old fashion narrow way, and cut it three inches shorter[,] wear beneath it [a] pair of ready made black satin knickerbockers, and with such a costume may bicycle comfortably."²⁷⁸ Directly contradicting the association of bloomers with ugliness, in the "Fashionable" column costumes were described as "very graceful but eccentric," "beautiful," "charming," and as having a "jaunty effect."²⁷⁹ Although echoing Washington's call for "lessons in tidiness of appearance," this column's advice for "fashionable girls" seeks not to discourage cycling, but to contain the activity within appropriate boundaries of traditional femininity: "Bicycling and roller skating are much the fashion at present and of course all fashionable girls will seek the model for dress I described some time ago. Dark dresses only look well upon bicycles, and the more neatly they are made the better. It is not quite the fashionable thing for ladies to go bicycling alone, still the girls who 'don't care' are

²⁷⁷ "Woman's World," *The Washington Bee*, November 2, 1895, 6, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

²⁷⁸ "Fashionable," *The Washington Bee*, October 12, 1895, 3, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

²⁷⁹ "Fashionable," *The Washington Bee*, August 31, 1895, 3, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

often seen alone.”²⁸⁰ Even while advocating for some maintenance of the private sphere, cautioning ladies not to bicycle without accompaniment, the segment’s acknowledgment of the “girls who ‘don’t care’” brings awareness to the (growing) infiltration of women and their bicycles in the public sphere, even in communities of color. Finally, less than one year later, “Pointer on the Side” seems to have surrendered to the popular use of bloomers and declares: “Bicyclers: Bloomers are an indispensable [*sic*] adjunct to a bicycle suit, and should be worn by girls for golf, tennis or all athletic sports. A woman can, if she will, dignify any branch of useful labor.”²⁸¹ Praising the lady cyclist and her jaunty bloomers while warning her against abandoning expectations of appropriate femininity, *The Washington Bee* remains ambivalent about the bicycle’s potential revelatory influence upon the New Negro Woman.

The *Bee*, however, was not ambivalent in its praise for the bicycle as a symbol of class status, consistently emphasizing the link between the bicycle and upward mobility. The *Bee* often printed short updates on the lives of members within its distinguished readership, frequently mentioning doctors, lawyers, and teachers embarking upon short and long-distance bicycle tour vacations.²⁸² The newspaper’s proud references to respected members of its community taking to the wheel reflect a somewhat unusually upper-class demographic. In the first years of the bicycle boom, bicycles were expensive luxury items. It wasn’t until the late 1890s and early 1900s that the bicycle became sufficiently affordable for the white working class or even the Black middle-class. For

²⁸⁰ “Fashionable,” *The Washington Bee*, October 26, 1895, 3, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

²⁸¹ “A Pointer on the Side,” *The Washington Bee*, June 13, 1896, 7, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

²⁸² “City Brevities,” *The Washington Bee*, July 18, 1896, 8, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>.

example, in 1896 most bicycles advertised in *Harper's Weekly* were asking between \$85 - \$100 per bicycle, with a few lower priced models ranging between \$40 - \$75 per bicycle. That means that, according to W.E.B. Du Bois's 1908 study, *The Negro Family*, "Well-to-do" Black families would need to commit between 4 – 10% of their annual incomes in order to purchase a new bicycle in 1896.²⁸³ Nevertheless, as evidenced by the *Bee*, some upwardly mobile middle- and working-class cyclists invested in the bicycle as a status symbol.

Black cyclists in Boston, for example, found work in decidedly middle-class or lower-middle class occupations, such as "laborers, porters, waiters, tailors" and the like.²⁸⁴ According to Census records, these Boston cyclists were literate and many of them identified as "mulatto," or mixed race, suggesting that "this was a group of middle-class individuals for whom upward mobility was likely easier than for their darker-skinned brethren."²⁸⁵ For these working men and women, ownership of a bicycle and the time to ride it signaled the ability to enjoy leisure, and could provide access to a similar network of upwardly mobile people of color. In an era of proliferating social and political organizations, bicycle clubs existed within a "web of historical relationships among black

²⁸³ W. E. B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro Family* (Atlanta: The Atlanta University Press, 1908), 113. W.E.B. Du Bois's 1908 study, *The Negro Family*, offers us insight into the ability (or inability) of Black families to participate in the bicycle craze. He records the average annual income for Black families in Philadelphia in 1896. We learn that 73% of the families surveyed for this study were considered either "Fair" or "Comfortable," earning between \$5 to \$15 per week, or an annual income for a family of five of between \$260 to \$789. Only the top category, "Well-to-do," earned \$1,000 per year, matching the national average annual income for (predominantly white) families from three years earlier, in 1893. When we apply this knowledge to an examination of bicycle costs, it becomes clear that a very small percentage of Black families could afford to engage in the leisurely pastime of bicycling. Those who did were likely acutely aware of the bicycle's symbolic value as a modern machine of leisure.

²⁸⁴ Lorenz J. Finison, *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 161.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

cyclists, businesses, churches, military, and fraternity organizations.”²⁸⁶ Ultimately, whether Washington, D.C. doctors, or Boston tailors, “[t]he composite biography of the African American cyclists of the 1890s suggests that they were upwardly mobile individuals—strivers” for whom the bicycle behaved as a tool of racial solidarity, leisure, and movement.²⁸⁷

Willard, too, saw the bicycle as a vehicle of upward mobility, though her vision was more narrowly focused on women and the white working class. She foresaw—and certainly hoped—that the bicycle would “ere long come within the reach of all” and prove to be a democratizing form of transportation and leisure for laborers.²⁸⁸ In *A Wheel Within A Wheel* she commends the “democratic route of hard work” that is essential when attempting to master the bicycle for both the “peasant and prince.”²⁸⁹ For Willard, the difficulty of mastering the bicycle is part of her attraction to it. She believed that the strength, balance, access to outdoors, and need for sobriety that the bicycle demands of its riders would contribute to her overall vision of the good society. Instead of frequenting public houses, for example, bicyclists would be exposed to the “cleanliest ways of living.”²⁹⁰ This was leisure without licentiousness.

Willard liked the contrast between the public house (as the site of sin) and the bicycle’s ability to grant access to the natural world (“the gospel of outdoors,” she called

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁸⁸ Willard 73.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

it).²⁹¹ Both the pub and the bike offer its patrons pleasure; but as the nation's leading temperance reformer, Willard argued vehemently against the *harmful* and *unnatural* pleasures of the pub and celebrated the *harmless* and *natural* pleasures of the bicycle: "I had often mentioned in my temperance writings that the bicycle was perhaps our strongest ally in winning young men away from public-houses, because it afforded them a pleasure far more enduring, and an exhilaration as much more delightful as the natural is than the unnatural."²⁹² Here, Willard establishes a strong binary opposition between the natural bicycle, and the unnatural public-houses.

In carefully qualifying the pleasure achieved through a bicycle as *harmless* and *natural*, Willard condemns the *unnatural* and *harmful* pleasures of men who frequent public-houses. Read within this natural/unnatural opposition is a series of related, simplified dichotomies: country/city, productive/lazy, sober/intoxicated, moral/immoral, woman/man. When placed within the historical context of late 19th century temperance reform, there is another unspoken but implicit distinction between citizen and immigrant, white and black, native and foreigner. The collection of binaries to which Willard's statement alludes is deeply connected to larger anxieties surrounding race, class and gender in the United States during the great waves of immigration at the turn of the century. Temperance reform sympathizers felt threatened by a largely male, racially foreign, and working-class population overtaking "native" U.S. citizens, their anxiety

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 12.

compounded by the arrival of immigrants from Europe and Asia on either coast, and from the northern migration of formerly enslaved Black Americans after the Civil War.

Indeed, Willard, like many other white women reformers in the 19th century, spoke in support of women's suffrage in nativist and racist terms. In her first public speech on the topic at Old Orchard Beach, Maine in 1876, Willard's appeal to support women's suffrage was couched in anti-immigrant rhetoric. While Bordin allows that "Willard found less offensive arguments to support the temperance cause" in subsequent speeches, by the 1890s, Willard and many of her fellow white women reformers again "joined the nativist upsurge and began calling attention to what they saw as the enfranchisement of ignorant male foreigners while women were denied the ballot."²⁹³ The importance of the "woman's vote" was always—and crucially—imagined as the "white, native-born woman's vote." Turning to "educational qualifications" to approximate and maintain the whiteness of the ballot, many white women suffragists "argued that only the votes of [white] women would enable white Protestant...Americans to outvote new immigrants in the North and blacks in the South."²⁹⁴ Like so many other racialized arguments of this historical moment (and certainly since), these arguments revolved around the protection of white women, and the protection (Willard would argue) white women are uniquely suited to offer the home and nation.

Willard's positioning of the natural and the unnatural against one another, and the pleasures that she grants to either reveals the ways in which Anne McClintock instructs

²⁹³ Bordin, *A Biography*, 99; Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 122.

²⁹⁴ Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 122.

us to see race and class as relational categories of social organization. The image presented at the beginning of this chapter serves to highlight the ways in which race, class, gender and sexuality exist “*in and through* relation to each other” in late 19th century U.S., and the complicated role that the bicycle plays in policing, disrupting, and regulating the interactions between these contested categories.²⁹⁵

As Kemble’s cartoon emphasizes, the binary opposition separating civilization and savagery is further complicated when considering the gendered and sexualized anxieties around the mechanics of bicycle riding; indeed, this problem of *straddling* the bicycle is at the heart of the preacher’s discontent, and the subject of much of the medical and moral discourse of bicycle riding. Indeed, as Ellen Gruber Garvey argues, “riding astride anything was problematic for women,” and the bicycle in particular posed a potential threat to “sexual innocence and gender definition.”²⁹⁶ Amidst public discussions about the masturbatory potential of women riding upon bicycle saddles, “a woman’s bicycle riding posture could be a significant measure of her propriety and sexual innocence.”²⁹⁷ But Willard, with her devotion to the home—and, crucially, her whiteness—may insist that the pleasures experienced astride a bicycle saddle are *natural* and *harmless*. Meanwhile, the Black New Woman cyclist is ridiculed, dehumanized, and sexually degraded. To borrow from McClintock, this Black woman “exist[s] in a permanent anterior time within the geographic space of the modern.”²⁹⁸ As a Black

²⁹⁵ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.

²⁹⁶ Garvey 114.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

²⁹⁸ McClintock 30.

woman, she cannot be Willard's New Woman, able to conquer the universe; rather, she is "atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency—the living embodiment of the archaic 'primitive.'"²⁹⁹ This image reminds us that Willard's bicycle and the New Woman that will enjoy its wholesome pleasures exists in relational opposition to the atavistic, primitive Other. It is a reminder of who will perpetually exist outside of the perfected society Willard and her fellow white woman reformers envision. The bicycle cannot bridge that gap, real or imagined.

Conclusion

So, what does a focus on the bicycle tell us in this examination of white 19th century feminist reform politics? Interestingly, because the bicycle was such a successful "whimsical" yet powerful symbol for social change and for the New Woman, it became associated with the broad coalition of progressive reforms and philosophies guiding Willard and her fellow reformers. Issues like vegetarianism, experimentation with the occult, such as theosophy, cremation, animal rights, the bicycle, and dress reform existed on the fringes of big philosophical ideas like Fabianism and Christian socialism, and found their way onto long lists of more common—yet no less radical—reform efforts such as: temperance education in public schools, physical and sex education, eliminating the double standard for sexual purity expectations, free kindergartens, night schools,

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* It is important to note that, for Willard, *natural* and *civilized* share the same side of the binary coin, while *unnatural* and *primitive* occupy the other. We are perhaps used to seeing *natural* and *primitive* lumped together in a category that is lesser than the civilized and man-made; however, Willard's "gospel of outdoors" identifies the outdoor, natural space to be the most privileged, moral, and civilized space available (Willard 14).

women's shelters, the eight-hour work day and forty-five-hour work week, improved working conditions for working class laborers and farmers, and of course women's suffrage.³⁰⁰ Together, these reforms would correct the social evils of society. Willard's ultimate vision for a perfected world "required a two-pronged approach that would first overcome restrictions on women's self-development and exercise of power, and then unleash that formerly suppressed energy in lines of work that would transform human societies and establish a world founded on equality and justice."³⁰¹ Essential in this plan is the woman's right to vote, to self-determination, and to a liberated political selfhood. The bicycle was her chosen vehicle.

Not only was the bicycle already a useful symbol for white women's liberation and capable of carrying the weight of Willard's metaphors of conquest and mastery, but, as I have demonstrated here, the bicycle was also burdened with anxieties about controlling pleasure and protecting whiteness. This is the conquest of which Willard speaks, and the empire that her philanthropic and reform work would bring into being. In her utopian vision, mastering the universe requires self-discipline, moderation, responsible citizenship, and a celebration of natural harmless pleasures like a good clean bike ride to the countryside. Implicit within this vision is the exclusion of people of color and the celebration of statist empire.

Liberatory though it may be for Willard and her fellow white, feminist reformers, her vision, for which she uses the bicycle as a metaphor and vehicle, is just another tool

³⁰⁰ DeSwarte et al., xxviii-xxix; Bordin, *A Biography*, 145, 157; Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 13-14.

³⁰¹ DeSwarte et al., xxx.

of someone else's imperial project. Although Willard admirably commits herself to the Woman Question, and the Human Question, she somehow forgets to question her definitions of harm, of pleasure, and of the good life. Without disrupting these definitions, Willard's bicycle will never propel its New Woman riders to a liberated revolution. Instead, Willard's metaphorical New Woman returns from her world conquest by bicycle as the ideal, moral, civilized companion of man. Together, this New Woman, her bicycle, and her husband will build the foundations of a civilized, wholesome, healthy, harmless society, content to reform (or exclude) the ever present, yet seldom seen, uncivilized, unnatural, and harmful Others of the world.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERT ATTACHMENTS AND NOSTALGIC LONGINGS IN *TO GIPSYLAND (1893)*

An open road, a wandering “gipsy,”³⁰² and a woman with her bicycle. All three aspects of this image connote escape, freedom, and movement; it is Elizabeth Robins Pennell’s ideal realized.



THE PERFECT GIPSY.

Figure 19: “The Perfect Gipsy”

³⁰² Pennell, like many of her contemporaries, uses the term “gipsy” or “gypsy” to refer to the Romany people. Today, this terminology is largely considered derogatory, although some Romany communities prefer to refer to themselves as “Gypsies.” Throughout this text, I will use Pennell’s language of “gipsy” to describe the Romany people in order to highlight Pennell’s exoticized and racialized Othering of this community, which is central to her experience of the “real gipsy.” I will not use this terminology when speaking more generally about the Romany people or Romani language. I follow Angus Fraser and Deborah Epstein Nord’s lead in referring to “Romany” people and the “Romani” language in accordance with present norms in English-language writing (Nord 18-19).

The illustration, “The Perfect Gipsy,” drawn by her husband Joseph Pennell, appears toward the end of Pennell’s 1893 travelogue *To Gipsyland*, which details her early self-described “infatuation” with Romany people and culture and culminates in an extensive bicycle and train trip through parts of Austria, Hungary, and present-day Romania with the solitary mission to find “my real gipsy.”³⁰³ For Pennell, the bicycle was the means through which to access the open road, and to “hunt” for an authentic embodiment of unconventional freedom: the “real gipsy.” Indeed, Pennell craved intimacy with the “gipsy” traveler and with unconventional living. But her bicycle, here literally dividing the road between she and her object of professed desire, stands as a contradictory symbol of liberation from convention and of modernity—the sworn enemy of Pennell’s fantasies of primitive simplicity. Using *To Gipsyland* as a case study, I explore what kind of intimacy is possible between the whitenormative protagonist and her Othered object of desire. Can she offer new forms of knowledge production or does she simply rehearse Orientalist tropes about the exotic and erotic Other? What does it mean for Pennell to “hunt” for her “gipsy” from atop a bicycle?

In this chapter, I offer a close reading of Pennell’s *To Gipsyland* to investigate the potentiality of her attachment to the Romany people, language, and culture to offer queer forms of knowledge production. In conversation with Carolyn Dinshaw, Anne McClintock, and Edward Said, I consider how, despite Pennell’s claims to unconventionality, her investments in white supremacy and Orientalist logics of race, gender, and sexuality thwart the possibilities of queer amateurism. Moreover, I argue that

³⁰³ Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *To Gipsyland* (New York: The Century Co., 1893), 71-72.

rather than operate as an agent of queer knowledge production, Pennell's cycling adventure indulges in the violence of imperialist nostalgia to advance yet another narrative of modernity and empire. In this way, Pennell's *To Gipsyland* serves as an example of how even (or perhaps especially) the self-described unconventional white woman on an unconventional cycling journey fails—despite her desire for intimacy and attachment to Othered people—to meaningfully upend hegemonic power and white supremacy.

To Gipsyland: A Story of Longing

Already a seasoned cycle tourist and travel writer, Pennell's *To Gipsyland* was her sixth travelogue, but it describes perhaps “the most significant of many pilgrimages for the Pennells” because of the deep sense of kinship both Elizabeth and Joseph felt toward the (romanticized) “gipsy” existence.³⁰⁴ The text is organized into six sections, with the first four parts dedicated to offering background about Pennell's motivation to travel in search of the “real gipsy,” and parts five and six providing an account of the eventual trip abroad. She describes her young adulthood living in Philadelphia, during which she made it her mission to cross paths with the Romany caravans that journeyed between Florida and Maine each year. In addition to these seasonal encounters, Pennell cultivated her appreciation for Romany music at various beer gardens in the less-than-posh neighborhoods of Philadelphia (she proudly boasts). This exposure to Romany

³⁰⁴ Dave Buchanan, “Introduction,” in *A Canterbury Pilgrimage and An Italian Pilgrimage* by Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, ed. Dave Buchanan, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2015), xxvii. Pennell writes in her biography of Joseph Pennell: “No more beautiful month of our life together can I recall” (Buchanan xxvii).

culture and music inspired the Pennells to scheme about joining a passing “gipsy” caravan for their wedding-journey—a plan that did not come to fruition. But their commitment to exploring Romany culture was not swayed, and some years later, they finally departed for their several-month tour by bicycle to Austria, Hungary, and Transylvania where the wildest “gipsies” supposedly still roamed free.³⁰⁵

And yet, Pennell’s quest is tainted almost from the beginning with bitter disappointment: her “real gipsy”—an imaginary figure with long hair, traditional costume, violin in hand, and free-spirited—is nowhere to be found, and she mourns the loss of her fantasy, supposedly ruined by a combination of modernity and influences of Western civilization, spoiled by greed, and enslaved by an enforced lifestyle of settled labor and servitude. Indeed, Pennell concludes her travelogue with the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that she and her husband may in fact be “the only human beings now who are Free as the deer in the forest/As the fish where the river flows/Free as the bird in the air!”³⁰⁶ These closing words imply that the Pennells themselves are the “*real gipsies*” they have been seeking all along—that they are the representation of unconventional freedom that had so excited and enticed them to travel eastward and toward a fictional

³⁰⁵ *To Gipsyland* is not the only one of Pennell’s travelogues to feature her interest in Romany culture, music, and people. For example, in *Our Sentimental Journey* (1893) she seeks out and attempts to communicate with a couple she assumes are “gipsies,” declaring, “‘*Me shom une Romany chi*’ (‘I’m a Gipsy’)...in [her] best Romany.” But this potential connection with authentic “gipsies” is quashed when the woman responds that she is no Gipsy, leaving Pennell feeling “snubbed” (Pennell, *Our Sentimental Journey*, 39-40). See Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Our Sentimental Journey* 2nd Edition, London: T. Fisher Unwin Paternoster Square, 1893.

³⁰⁶ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 240. Pennell quotes this verse frequently throughout her text, a sort of mantra that describes the essence of her “real gipsy.” She likely learned of the poem from her uncle Charles Godfrey Leland, who published the full “Gypsy Song” in his book *The Gypsies* (1882). For the full text, see Charles G. Leland, *The Gypsies* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1882), 81-82.

past that eschews the material troubles and social expectations of modernity. It is, however, a conclusion that refuses to recognize the role that they themselves have played in creating an exoticized fantasy of Otherness, and in maintaining power relations that keep the East/West binary solidly intact, even as Pennell insists upon her and her husband's unconventionality.

Pennell was clearly inspired to embark upon her cycle tour by the admiration and connection she felt toward unconventional and nomadic travel. As we shall see, her amateur "infatuation" with Romany culture and people and her desire to achieve some kind of intimacy and connection with them has the potential to confound traditional methods of knowledge production; and yet, her actions and rhetoric are consumed as expert knowledge and consistently serve to reinforce rather than complicate narratives of Orientalism and white supremacy. Her travelogue, then, serves to advance the steady imperial progress of the modern West, even as the journey itself was designed to escape and reject modernity. Moreover, Pennell fails to recognize her role in this steady imperial progress, mourning the loss of her fantasy without stopping to question her own role in making it happen.

Amateur or Expert?

To theorize Elizabeth Robins Pennell's infatuation with all things Romany, Carolyn Dinshaw's understanding of amateur knowledge, which is motivated by desire,

rather than discipline, becomes a useful point of departure.³⁰⁷ Dinshaw explains the fundamental difference between amateur and expert knowledge: “In fact, not ‘scientific’ detachment but constant *attachment* to the object of attention characterizes amateurism.”³⁰⁸ Desire, attachment, even love forms the basis for amateur knowledge production. With this definition in mind, it is possible to see Pennell’s desire for an intimate knowledge of the “real gipsy” as a kind of amateur approach to an exotic subject. We might even concede that this “[a]mateurism...is itself a bit queer, defined by attachment in a detached world.”³⁰⁹ For Dinshaw, amateur knowledge “shows the potential for shifting the whole system of credentializing, of judging who gets to make knowledge and how.”³¹⁰ So, if we are to extend to Pennell a version of amateurism, gathering and producing knowledge about the subjects to whom she felt intimately attached, then such knowledge may indeed allow for queer forms of world-making. Queer, in this context, refers not to non-heteronormative sexualities, but instead offers itself as a term to denote a variety of non-traditional possibilities, including knowledge production that strays from traditional methods of objective data collection, and instead relies on attached experiences, desires, and intimacies. Dinshaw, therefore, identifies the amateur, driven by desire, as a potentially rich site for queer knowledge production.

Pennell was, of course, not an amateur, strictly speaking. She was a prolific author of many books and published essays. Her travels were funded by her writing and

³⁰⁷ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), xiv.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Joseph's illustrations. However, Dinshaw's definition of amateurism resonates for me with Pennell's relationship to this *particular* topic. Her passion for Romany culture and her attachment to the idea of gaining intimacy and authentic connection to the "real gipsy" was unmistakably driven by desire rather than detached, objective investigation. Or perhaps she wore both hats: possessed of the passion of the amateur and the profits of the professional.

Pennell was not alone in straddling the line between professionalism and amateurism when it came to knowledge-gathering about the Romany. Deborah Epstein Nord writes of the semi-professional status of the British Gypsy Lore Society: "The lorists hovered between amateurism and semiprofessional aspirations, a pattern common to a variety of late-nineteenth century scholars whose work took place outside of academic institutions."³¹¹ For example, Nord situates Pennell's uncle, Charles Godfrey Leland, within a larger community of British Gypsy Lorists, most of whom were men who chafed against the social norms of their gender and class positions to embrace a version of Romany counter-culturalism.³¹² This in-between space was perhaps more conducive to women of the era. The "extra-institutional setting" of fields like folklore,

³¹¹ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination (1807-1930)*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 130.

³¹² Leland, author of *The English Gypsies and Their Language* (1873), among other texts and novels featuring the Romany, considered himself to be a "Romany rye," a master of the Romani language who developed a close kinship with Romany people through language and through an affinity for a nomadic or bohemian lifestyle (Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 13). These wandering "Romany ryes," lorists, and independent scholars "devoted [themselves] to the preservation of Gypsy lore and abandoned—even for a brief time—settled English life for a nomadic sojourn among the peripatetic Gypsies," which offered an opportunity to "escape from time, and live a pastoral existence," and for some to experiment with "ostentatious heterosexuality" (Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 71, 131).

anthropology, or, indeed, travel writing, was more “hospitable to women...They were allowed to act as intermediaries of a sort between acknowledged male professionals and objects of study or charity.”³¹³ An intermediary role ideally allowed for the possibility of genuine connection—and not only objective study—of one’s subject.³¹⁴

Introduced to the concept of “gypsying” by her uncle, Pennell found in her first encounters with the Romany an exciting newness and “romance,” which her otherwise conventional life in Philadelphia lacked.³¹⁵ Reflecting on her early memories as a young woman, she recalls her initial interactions with Romany caravans along the east coast:

I thought nothing could be more enchanting than the life these people led, wandering at will from the pine forests of Maine to the orange groves of the far south; pitching their tents now in blossoming orchard, now under burning maple; sleeping and fiddling and smoking away their days while the rest of the world toiled and labored in misery and hunger.³¹⁶

Here, Pennell describes an ideal life of leisure, nomadic travel, and connection with nature. The “gipsy” became a popular trope in American and British literature and popular culture, “easily absorbed into pastoral imagery as citizens of a green and better world.”³¹⁷ The “gipsy” as an idea representing unconventional freedom from social and economic expectations was “a trope for nonproductive work, refusal of ambitions, and the delicacy and softness—the implied effeminacy—of the unsalaried and unharnessed

³¹³ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 148.

³¹⁴ For more on the relationship between objectivity and intimacy or “*distance and difference*” in the field of anthropological study, see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 87.

³¹⁵ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 2.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

³¹⁷ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 67.

male.”³¹⁸ A useful trope, the “gipsy” became “an object of fascination” for writers, historians, reformers, investigative journalists, anthropologists, and others eager to “stud[y] the relationship between the primitive—so-called—and the modern.”³¹⁹ Both Pennells and Leland were part of this community of eager students—and masters—of Romany culture, language, and movement. Like so many others, they found in the “gipsy” idea “dreams of escaping from stifling respectability.”³²⁰

Pennell found escape at the less-than-reputable beer gardens and outdoor cafes in Philadelphia where the Romany played music. She describes the intense connection she felt with the Romany musicians when she first heard them play the Czárdás: “I only felt—felt the fierce passion and unutterable sadness, the love and rage in the voice of violin and cymbal. In it was all the gipsy beauty, all the gipsy madness I had ever dreamed and more.”³²¹ But, according to Leland, the “Hungarian gipsies...were wilder and freer, and all the strange beauty and poetry of their lives they put into their music when they played. There was magic in it.”³²² Thus was the desire to travel to “the real gipsyland” first planted in Pennell’s imagination.³²³ Upon her arrival in Hungary a decade later, Pennell searched (in vain) for the physical representation of her fantasy and wrote about her thwarted desires in *To Gipsyland*.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 138.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

³²¹ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 17.

³²² *Ibid.*, 9.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

This kind of immersive experience, muddying the waters between work and pleasure, became a popular style of journalism for both men and women in the late nineteenth century.³²⁴ Seth Koven points to the “amateur-casual” style of journalism, popularized by James Greenwood and then expanded to women by Elizabeth Banks in both the UK and US, in which journalists would disguise themselves to more fully experience and understand the lives or working conditions of working class, homeless, or otherwise “Othered” populations.³²⁵ Similarly, Audra Simpson highlights the importance of “mimetic play” to the origins of American anthropology.³²⁶ She argues that the “inventive activities of ‘playing Indian,’ of approximating Indianness...donning the garb, writing speeches, doing as one thinks Indians do (or, rather, did) in that particular time” were fundamental to the intimacy demanded by and made possible through anthropology, defined as “a practice of documentation, of theorization, of desire.”³²⁷

Pennells eagerly engaged in this kind of “mimetic play.” For example, when they decided to marry, they planned to join a Romany caravan outside of Philadelphia for their wedding-journey. Rejecting the expectations of their class and race, the Pennells delighted in their unusual “bridal finery” consisting of “old clothes, disreputable hats, bright bandana handkerchiefs, flaring neckties.”³²⁸ Clothes, of course, are an important, though unreliable “marker of class and sexual identities,” allowing here for the Pennells

³²⁴ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 157.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

³²⁶ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 77.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 77, 69. See also: Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³²⁸ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 49.

to “cast off...the constraints though not the privileges of their social status.”³²⁹ In this section of her text, Pennell uses humor and irony to distance herself from the majority: “Our freedom would begin where that of most men and women ceases. We too should become free as the bird in the air, as the deer in the forest, for we would follow the gipsy wherever he goes.”³³⁰ Of course, their attempts to “follow the gipsy wherever he goes” were met with one obstacle after another, from rain to the inability to actually track down the caravan they had hoped to meet. So, raising their umbrella, “one of our concessions to civilization,” Pennell recounts “with a weak attempt at humor, ‘we have our wish. No one could call this a conventional way of making a wedding-journey!’”³³¹ This image of the newlywed couple, soaking and abandoned, is nevertheless an image that Pennell recalls with pride. She tells this story early in her travelogue to signal to the reader that she is committed to flouting convention—with a few “concessions to civilization” perhaps thrown in.

Although the scene resembles a frivolous child’s game of dress-up or make-believe, the Pennells were quite serious in their attempts to join—if only for a short while—a “gipsy” caravan. In this way, their attempt resembled the “mimetic play” of the anthropologists Simpson investigates, or the “slum explorers, reformers, and journalists” Koven writes about, among other contemporaries of the Pennells who would visit—sometimes in disguise—impoverished neighborhoods either for work or for pleasure.³³²

³²⁹ Koven, 19.

³³⁰ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 41.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

³³² Simpson, 77; Koven, 19. Koven writes more broadly about the relationship between philanthropy, slumming, and the “eroticization of poverty.”

But Pennell was neither a professional journalist or anthropologist, nor was she self-consciously abandoning her identity to temporarily go undercover as a “gipsy.” Nevertheless, her style of writing and of travelling (among the Romany, desirous of belonging to and discovering an authentic “gipsy” community) resemble the mimetic play and semiprofessional/ “amateur-casual” approach to unconventional objects of study. In this way, the Pennells’ behaviors and desires are akin to a somewhat conventional pastime of “slumming” or “tramping,” in which white middle class people would enter working class or highly racialized spaces to observe and sometimes to “pass” as a “gipsy,” “tramp,” or person of color.³³³

Erotic Attachments and Fantasies of Possession

To Gipsyland is written in Pennell’s first-person voice, so her descriptions of the desire she feels, particularly for Romany men and boys, feel personal, intimate, and often possessive. Pennell’s reminiscences of her initial encounters with Romany musicians betray an erotic desire for ownership of these most freedom-loving and unconventional nomads. Over and over, she writes of her desire to be the solitary focus of Romany musicians’ attention: “half the pleasure in the music of the Hungarian gipsies was in their

³³³ The phenomena of “slumming” or “tramping” was often meant precisely to move oneself from amateur to professional. By dressing as/engaging with an othered population, the slummer then claims intimate and authentic knowledge of that population. That authentic knowledge then forms the basis of the claim to authority and expertise. For more on “slumming” in the late 19th century, particularly as it relates to gender, class, race, and sexuality, see: Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Reform*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004); Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

playing for you alone...And I was eager that...their music should be for me.”³³⁴ Night after night, she attends the Romany’s concert, satisfied that “they played again, and again it was for me alone...it was always for me the gipsies waited, always for me they reserved the table facing their stand, always for me their violins and cymbal sang.”³³⁵ Pennell’s desire for intimate attachment with the Romany is unmistakably erotic when, later, in Hungary, she describes an intoxicating experience of orgasmic release:

Presently Racz Pal, always playing, came slowly through the darkness to my side, his violin close to my ear, its every note thrilling me with pain that was almost unendurable in its sweetness. One by one the others, always playing, crept down until all stood around us among the shadows. I do not know whether we gave them more money; I do not think they knew either. But they played on and on, exulting in their power. Was it with tears my cheeks were wet, I wonder? Was there really some one opposite with head bent low, his clenched fists beating the table, singing like mad? And who was sober enough to push back his chair and break the charm? Not I. The violin was too sweet in my ear. And these wild creatures with flaming eyes and faces aglow, who kissed my hands, were they the musicians who had seemed so cold and passionless as they sat among the palms and oleanders?³³⁶ (Pennell 108-109).

Slow, creeping, shadows, and darkness; “unendurable sweetness,” pain, and power; “clenched fists,” madness, “flaming eyes and faces aglow;” kisses, tears, wetness.

Pennell’s fantasy is about total consumption; but it is arguably a fantasy of (her) erotic possession rather than consensual invitation.

Another important aspect of Pennell’s erotic pleasure in the Romany musician is his apparent femininity. Anne McClintock writes about the “pleasurable shock...of gender

³³⁴ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 15.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 22; 26.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

confusion” in the context of the British Victorian empire.³³⁷ For example, she calls attention to the titillating excitement one middle-class man, Arthur Munby, experiences when confronted with the visual evidence of working-class women’s labor. Conversely, Pennell’s desire is directed at the delicate, idle, feminized beauty of Romany men and boys. In both cases—Munby’s laboring women and Pennell’s idle men—unexpected gender transgressions become the site of the “exotic and erotic.”³³⁸

But McClintock reminds us that “these gendered labor distinctions were recent social inventions,” and crucially, “the rhetoric of *gender* was used to make increasingly refined distinctions among the different *races*.”³³⁹ We see evidence of this in Pennell’s erotic attention to the brown-and blackness of “gipsy” men’s bodies. For example, upon arriving in northern Transylvania, Pennell remarks upon a passing wagon carrying a Romany family:

...the boys, with tumbled black locks falling into their eyes, were beautiful in that exaggerated, sentimental way that we resent as artificial and theatrical in pictures of the ideal Neapolitan, while their rags were more artfully ‘arranged’ than those of the best made-up stage beggar. One wore a bit of bright red in an old sleeveless waistcoat, but it only half-covered the beauty of his young brown body. We thrilled a little as we saw them...³⁴⁰

Pennell—and presumably, as the “we” indicates, her husband, too—expresses an erotic excitement for the “young brown bod[ies]” of delicate, beautiful “gipsy” men of leisure. Within the context of empire, these bodies, marked as racially Other, are simultaneously

³³⁷ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 102.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁴⁰ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 141.

and consequently marked “as gender deviants, the embodiments of prehistoric promiscuity and excess, their evolutionary belatedness evidenced by their ‘feminine’ lack of history.”³⁴¹ Here, Pennell’s attraction to the gender and racial deviance of Romany men and boys is situated within the context of histories of empire and possession.

Finally, Pennell’s infatuation with the Romany and her desire to seek intimacy with them gestures to her identification with unconventional femininity. Dressing the part, studying Romani, even suggesting at the end of her travelogue that she and her husband may be the nearest thing to authentic “gipsies” left, Pennell “imagines herself a Gypsy” and in so doing, she “escape[s], in some sense, from conventional femininity.”³⁴² Pennell’s unconventionality, erotic attachments, and amateur passions sit uncomfortably alongside her investment in histories of racial and gendered imperial possession.

Bodies in/and/out of Time

In addition to queer attachments and desires, Dinshaw’s amateurism relies upon a queer engagement with time and attachment. While Dinshaw assigns expert knowledge to modern, linear time, she associates amateurism with “nonmodern ways of apprehending time.”³⁴³ Pennell, like the Gypsy Lorists of the period, operated with a sense of urgency in the face of an aggressive passage of time. Resisting the steady march of modernity, these “gypsiologists” sought to preserve a “premodern world” with their “extraordinary discoveries” about a disintegrating culture.³⁴⁴ For these lorists, knowledge produced

³⁴¹ McClintock, 44.

³⁴² Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 14; Deborah Epstein Nord, “Marks of Race,” *Victorian Studies* 41, 2 (Winter 1998): 192.

³⁴³ Dinshaw, 24.

³⁴⁴ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 134, 45.

about the Romany was a final attempt to “salvage what was left of a people” to whom the
lorists craved kinship.³⁴⁵ Amateurism’s attachment to bodies, spaces, and times that exist
in heterogeneous temporalities require the amateur’s embrace of a queer, attached,
nonlinear approach to knowledge production.

To that end, Dinshaw suggests that for the amateur, “[t]raveling east is better
understood as traveling toward and into more explicitly heterogeneous temporalities.”³⁴⁶
Pennell’s adventurous foray into the foreignness of the East offers many examples of this
potentially queer, heterogenous temporality. In her descriptions of the exotic East, she
consistently recognizes hints of Western civilization, complicating her temporal
expectations. For example, she remembers that entering one town, Nagy Bányá, was “to
step across centuries of civilization, from the midst of the wild sheepskins, into a house
where etchings by Rembrandt, and drawings by Victor Hugo, and rare old tapestries hung
on the walls; where the latest books lay within easy reach; and where London tailors and
Paris milliners had set the fashion.”³⁴⁷ This observation illustrates the heterogeneous
temporality that Pennell encountered, moving across centuries and finding both old and

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 132. The desire to “salvage what was left of a people” is closely related to a form of “salvage anthropology” popular among scholars of American Indians at the turn of the 20th century. This practice was also closely tied to “fears about industrialization and the loss of a raced, white manliness associated with the taming of the frontier” (Simpson 77; Deloria 95-127). For more on “salvage anthropology” and its relationship to mimetic play and anxieties about modernity see: Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁴⁶ Dinshaw, 78.

³⁴⁷ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 129.

modern in one space. Such heterogeneity simultaneously fascinated Pennell and disturbed her fantasy of a pure Otherness.

Rich with queer potential though it may be, this particular nonlinear temporality relies upon the divide between a modern Europe defined by forward-moving progress, and an anachronistic temporally heterogeneous East. Therefore, the divide between the West and the East is reinforced, as “cultural differences get turned into temporal distance.”³⁴⁸ Furthermore, to borrow from Anne McClintock, while Westerners possess the privilege of “panoptical time,” which describes “the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility,” the exotic Others of the East exist in “anachronistic space,” where they “do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanent anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency—the living embodiment of the archaic ‘primitive.’”³⁴⁹ Ultimately, Pennell’s “temporal distancing” serves to reify the anachronistic East against the modern West.³⁵⁰

Edward Said describes this divide as Orientalism. To the contemporary American reader, the Orient may be more easily associated with the Far East, however, Said acknowledges that a European perspective (especially British and French) names the spaces adjacent to Western Europe as the Orient.³⁵¹ Pennell clearly saw her travels to

³⁴⁸ Dinshaw, 103.

³⁴⁹ McClintock, 37, 30.

³⁵⁰ Dinshaw, 92. This was a common lens through which to view the Romany during this period. According to Nord, the Gypsy type in literature was seen as “both homogenous and consistently anachronistic” (Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 21).

³⁵¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 1-2. In defining Orientalism and justifying its application to the Near East, Said writes: “Americans will not feel quite the same about the

Hungary and Romania as a journey to the East, even citing Budapest as the “enchanted city of the East.”³⁵² Indeed, Pennell was undoubtedly drawn to her quest to find the “real gipsy” precisely because he was understood as Eastern and Other. Early in her travelogue, she explains: “I wanted something new, something strange, something different...in my eyes [the gipsies] brought with them all the glamour of the East, all the mystery of the unknown.”³⁵³ It is thus useful to consider how Pennell’s text—as a form of “*racialized knowledge of the Other* (Orientalism) [is] deeply implicated in the operations of power (imperialism).”³⁵⁴ This racialized Orientalism, Said argues, is essential to creating, maintaining, and increasing Western power over the Orient.³⁵⁵

If Orientalism is fundamentally concerned with an imperial/Western authority over the Orient, then Western knowledge production about the Orient is Orientalism’s most powerful weapon. Said reminds us that “the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West.”³⁵⁶

Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly). Unlike the Americans, the French and the British—less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss—have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said 1-2). But even regardless of the particular geography of the Pennells’ “real gipsy,” Nord demonstrates that “fascination with Gypsies in Britain was a form of orientalism,” representing the East no matter where they were located, perpetually “a perennial other, a recurrent and apparently necessary marker of difference” (Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 3).

³⁵² Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 37.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵⁴ Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the ‘Other,’” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, 1st ed., (Sage Publications and Open University, 1997), 260.

³⁵⁵ Said, 32.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

Pennell's encounters with this Oriental "unknown" are chronicled, and according to Mary Louise Pratt, "discovered" through the text of her travelogue. Pratt suggests that the concept of a new discovery is "made" through "the seeing, and the writing of the seeing."³⁵⁷ McClintock, too, argues that "the language of discovery was a language of disavowal and dispossession, robbing the discovered classes of originary authority and erasing their power to represent themselves as well as their power to make history."³⁵⁸ In this way, travel writing is, therefore, a form of mastery over the Other. Of course, most Victorian travelling and writing was undertaken by men; but Pratt points to a few key examples of Victorian women travelers and writers to suggest that (white) women also engaged in a "monarchic...discourse of domination and intervention," but that the "female voice...asserts its own kind of mastery even as it denies domination and parodies power."³⁵⁹ This delicate combination of asserting mastery over the Other *while* distancing oneself from hegemonic power—even parodying it—is similarly achieved in Pennell's travelogue, thus requiring a closer examination to determine what kind of knowledge Pennell offers.

"Funny little black things"³⁶⁰

The language Pennell uses throughout her travelogue to describe the "strange" people she encountered on her journey is highly racialized. For Pennell, the image of the "real gipsy" is associated with the exotic strangeness of the East, "where men wear

³⁵⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 202.

³⁵⁸ McClintock, 121.

³⁵⁹ Pratt, 209.

³⁶⁰ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 78.

impossible costumes” and where “the crowd suggested nothing so much as an illustrated ethnological catalogue.”³⁶¹ Nord suggests that within the cultural context of the nineteenth century, “Gypsies appeared to be an observable form of enduring primitivism and an extant link between ancient tribes.”³⁶² Pennell frequently describes the Romany she met (and imagined) as “wild,” “savage” “creatures.” The color of their skin is “dark,”—the “darker and wilder” the more likely that they might approach Pennell’s ideal.

Pennell imagined her “real gipsy” with “long black hair curling to his shoulder, and silver buttons on his coat, [as he] wandered, violin in hand, through the cool wood and over the vine-clad hillside, or sometimes into towns, above all to Budapest which in [her] fancy was an enchanted city of the East, with domes and minarets, with marble terraces and moonlit waters.”³⁶³ This ideal image of the “real gipsy” was so firmly established that Pennell consistently dismissed any person who failed to satisfy each and every requirement of this supposed-authenticity. Thus, throughout her entire cycle tour “hunting after the real gipsy,” she found him only once, “by the roadside, in the middle of the plain...sitting in the grass, playing on his violin...to the sun and to the birds and to himself.”³⁶⁴

This ideal—Pennell’s and many others attracted to “gipsy” culture—is concerned with a racial and linguistic purity that suggests ancient origins.³⁶⁵ The images of dark,

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

³⁶² Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 139.

³⁶³ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 37.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 176, 211-212.

³⁶⁵ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 134.

semi-naked “savages” remind Pennell of the most exotic Other: the African. On one memorable “gipsy-hunting” excursion in Hungary, Pennell describes coming across an encampment where “an old brown witch” sat near “three boys...brown and naked, like little imps of darkness,” and “a young man in a pair of wide drawers, but stripped to the waist, as coal-black as a negro. It was a family party an explorer would not have been surprised to find in Africa. They were far wilder than any gipsies we had ever met upon the roads at home.”³⁶⁶



A FOND PARENT AND HIS FAMILY KOLTO.

Figure 20: “A Fond Parent and His Family Kolto”

Although Pennell’s tone communicates desire rather than disgust at her “discovery” of these “imps of darkness,” her language, its meaning, and its impact nevertheless reinforce logics of white supremacy.

³⁶⁶ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 77, 134-136.

This kind of highly racialized language and the associations between “darkness” and “savagery” were familiar to white Americans like Pennell during this period. For example, Louise Michelle Newman attests that “white visitors to the Chicago Exposition [in 1893] were acutely sensitive to this discourse of racial exoticism that linked blackness with primitivism and used such moments to define and position themselves in relation to primitive peoples.”³⁶⁷ Similar to white Americans of this period, Nord suggests that “Europeans favored the notion of Gypsy homogeneity because it reassured them about their own distinctness and national or ‘racial’ integrity.”³⁶⁸ Throughout her text, we see examples of how Pennell engages in essentialized representations of a racially distinct and homogenous “gipsy” to signal her difference from the people she “hunts.” However, Pennell, like her lorist contemporaries, makes it clear through her use of tone and language that this difference is attractive, rather than repellent.

In fact, Nord argues, “The Gypsy lorists’ fascination with [Gypsy] authenticity...led them to fetishize a notion of racial purity and to romanticize the primitive.”³⁶⁹ It may, therefore, be helpful to understand Pennell’s desire for her “real gipsy” as a form of fetishism. Stuart Hall clarifies the ways in which racialized representations of the Other become fetishized, and therefore make it possible for “a double focus to be maintained.”³⁷⁰ This “double focus” allows an object to be both

³⁶⁷ Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States*, (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 7.

³⁶⁸ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 23.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 150. Audra Simpson similarly argues that anthropologists of this time sought to “authenticate...rather than analyze” their objects of study (104).

³⁷⁰ Hall, 268.

desired and despised; in fact, “What is declared to be different, hideous, ‘primitive’, deformed, is at the same time being obsessively enjoyed and lingered over *because* it is strange, ‘different’, exotic.”³⁷¹ Pennell’s obsessive enjoyment of the Romany should theoretically indicate to her readers her own unconventional positioning in relation to dominant narratives of modernity, gender, white supremacy, and imperialism. And yet, as Hall’s “double focus” suggests, her obsession with the Romany’s exotic and erotic Otherness is consumed and incorporated into whiteness and logics of empire.

Expert Attachment

When we examine Pennell’s travelogue through the lenses of Said and Pratt, the distinction between the amateur and the expert necessarily collapses. Both amateur and expert are undeniably attached to their Orientalist desires, as “the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from [the Orient] objectively.”³⁷² However, as Said argues, “[a] text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual...is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it.”³⁷³ Because the Orient is always already imagined as the binary opposite of the West, its fundamental foreignness is common sense, requiring only rich description as confirmation of this truth. Said further insists that these discourses of Orientalist description “can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe.”³⁷⁴ In accordance with Said’s argument about the

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Said, 104.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

power of Orientalist description to create both knowledge and reality, Pratt similarly demonstrates that the travel book *makes* the discovery real.

Therefore, knowledge about the Orient and Oriental Other is a Western artifact masquerading as description of fact, ensuring that “the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks.”³⁷⁵ Thus, for all her supposed rejection of convention and modernity, and her exploration of heterogeneous temporalities, Pennell’s text nevertheless offers itself as an authority on the subject of “gipsies.” For example, Pennell takes care to catalog and differentiate between the various racial types and ethnicities of the peasants she and Joseph encounter in their travels, describing:

his dark oval face with its delicate features—the sensitive mouth; the nose something like that of the old Assyrian; the unmistakable eye of his people; the fawn-like ears peeping from under the curls—would have stamped him as the stranger he is among the low-browed, swarthy Wallachs, the fair, high-cheeked Hungarians, the stolid Saxons, and the greasy, cringing Jews.³⁷⁶

Accompanied with detailed illustrations, these descriptions conform to and maintain dominant ideologies about race.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁷⁶ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 149. In addition to Pennell’s frequent racial stereotyping, her anti-Semitism throughout the text is especially pronounced and disturbing. Such anti-Semitism is an important example of how Pennell relies upon and maintains logics of white supremacy, yet her treatment of Jews is different from that of other ethnic Others in that she *does not* desire or admire the Jew, however, she *does* profess to admire and desire the “real gipsy.” Thus, her participation in anti-Semitism is much more straightforward than her participation in logics of white supremacy in relation to other ethnic minorities she meets. But while her response to the Jew differs dramatically from her treatment of the “gipsy,” the pairing was common and significant. Nord writes: “Jews and Gypsies haunted each other throughout the nineteenth century as persecuted and stateless peoples, amounting to each other’s ‘strange, secret sharer[s],’ a term that Said borrowed from Joseph Conrad to refer to the paired discourses of orientalism and anti-Semitism” (Nord 6).



A FINE TYPE.

Figure 21: "A Fine Type"



ANOTHER TYPE.

Figure 22: "Another Type"



A REAL EGYPTIAN.

Figure 23: "A Real Egyptian"



THE REAL GIPSY BEGGAR.

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Figure 24: "The Real Gipsy Beggar"

³⁷⁷ Pennell, "The Real Gipsy Beggar," *To Gipsyland*, 173.



AN INVALID.

Figure 25: "An Invalid"



A VAGABOND.

Figure 26: "A Vagabond"



SEEN IN DÉES.

Figure 27: "Seen in Déés"



THE REALITY OF OUR DREAMS.

Figure 28: "The Reality of our Dreams"

These detailed comparisons and characterizations of the racialized Other betray a “desire for order, for purity, for fixity, and for cultural perfection.”³⁷⁸ Audra Simpson lists “categorization, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation, and ethnography” as key ingredients for the anthropologist’s “methods and modalities of knowing.”³⁷⁹ Indeed, once a race, community, or culture is made “discernible” is it conquerable. Joseph Pennell’s sketches of the “types” he and Elizabeth encounter on their “gipsy-hunt” contribute to an “*imperial* genre.”³⁸⁰ McClintock attests that “the notation of types and specimens was characteristic of the travel ethnographies being written at the time by men who were taking a good look at the marketplace of empire.”³⁸¹ Joseph’s “generating gaze” is combined with Elizabeth’s “language of discovery” to offer their readers a voyeuristic spectacle of a “vanishing species.”³⁸²

As we have seen, racialized knowledge produced about the Other is easily consumed as truth. In particular, Hall reminds us that “Adventuring was one means by which the imperial project was given visual form in a popular medium, forcing the link between Empire and the domestic imagination.”³⁸³ Pennell’s travelogue, then, complete with rich description and illustrations of the “gipsy” Others she sought, brings the discovery of the “real gipsy” into being and thus becomes a source of expert knowledge.

³⁷⁸ Simpson 70.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³⁸⁰ McClintock, 81, emphasis hers.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 122; 121; 130.

³⁸³ Hall, 240.

With the amateur/expert binary collapsed in the context of Orientalism, Pennell sheds her queer potential as an amateur, and instead moves through the Orient as a passionately attached amateur-made-expert. Her attachment to the “real gipsy” is steeped in imperial desires of erotic possession. This relation of power between Pennell and her object of fascination is not diminished by her status as amateur or, as Pratt reminds us, of her gender, as the text she produced offers the “monarchic female voice” of the Victorian travel writer, which carries its own kind of mastery over the Other in the form of knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, Pennell’s relationship with the potential queerness of heterogeneous temporalities of the East are made static when she consistently understands the “real gipsy” as lost. The Orient comes into being in the Western imagination as a perpetual past: Said demonstrates that the Orient “was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over.”³⁸⁴ Pennell’s disappointment in how the effects of modernity complicate her vision of a pure “gipsy” suggest that her experience of the East was indeed one in which the East was less full of the possibility of heterogeneous temporalities and existed instead as a space of loss whose “time was over.”

A Disenchanted End

The overwhelming message of *To Gipsyland* is Pennell’s sense of “disenchantment” with the ever-elusive “real gipsy” and his or her foreign world.³⁸⁵ The

³⁸⁴ Said, 1.

³⁸⁵ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 85.

source of this disenchantment is modernity³⁸⁶—the influences of regulatory control upon a time, place, and people that were expected to be perpetually wild, free, and untouched by the material realities of our world. Echoing the Gypsy Lorists’ sense of loss and fervent need for preservation, this disenchantment is predominantly expressed as a kind of mourning or nostalgia for a way of life that has been lost. The “Romany ryes” and lorists were largely united in blaming modernity for encroaching upon the supposed purity and primitivism of authentic “gypsy” life. Nord writes: “The lorists’ obsession with purity is difficult to separate from their quarrel with modernity and their habitual search for origins.”³⁸⁷ Believing that the Romany language and people “contain in their culture clues to essential humanity that might otherwise be lost,” the lorists felt moved to identify, record, and preserve all things Romany before the regulatory machine of modernity threatened their existence.³⁸⁸ Thus, the lorists imagined a pristine purity of race and language and developed a strong sense of nostalgia for a premodern era.

Pennell, too, blamed this loss largely on modernity’s influence of “aggressive newness” upon the region, which led to the Romany being “hunted and hounded from their old haunts in the green forest and by the quiet stream...who are settled, and housed,

³⁸⁶ The concept of “modernity” is fluid; here I borrow from Angus Bancroft’s definition of modernity “as a set of systems and sub-systems such as the nation-state based on specific forms of time-spatial order and control” (2). For more on the relationship between modernity and Roma or Romany communities in Europe, see Angus Bancroft, *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe: Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion*, Ashgate: Hants, England and Burlington, VT, 2005.

³⁸⁷ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 135.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 9. Once again, for a more robust discussion of “salvage anthropology” and its ties to anxieties of modernity, see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

and taxed, until they need but the visit of the extension lecturer and the patronage of the amateur missionary to complete their degradation.”³⁸⁹ Remembering the one encounter the Pennells had with a “real gipsy,” Pennell mourns: “He was the only gipsy left in Transylvania, where the Romanies no longer travel *apré o drom*, but are being fast elevated into farmers and laborers, fast degraded into serfs; where the musicians send their children to school and talk of their professions. Our gipsy had vanished from Hungary forever.”³⁹⁰

Pennell’s uncle, Leland, like many of his contemporary lorists, was open about his disdain for the ruinous effects of modernity upon a supposedly authentic Romany lifestyle. But, Leland’s writings on the subject betray a kind of “self-indulgent nostalgia.”³⁹¹ Comparing the Romany he encounters to the natural beauty of pastoral scenes, Leland dehumanizes the “gipsies,” categorizing them as “a type...indistinguishable from animals and inanimate objects.”³⁹² Thus, Nord argues, Leland’s version of nostalgia for the authentic “gipsy” “is aesthetic and solipsistic. His Gypsies are part of the scenery, a gorgeous bric-a-brac, a beautiful parrot for his own delectation.”³⁹³ Pennell’s particular brand of ambivalent desire of the Romany is situated within this larger context of transatlantic Gypsy Lorists’ relationship with the Romany.

Renato Rosaldo’s now classic “Imperialist Nostalgia” captures Pennell’s relationship to those she encountered well. Reflecting on his own time spent with the

³⁸⁹ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 86, 166.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 236-239.

³⁹¹ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 136.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

Ilongots in the Philippines as an anthropologist doing fieldwork, Rosaldo identifies “a kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.”³⁹⁴ Key to this dynamic is the sense of innocence that is (problematically) attributed to the mourner, in which they “attempt to use a seemingly harmless mood as a mask of innocence to cover their involvement with processes of domination.”³⁹⁵ Their complicity in creating the conditions of change to a place or people is seemingly forgiven or distanced from self due to the regret, longing, and nostalgia they carry for the “traditional” ways now gone. For example, Pennell frequently laments the apparent disappearance of the “real gipsy,” comparing him to a caged bird: “But for the gipsy, free as the deer in the forest, as the bird in the air, alone with his violin, his music the breath of life to him, we scoured the country in vain...in every case the bird in the air had been caged.”³⁹⁶ Rosaldo points to examples in which these mourners feel that “nostalgia for things as they had been...absolved him of guilt and responsibility.”³⁹⁷ It is clear throughout Pennell’s text that she felt little or no personal responsibility for the “disappearance” of the Romany people. Instead, she decides: “there seemed to us no hope for the poor gipsy. And the pitiful face, the eyes, mournful and pleading as those of an animal in pain, haunt me yet.”³⁹⁸ For this haunting—this dream-turned-nightmare—she occasionally placed blame on the descendants of the Romany who had succumbed to begging and laboring.

³⁹⁴ Renato Rosaldo, “Imperialist Nostalgia,” *Representations*, No. 26 (Spring, 1989): 108.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁹⁶ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 190; 154.

³⁹⁷ Rosaldo 114.

³⁹⁸ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 144.

You Can't Pay for Pure Pleasure

The true “gipsy’s” apparent objective of pure pleasure—without payment—is what most set him apart from his inauthentic counterparts, endlessly seeking compensation in the cities and tents the Pennells visited. Indeed, according to Pennell, her eventual example of an authentic “gipsy” was “the only man in all that broad plain... who was idle and heedless of to-day and the morrow!”³⁹⁹ For Pennell, idleness is strongly associated with pleasure and with a simpler, natural kind of freedom, whereas begging or playing music in exchange for monetary compensation betrays the “degradation” of modernity upon the “real gipsy.”⁴⁰⁰

Most of the Romany people the Pennells encountered were dismissed as inauthentic due to their participation in some form of economic exchange. For example, at the first hotel they visited in Budapest in search of the “real gipsy” the Pennells were met with a “gipsy” band. But from the very beginning, they were disappointed by what Pennell identified as the inauthenticity of this group of musicians. In contrast to the passion she felt for the Romany musicians in the beer gardens of Philadelphia, she describes the band at this tourist hotel standing “correct and commonplace in stiff linen and black coats, the leader with his violin facing the audience as he stood grinning as if in bored resignation.”⁴⁰¹ Upon playing a set, the group fanned out into the audience to collect tips from the guests. This, above all else disgusted Pennell, as she incredulously describes the scene:

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

Eagerly they bent over as [one musician] counted the money and laid it to one side. Then on the empty plate he put one gulden note—about fifty cents—as a decoy, and stepping down, he passed from table to table, smiling and bowing, actually begging! The real gipsy, who calls no man master, who plays but for his own delight, begging in the *boro ketchema* of the *gorgio*!⁴⁰²

Pennell's outrage was directed at the musicians themselves, and not at the tourists, hotel managers, or larger structural realities of tourism and capitalism. In fact, when one musician approached her table, she recounts:

...instead of a rapturous Romany greeting, we gave him a twenty-kreutzer piece. I almost wished he would throw it back in our faces: but he did not; he bowed and smiled superciliously as the coin fell silently on the pile of notes.

The collection over, they played again, but there was no magic in music bought for a few kreutzers. It was dull and lifeless.⁴⁰³

Pennell's revulsion at the arrogant yet obsequious behavior of the musicians led to an insulting tip, and to refraining from offering a Romany greeting, thereby refusing an opportunity for connection. She sought no connection with people whom she decided did not match her ideal of "real gipsy" authenticity. Perhaps the economic component reminded her of her class privilege and identified her too closely with the "gorgios," or non-Romany, from whom she consistently attempted to distance herself.

Ironically, the Pennells were not strangers to working their craft—writing and illustration—to fuel their passion for travel. But the laboring Romany—regardless of the context—spoiled Pennell's fantasy of freedom and "gipsy" idleness. Desirous of small,

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 84. Pennell occasionally inserted Romany words and phrases into her text. This appears to be a tactic to demonstrate her intimate knowledge of the people and culture. A favorite word is "*gorgio*," which translates to a person who is non-Romany. Pennell used it primarily to refer to white Euro-Americans, usually in a derogatory way. She avoided referring to herself as a "*gorgio*" and took pleasure in being mistaken for a "gipsy sister."

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 84.

delicate features, long hair, “long slim hands that looked unused to labor, and...graceful, shapely limbs,” Pennell describes an attraction to a non-laboring, effeminate masculinity.⁴⁰⁴ This is the “gipsy” trope of unconventional masculinity that suggests “nonproductive work, refusal of ambition, and the delicacy and softness—the implied effeminacy—of the unsalaried and unharnessed male.”⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, the tantalizing image of the Christ-like “young brown body” is ruined by the knowledge that these Romany were not fully “unharnessed.”⁴⁰⁶ Witnessing Romany communities that either elected to or were forced to settle and work for wages, Pennell condemns her spoiled fantasy: “the delicacy of their features, the refinement of their expression, meant nothing. They were little better than animals. The Sebastians crouched for hours in the sun, their arms clasped about their knees, waiting for something to turn up.”⁴⁰⁷ Here, again, we see the racialized language that so easily moves between an eroticized fetish of brown bodies to a dehumanizing comparison of men to crouching animals. Ultimately, labor, whether in the form of musicians collecting tips at a high-end hotel or peasants farming the land, bore the taint of modernity and therefore remained antithetical to the kind of pleasure, freedom, romantic idleness, and primitive simplicity that Pennell required of her “real gipsy.”

Pennell’s relationship to civilization and modernity is complex; as we have already seen, she took great care to distance herself from “conventional” expectations of

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁰⁵ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 14.

⁴⁰⁶ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 141; Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 14.

⁴⁰⁷ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 152.

modernity, but she did not deny that “civilization” plays an important role in modern society. Her regret is its totalizing effects:

Once, when men were little less savage than the brutes, it was best that the many were tamed; but to-day, that the many are modeled after one peaceful pattern, why not spare the few who still feel the true poetry of life, who still love ‘the tent pitched beside the talking water, the stars overhead at night, the blest return of morning, the peep of day over the moors, the awakening birds among the birches’? Who would want to turn every lark and bluejay, ever oriole and nightingale, into the little twittering brown sparrow of our town gardens?⁴⁰⁸

Here, Pennell mourns for the loss of “the true poetry of life,” even as she acknowledges the importance of a “civilized” majority. Moreover, her sorrow at the loss of some idealized version of “savagery” falsely affirms her innocence.

Pennell’s complicated relationship with modernity and nostalgia is further illuminated by geographer Bruce Braun’s extension of Rosaldo’s concept of “imperialist nostalgia” to argue that in addition to “operat[ing] as an apologetics for domination,” this mourning for the destruction that has been brought about by the effects of modernity “is an irreducible element of *being* modern.”⁴⁰⁹ Consequently, despite Pennell’s frequently articulated disenchantment with modernity, and even her adventurous mode of travel, her sense of nostalgia “work[s] to *conserve* the modern bourgeois subject, not to disrupt or traumatize it.”⁴¹⁰

While Pennell may not be directly to blame for the political and economic changes that led the Romany to a more rooted lifestyle, she was part of the tourist

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁰⁹ Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada’s West Coast*, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 136, 137. Emphasis his.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142. Emphasis his.

economy upon which the Romany had learned to survive. Thus, her unequivocal claim to innocence was short sighted. She imagined herself a champion of Romany culture, lamenting what she called “this show of civilization” without recognizing the role she played in creating this dynamic.⁴¹¹ She refuses complicity in this process of modernity, even as her tourist’s gaze, her writer’s pen, and her eager consumption of all things “authentically gipsy” play a crucial role in transforming the Romany into a market to be consumed by adventurous and unconventional travelers (and readers).

The Modernist Cyclist

Interestingly, the bicycle—the Pennells chosen vehicle for accessing the open road of the authentic “gipsy” traveler—is undeniably modern. In the 1890s, the bicycle enjoyed widespread popularity as the latest and most fashionable product of a modern, urban, industrialization. However, the bicycle has always been fertile ground for contradictory symbolic meaning. Despite its easy association with modernity, it was also simultaneously associated with a freer access to nature and a healthy antidote to the physical and moral degenerative properties of urban living. Clearly, the Pennells were attracted to the bicycle for its ability to bring them closer to nature; but this proximity is nevertheless always slightly removed by virtue of its roots as a modern invention of industrialization.

⁴¹¹ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 169.



CURIOSITY ON BOTH SIDES.

Figure 29: “Curiosity on Both Sides”

In addition, the Pennells were drawn to the bicycle for their “gipsy hunting” because the bicycle, to them, resembled the “gipsy’s” method of travel, furthering their identification with an imagined “gipsy” authenticity. Pennell remarks: “as gipsies should, we were traveling by road.”⁴¹² Except for when they weren’t. The bicycle made off-road exploration possible as well for the Pennells to penetrate deeper into Romany encampments: “Just at the foot of the mountain, on a solitary hilltop, was a group of huts. There was no road to it, and over the stubble we pushed our bicycles, then up through the bushes.”⁴¹³ This kind of adventure-travel holds the promise of increased access to a premodern world, as the Pennells clearly desired:

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

we took our bicycles and wheeled to remote, unknown, unpronounceable villages far from railways; stopping in the shade of the broad street as the peasants in brilliant dress gathered about us, always the dark-robed Jew in their midst, and asking: ‘Are there gipsies in the country near?’ ...But never were there any gipsies [wandering on the road].⁴¹⁴

Here we see that the bicycle was imaged by the Pennells to offer access to a premodern “gipsy” authenticity, but instead, they found none. In fact, rather than aid in their hunt, the bicycle became an obstacle to forging connections with the exotic Others they sought:

...we saw the first Hungarian camp. Out from the tents rushed men in the loose white drawers, or divided skirts, of the Hungarian peasant, women in ragged petticoats and bare feet, boys and girls as naked as God made them, funny little black things on the dazzling white road. They seemed free enough to match their song—free, indeed, not only as the bird in the air, but as the savage in desert or jungle. But we had been pushing our bicycles for hours through the sand-tracks which in lower Hungary pass for highways, and we were too tired to care who or what they were. We did not speak, and the wretched things ran after us begging, whines their only music.⁴¹⁵

In this scene, we again see the highly racialized and dehumanizing language Pennell uses to describe the Other. But importantly, it is because of fatigue from pushing their bicycles through unsuitable roads that they elect to pass this camp by without a friendly word or attempt at kindling a connection. The “savagery,” “blackness,” or poverty of the camp is intriguing—even quaint—but the bicycle prevents a leisurely visit.

The bicycle is baggage for the Pennells in another sense during their journey, when they elect to take a train to Transylvania, stowing their bicycles in the baggage-car.⁴¹⁶ Trading one modern mode of transportation for an even speedier symbol of

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 115.

modernity, the Pennells are determined to reverse the effects of modern-time, even if they have to rely on the inventions of modernity to get there.

Caren Kaplan's *Questions of Travel* also sheds light on the relationship between travel and modernity. She argues that travel and tourism are closely linked to modernity and to histories of colonialism. Like Braun, Kaplan suggests that "travel affirms modernity," despite the insistence that travel, tourism, or even exile offers an escape from the modern world.⁴¹⁷ For indeed, the boundaries that the modernist traveler wishes to transgress "are boundaries that the tourist participates in creating; that is, an economic and social order that requires 'margins' and 'centers' will also require representation of those structure distinctions."⁴¹⁸ The modernist traveler, or exile, as described by Kaplan, shares much in common with Pennell's desire to travel to locate the "real gipsy." Kaplan writes: "the expatriate modernist writer and the vacationer may share the same desire for new experiences or places in order to 'see' or 'feel' differently."⁴¹⁹ Occupying the status as both expatriate writer and cycle vacationer on a quest to experience "something new, something strange, something different" Pennell exemplifies Kaplan's modernist traveler.⁴²⁰

Pennell, like the modernist exile Kaplan studies, sought "metamorphoses in form through the fruitful chaos of displacement."⁴²¹ Indeed, Pennell sought distance from

⁴¹⁷ Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 58.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴²⁰ Pennell, *To Gipsyland*, 2. In addition to Pennell's frequent travels, she lived much of her adult life in London, a true expatriate writer.

⁴²¹ Kaplan, 29, 64, 29.

conventionality, and intimacy with a particular myth of nomadic freedom, represented by the wandering “gipsy.” However, Kaplan suggests that this desperate “search for authenticity”—a “belief in a truer, more meaningful existence somewhere else”—is perhaps a “response to the generalized anxiety of modernity.”⁴²² Thus, Pennell’s distaste for modernity and her longing for a simpler, pre-modern time, space, and people cements her identity as a modernist traveler.

Conclusion

Throughout Pennell’s *To Gipsyland*, we see the unexpected ways that domination can be expressed. Unlike brute force, imperialist nostalgia conceals complicity with a “mask of innocence,” and unlike the male monarchic voice of domination, Pratt points to the ways that women explorers and travel writers parody power even as they engage in its dominating effects upon the people and places they “discover” and describe. Moreover, Said demonstrates that the Orientalist’s descriptions become a form of “expertise,” wielding authority over an object of study, even desire. Therefore, while it may first appear as though Pennell flouts expectations of gender, whiteness and modern civilization, attention to her descriptive language suggests that she remains invested in logics of white supremacy.

Her actions, too, betray her class and white privilege. Although her desire for the “real gipsy” does in a sense challenge the binary that places the Romany in a despised

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 60.

category, this reversal of the stereotype—Pennell’s “celebration...of difference”—does not escape “the contradictions of the binary structure of racial stereotyping.”⁴²³ Pennell’s racialized and erotic interactions with the Other betray her desire for possession more than an authentic desire for intimate connection. Her text participates within the framework of established racial stereotypes and logics of white supremacy at the turn of the twentieth century, thus seriously complicating her professed desire for authentic connection and intimacy with the exotic Others she sought. Finally, her unconventional choice of transportation—the bicycle—similarly performs a fantasy of primitive adventuring, even as it—and she—exemplifies modernity.

This isn’t to say that Pennell’s feeling of intimacy and desire for the “real gipsy” was altogether artificial or malevolent. Rosaldo allows that the nostalgic mourner “surely manifests authentic and deeply felt sentiments, yet even such moments of ‘pure subjectivity’ do not remain untouched by social force and dominant ideologies.”⁴²⁴ Here, Rosaldo reminds us that even genuinely expressed desire and attachment do not automatically detach us from the ideologies of our time, nor do they absolve us of wrongdoing.

While Pennell’s relationship to Romany culture may not have been maliciously intended, her complicity with ideologies of white supremacy and imperialism is nevertheless an important factor throughout her “discovery” and her text. Nord recognizes that this particular kind of nostalgia and mourning for the “gipsy” as an

⁴²³ Hall, 272.

⁴²⁴ Rosaldo, 117.

“endangered remnant” of a premodern time is problematically “the result of projection and an ultimately self-regarding nostalgia, [which] often limited [the lorists’] ability to acknowledge the Gypsies as independent beings subject to change and possessed of a complex history.”⁴²⁵ Indeed, while the Pennells’ “empathy and intense identification” with the “real gipsies” they sought appears genuine, such identification, Nord warns, easily becomes a distorted projection that threatens to “obscure[] the humanity of those whose language, culture, and customs they wished to save.”⁴²⁶ As we saw early in Pennell’s travelogue, her desire for close kinship with the “real gipsy” led her to conclude (in partial jest) that she and Joseph were the only true “gipsies” left; this is an excellent example of how the well-meaning “writer or artist begins to stand in for and replace the Gypsy in a cultural discourse that threatens to occlude the already partly invisible object of sympathy.”⁴²⁷ Here, we see the instability and violence of such close identification with an already marginalized community.

⁴²⁵ Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 126-127.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16, 155.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

CHAPTER 4

RADICAL RIDES:

THE PLEASURE OF RESISTANCE

On June 25, 1894, an Eastern-European Jewish immigrant woman riding under the pseudonym Annie Londonderry set out to be the first woman to bicycle around the world. Just over one year later, a biracial woman named Kittie Knox won a cycling costume contest and attended the annual League of American Wheelmen meet in Asbury Park, New Jersey, openly defying the newly instated color bar. Both women were trailblazers, occupying positions of celebrity and suspicion for their extraordinary feats. Part of what makes their stories so extraordinary is how relatively unexceptional their pre-and post-cycling lives were. Although they likely never met, both women lived within five blocks of each other in Boston's ethnically diverse West End neighborhood of working-class boarding houses and tenements. They were both working women in their twenties with families to care for and likely lacked expendable income and the options that come with financial security. And yet, both women used the bicycle to catapult her out of the crowded streets of Boston and toward a spectacular form of celebrity and resistance to the expectations of womanhood, whiteness, and labor placed upon them. In short, for these two women, the bicycle *did indeed* offer a form of liberation, freedom, and resistance to oppression.

The narrative of the bicycle boom of the 1890s is full of images and superlatives of white wealthy women cycling to freedom. As I have argued throughout this

dissertation, such narratives of the whitenormative feminist protagonist are hugely inspiring, but often conceal the New Woman's participation in protecting empire, whiteness, domesticity, and class disparity. While this critique of narratives of white women cyclists' liberation is, I believe, crucial to offering a comprehensive history of how whitenormative hegemony is constructed and maintained, in this final chapter, I turn to the ways in which cycling and pleasure find innovative and sometimes ordinary outlets for resistance to structures of oppression, in this case in the bodies and ambitions of two unlikely New Women: Annie Cohen Kopchovsky (Londonderry) and Kittie Knox.⁴²⁸ It is worth parsing out what about these women's liberation stories is so exceptional.

Robin D. G. Kelley and Tera W. Hunter's works on African American working-class pleasure and resistance offer important historical context and theoretical direction for this chapter. Knox and Kopchovsky's lower-middle and working-class identities, their racially Othered precarity, and the pleasure they took in the drama of struggling against the expectations of their race, class, and gender are wonderfully illuminated by Kelley's and Hunter's contributions. Ellen Gruber Garvey and Anne McClintock, too, ground my analysis in the historical period of the Victorian empire and shed light on the role that spectacle and advertising play in maintaining and growing empire. Advertising plays an important role in Kopchovsky's liberation, ironically perhaps, as she auctions her body

⁴²⁸ I refer to Annie Cohen Kopchovsky (Londonderry) by her legal last name, Kopchovsky. She is undoubtedly best known as Annie Londonderry, but I hesitate to use Londonderry throughout my text to refer to her, as it would obscure her pre- and post-cycling identity as Annie Kopchovsky. By all accounts, Annie Kopchovsky reveled in the multiple identities and performances of self that she presented to the public. Londonderry and Kopchovsky both limit the breadth of her chosen selfhood; however, for consistency's sake I use Kopchovsky here. I refer to Kittie Knox by her last name, Knox, both because it is consistent with current naming conventions in academic writing, and because her first name is inconsistent in historical documents, recorded as Kittie, Kitty, Katie, Katherine, etc.

off for ads in exchange for economic liberation. Finally, Donna J. Haraway's cyborg manifesto allows me to theorize pleasure and resistance in bodies that refuse salvation in the form of wholeness or innocence. Indeed, I argue that these women, like Haraway's cyborg, are uninterested in the innocence of the New Woman whitenormative protagonist narrative of freedom and goodness. Rather, they revel in the *harm* their pleasures inflict upon structures of power. They occupy a perverse partiality that rejects the wholeness of a simple liberation narrative and embrace the chaos of resistance, spectacle, and performance.

But how do these women demonstrate the radical resistance that is possible when we engage with pleasure? Here, pleasure is not, as Frances E. Willard would have it, *harmless*.⁴²⁹ It is also not the same kind of harm that contributes to systemic forms of oppression—harm to individuals and communities. Instead, these two women contribute to harming the very structures of power that would otherwise harm them with considerable pleasure. They succeeded in their unconventional liberatory struggles through leveraging the public spectacle that their bodies and identities attracted. They were expert performers, skilled at finding new ways to showcase their talents for a public eager to consume, to devour. But though they both sank into obscurity, either by death or by wife-and-motherhood, they never offered their whole selves.⁴³⁰ What we have to

⁴²⁹ See chapter two of my dissertation for a discussion of temperance reformer Frances Willard's praise of the bicycle as a "harmless pleasure."

⁴³⁰ Kittie Knox died in 1900 at Massachusetts General Hospital of chronic nephritis and was buried in an unmarked grave. She never married or had children. For more on Knox's descendants and legacy see Lorenz Finison's *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 214. Annie Kopchovsky had three young children at the time of her bicycle adventure. Upon her return, she moved her family to New York City where she briefly worked for the newspaper, *New York World*, had one more child, left her family again to live alone in California,

devour are only fragments—they only ever provided fragments. Rather than bear themselves to us as goddesses, they compartmentalized their wares and sold them for parts—a cyborg resistance that took pleasure in the partiality of their allowable existence.

Pleasure, Politics, Power

The question of pleasure, and particularly the pleasures of disempowered people, has long been theorized as political. Women, people of color, the working-class, immigrants—for these overlapping communities of variously oppressed peoples, the ability to define and seek out leisure, amusement, and pleasure is often a radical act. Throughout this dissertation, I have probed Willard’s declaration that the New Woman on her bicycle engages in “harmless pleasure.” I have sought to examine how “harmless” in Willard’s construction denotes a natural, pure goodness and protection of whiteness. And how “pleasure” can—when not paired with its crucial modifier “harmless”—easily fall into the “sluiceways of oblivion and despair” and become degraded by the many “harms” of urbanization, modernity, intemperance, and social chaos.⁴³¹ I have thus also tried to demonstrate how the so-called “harmless pleasure” of the bicycle is intimately connected to protecting the false innocence of the whitenormative feminist protagonist:

and finally returned for good in 1900 when she entered into the garment business with her husband. She died of a stroke in 1947 one year after her husband’s death. For more on Annie Kopchovsky’s family life, career, and death, see Peter Zheutlin’s *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry’s Extraordinary Ride*, (New York: Citadel Press, 2007), 149-150.

⁴³¹ Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 27.

the New Woman cyclist.⁴³² Her pleasures are indeed political, sometimes radical, but they are not pure. In this chapter, I explore the pleasures and politics of two New Woman cyclists from mixed race and/or immigrant-working-class backgrounds to challenge the value of harmlessness to the project of the New Woman's politics. Rather than moral purity, protection of whiteness, and the politics of (an enlarged) domestic sphere, what can the politics of working-class pleasure-as-resistance and the potentiality of the cyborg, as a socialist feminist vision of resistance without innocence, bring us? The stories of Annie Kopchovsky and Kittie Knox are useful case studies through which to explore the politics of "harmless pleasure."

In *To 'Joy My Freedom*, Tera W. Hunter explores the false dichotomy between the "wholesome" and "hurtful" amusements on offer for Black women in the South in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁴³³ Race, class, and gender politics that dictate the boundaries of middle-class respectability contribute to definitions of decent and indecent pleasure, especially as modernity shed light on the permeability of these boundaries.

Hunter explains:

The division between decency and indecency that dominated the middle-class discourse on leisure reflected the tenor of debate throughout urban America as popular culture modernized. But the anxieties manifest everywhere about crowds

⁴³² In describing the whitenormative feminist protagonist, I borrow from Amy L. Brandzel's terminology and critique of the way the history of feminism is taught and retold, featuring a "unified feminist subject" as the "whitenormative citizen-woman" (505). I elaborate on Brandzel's critique and its influence on my research in my Introduction and Epilogue. For Brandzel's full text, see: Amy L. Brandzel, "Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women's Studies," *Feminist Studies* 37, 3 (Fall 2011): 503-533.

⁴³³ Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After The Civil War*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 145. Specifically, see Hunter's chapter "'Wholesome' and 'Hurtful' Amusements" in *To 'Joy My Freedom* for an in-depth discussion about the politics of commercial amusements for Black working-class women in Atlanta at the turn of the 20th century.

of strangers indiscriminately engaging in festive social intercourse were magnified in the Jim Crow South, where whiteness was literally reinscribed through play—in grandiose landscaped gardens, mechanical amusement parks, shopping promenades, and in the theaters on stage and off.⁴³⁴

As Hunter argues throughout her text, leisure was so dangerous *and* so essential to boundaries separating race, class, and gender—and separating the wholesome from the hurtful—because pleasure and play do real political work in “reaffirming whiteness.”⁴³⁵ Parks, theaters, dance halls, and social clubs opened up contested space for a broader public. “The changing rules and expectations of public decorum and social conviviality as strangers encountered one another more casually and intimately on this new terrain heightened the tensions that accompanied modernization throughout urban America in the Victorian era.”⁴³⁶ Social clubs, Hunter argues, became a particularly important space for Black women to gather, play, and organize.⁴³⁷ Because of the inherent intimacy of social clubs, such spaces were highly segregated by race, class, and sometimes gender.⁴³⁸ Clubs were also, therefore, a useful tool for maintaining “respectability” in social space.

Hunter’s exploration of the politics of “wholesome” and “hurtful” pleasures in the context of Black Atlantan women builds generatively upon Robin D. G. Kelley’s analysis of the infrapolitics of Black working-class people in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. Kelley, too, locates resistance in the everyday pleasures of working-class Black people.⁴³⁹ Drawing from James C. Scott, he defines infrapolitics as

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁴³⁸ See my Introduction for more on the social politics and segregation of bicycle clubs.

⁴³⁹ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 9.

“the daily confrontations, evasive actions, and stifled thoughts that often inform organized political movements” and argues for the importance of “these daily acts” upon larger systems of power.⁴⁴⁰ He asserts that significant and under-studied political resistance can be found in the “daily, unorganized, evasive, seemingly spontaneous actions” of the Black working class.⁴⁴¹

Kelley’s argument is both convincing and politically urgent, for within his claim is the insistence that the organized resistance to oppression, which most often gets recognized as historically important, is inseparable from and certainly no more crucial to the liberation and survival of working-class Black people than the daily acts of resistance that are often found in moments of leisure, play, and pleasure. Kelley writes: “I am rejecting the tendency to dichotomize people’s lives, to assume that clear-cut ‘political’ motivations exist separately from issues of economic well-being, safety, pleasure, cultural expression, sexuality, freedom of mobility, and other facets of daily life.”⁴⁴² As we begin to think more specifically about the case studies I present here, Annie Kopchovsky and Kittie Knox, I want to reexamine how some actions are classified as daily, spontaneous, play, and others are considered exceptional, organized. Both of these women are consistently described as exceptional. But *must* their actions be framed as

⁴⁴⁰ Robin D. G. Kelley, “‘We Are Not What We Seem’: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South,” *The Journal of American History* 80, 1 (Jun., 1993): 77-78. Note that I draw here from Kelley’s article “We Are Not What We Seem” rather than his book *Race Rebels* due to the inability to access the full text in a timely fashion during the coronavirus pandemic. I trust that the overall concepts put forth in his article form the foundation for his larger arguments in the book.

⁴⁴¹ Kelley “‘We Are Not What We Seem’” 83.

⁴⁴² Kelley *Race Rebels* 9.

unusual, deliberately political, and extraordinary in order to make sense of (and perhaps put away) their political contributions?

I argue that their participation in cycling for leisure and/or for economic independence were *not* exceptional, but importantly stand as acts of pleasure and everyday resistance. Kelley is careful to insist that neither organized politics nor the daily resistance captured by infrapolitics is superior to the other, which calls into question why the classification of Kopchovsky and Knox as *either* exceptional *or* everyday is relevant. Both sorts of political actions are valid, necessary. And yet, I think in consistently framing these women as extraordinary, we forget that much of what they did was unorganized, self-interested, and spontaneous. Indeed, if we only ever consider Knox and Kopchovsky as extraordinary women, are we not implicitly suggesting that they (and their desires for economic and racial freedoms) are exceptional; not everyday; not (for) every day. In this way, their political resistance is separated from what might be considered possible in the unexceptional realm of the everyday. As the following short biographies might suggest, they were very much products of their times and communities—a community they shared with one another and other ethnically diverse transients in the West End of Boston.

West End Girls

Although they were born a continent apart, came from different racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds, and likely never met, by 1894, Kopchovsky and Knox lived just a few blocks away from one another in crowded tenements and boarding houses of

the West End of Boston. And they both sought to escape via the bicycle. Their stories highlight the complicated ways in which the exceptional and unexceptional aspects of their lives collide in their pursuits of mobility atop a bicycle. Furthermore, their stories reveal how the cycling pleasures of ethnically and/or racially Othered, working women have the power to do harm to hegemonic structures of power. Theirs are stories of how the narrative of liberation surrounding the New Woman cyclist *was indeed* sometimes leveraged in the name of radical resistance.

Annie Cohen Kopchovsky was born to Jewish Latvian parents Levi (Leib) and Beatrice (Basha) Cohen around 1871.⁴⁴³ She, her parents, and two older siblings immigrated to the United States in 1875 moving between Jewish tenement neighborhoods and eventually settling on Spring Street in the West End of Boston.⁴⁴⁴ Her parents died within months of each other in 1887, and Annie married another Eastern European Jew, Max (Simon) Kopchovsky, a peddler, in 1888. They soon had three children and continued to live on Spring Street with Annie's brother, his wife and their two children.⁴⁴⁵ A young mother of three, Annie Kopchovsky worked for various newspapers and local dailies as an advertising solicitor.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Peter Zheutlin, *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry's Extraordinary Ride*, (New York: Citadel Press, 2007), 8. The majority of the information I have about Annie Kopchovsky comes from Zheutlin's biography of her cycling journey. His text focuses on the specifics of her trip, though he also offers some information about her background and later life. As Annie Kopchovsky's great-grand-nephew, he is transparent about his personal connection to the story and its protagonist.

⁴⁴⁴ Lorenz J. Finison, *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880 – 1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 137.

⁴⁴⁵ Zheutlin 8.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8; Finison 137.

1880s-1890s Spring Street in the West End of Boston was at the heart of the growing Jewish community, made up largely of recent arrivals from Eastern Europe.⁴⁴⁷ But this vibrant Jewish community made up only about one quarter of the neighborhood's "highly transient" inhabitants.⁴⁴⁸ Lorenz J. Finison describes Boston's West End in the 1890s as "micro-segregated,"⁴⁴⁹ and Peter Zheutlin catalogs the "small ethnic enclaves block by block" consisting of "clusters of Irish, Portuguese, Poles, Germans, Russians, and Italians, and a significant number of African Americans, as well. It was one of the most ethnically mixed neighborhoods in America."⁴⁵⁰

Just a few blocks away, Kittie Knox, her mother, and older brother lived on the corner of Cambridge Street and Irving Street.⁴⁵¹ Massachusetts General Hospital and the Charles Street Jail separated the two women from one another, and roughly separated the majority Jewish neighborhood from the majority Black neighborhood.

Knox was born on October 7, 1874 across the river in East Cambridge to a white mother from rural Maine and a Black father from Philadelphia.⁴⁵² Her father, John H. Knox, was a tailor and clothes cleaner who died 1883 after separating from Kittie's mother, Katherine Towle Knox. Kittie Knox's maternal grandmother had been a "bond servant" in Maine, where she was hired out as a child to work on farms for room and

⁴⁴⁷ Zheutlin 9.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 9; Finison 9.

⁴⁴⁹ Finison 8.

⁴⁵⁰ Zheutlin 9.

⁴⁵¹ Finison 5.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 5. The majority of the information I have about Kittie Knox comes from Finison's book *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880-1900*. Although she briefly attained celebrity status in the Boston cycling scene, her story has not been widely told.

board.⁴⁵³ At the time of Knox's birth, interracial marriages were at an all-time high in the US, and the Knoxes were not the only biracial family in the diverse West End.⁴⁵⁴ Even their street demonstrates the racial mixing that was commonplace in this unique neighborhood:

Going up Beacon Hill from 3 Irving Street [Knox's address], one would have found a livery stable (now a parking garage), then four more households of black families (lodgers and boarders), all living at no. 13, then white families (lodgers and boarders), tucked into Irving Place and the rest of the way up the hill (nos. 15-43)...Kittie's growing up experience was thoroughly multiracial and multicultural.⁴⁵⁵

Most families in the West End squeezed into small tenements and boarding houses; "incomes were modest, with most laboring in small factories, retail shops, or, like Annie's husband, Max, as peddlers of secondhand clothes and other sundries."⁴⁵⁶ Knox worked as a seamstress and dressmaker and her brother was a steamfitter.⁴⁵⁷ Avoiding work as laborers or domestic servants indicated that the Knox family, like the Kopchovskys, were part of a growing community of upwardly mobile lower-middle-class businesspeople.⁴⁵⁸ But both women faced significant economic, gendered, and racial obstacles in their lives, and both saw in the bicycle the possibility of transgression, liberation, or perhaps just some fun.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11, 8.

⁴⁵⁵ Finison 8-9.

⁴⁵⁶ Zheutlin 11.

⁴⁵⁷ Finison 9.

⁴⁵⁸ For context, Hunter classifies tailors as part of a growing Black middle-class in Atlanta (148).

Bicycle Escape Route

By February 1894, Kopchovsky had decided to embark upon a bicycle trip around the world, attempting to be the first woman to complete such a journey by bike. Stories of ‘round-the-world adventures were very popular in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and Kopchovsky was likely inspired to undertake such a journey by the examples of journalist Nelly Bly, cyclist Thomas Stevens, and countless other amateur travelers hoping to secure fame, riches, and freedom along the way. Again like many others at this time, Kopchovsky claimed that her journey would be in response to a wager by two wealthy Boston businessmen that a woman could not complete a trip around the world by bicycle in under 15 months. The terms of this wager change considerably throughout Kopchovsky’s tour, and we never learn any specifics about these Boston men, suggesting that such a wager never existed; instead, Kopchovsky probably invented the scheme to increase the stakes and importance of her journey—to offer, as she would in many other ways, public spectacle.⁴⁵⁹ Her bicycle tour officially began on the steps of the Massachusetts State House on June 25, 1894; she would not return until September 24, 1895.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Zheutlin 35.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 132.



Figure 30: Annie Kopchovsky, June 1894, Boston, MA

Meanwhile, Kittie Knox was a skilled cyclist years before Kopchovsky announced her intention to cycle around the world. Knox was a card-carrying member of the League of American Wheelmen (LAW) and caught the eye of newspaper reporters in the summer of 1893 when she appeared with members of the all-Black Riverside Cycling Club at “Cottage City” (now Oak Bluffs) Martha’s Vineyard.⁴⁶¹ But it wasn’t until July

⁴⁶¹ Finison 13; Hunter 148. Like the Black Atlantans Hunter writes about, Knox found solace and community in Black social clubs, like the Riverside Cycling Club, and purportedly participated in the “Octoroons, a light-skinned black vaudeville troupe” for a short time (Finison 233).

of 1895, a few months before Kopchovsky's return to Boston, that Knox would temporarily occupy celebrity status among Boston's cycling community. That summer, she won a cycling costume contest in Waltham and then attended the LAW's annual meet in Asbury Park, New Jersey.⁴⁶² There, her presence was hotly debated, as she was the only "colored" rider in attendance following the establishment of the LAW's 1894 color bar.⁴⁶³



Figure 31: Kittie Knox, Asbury Park, July 1895

Both Kopchovsky and Knox called attention to some of the gravest injustices in the US through spectacle and the pleasures they took upon their bicycles. Like the Black working-class communities that Hunter and Kelley study, Knox and Kopchovsky pushed

⁴⁶² "Invaded by Bicyclists." *New York Times*, July 9, 1895, 2.

⁴⁶³ "Fine Racing by Cyclers." *New York Times*, July 12, 1895, 2. See my Introduction for more on the LAW's color bar.

and played with the boundaries of appropriate womanhood, whiteness, and class expectations surrounding labor and leisure while riding their bikes. Although I do maintain that Kopchovsky and Knox were importantly *unexceptional* in many of the choices they made as New Women cyclists, they nevertheless were exceptional performers. The following section explores the ways in which both these New Women created (and took pleasure in) spectacle, performance, and drama in order to resist the confines of their station and status.

The Pleasure and Power of Spectacle

In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock examines the “*commodity spectacle*” of products such as soap to Victorian consumers.⁴⁶⁴ Soap, McClintock argues, stood as an especially useful commodity because “it could persuasively mediate the Victorian poetics of racial hygiene and imperial progress.”⁴⁶⁵ The advertising narrative and symbolic understanding of soap as a product that promised racial purity and erased women’s labor was closely tied to its function as a cleaning agent. Similarly, the rapidly commodified bicycle’s function as a vehicle of unprecedented mobility was easily tied to larger public narratives celebrating liberation, freedom, adventure, and leisure. It was therefore also a dangerous commodity; in the hands of women, people of color, and/or the lower classes, the mobility—the liberation—achieved via the bicycle would be a form of resistance.

⁴⁶⁴ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 374.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

Kopchovsky tied her journey to the movement of the bicycle *and* the movement of consumer goods via advertising. This was only possible in a world that was primed to embrace global capitalism and consumption. The expanding advertising industry made such mobility possible—on a global scale, and in Kopchovsky’s personal life. Advertising in newspapers and magazines exploded during the 1890s.⁴⁶⁶ Ellen Gruber Garvey writes about the emerging relationship between ads and fiction in magazines between the 1890s - 1910s. She argues that “complicated narratives...embedded products in a social context and associated them with romance, happiness, freedom, social acceptance, and socially approved behavior.”⁴⁶⁷ Although Garvey writes about magazine ads and written fiction, it is not difficult to apply her analysis to the relationship Kopchovsky cultivated between the (often fictional) narratives she wove about her bicycle journey and the ads that adorned her body and bicycle. Paired with her globe-girdling pursuits, any ad Kopchovsky wore was imbued with daring, adventure, and the symbolic meaning of the New Woman’s quest for liberation and mobility. This was no accident; formerly employed in the newspaper industry herself, Kopchovsky knew that “newspapers of the day devoted enormous attention to the New Woman and her doings, and by setting her trip up as a test of the New Woman, Annie greatly heightened her media appeal.”⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁶ Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s to 1910s*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁶⁸ Zheutlin 35.

Indeed, Kopchovsky's skill as an advertising solicitor prepared her exceptionally well for the largest advertising campaign of her life. Her first contract was with the New Hampshire-based Londonderry Lithia Spring Water Company, which gave her \$100 in exchange for an advertising placard on her bicycle and with the expectation that Kopchovsky would use the surname "Londonderry" throughout her bicycle tour.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, Kopchovsky's identity was for sale; so was her body. Traveling on her bicycle, the only available surface for advertisements was the frame of her bicycle and her body. Between 1894-1895, Kopchovsky became a "roving billboard" selling off pieces of her body and her bicycle to fund her trip and generate spectacle.⁴⁷⁰ Her body was carefully dissected and made profitable as a spectacle to exhibit and consume, like the products she advertised. Four months into her trip, *The Buffalo Express* reported on and helped to sell pieces of Kopchovsky's profitable body:

'The young woman is a sort of a riding advertising agency. She wears ribbons advertising various goods and will receive \$400 for one firm's ad that graces her left breast. On her right bloomer leg she carries \$100 worth of advertisements and she has just closed a contract to cover her left arm. She says her back is for rent yet and she hopes to get \$300 for it.'⁴⁷¹

Another upstate New York newspaper, *The Rochester Post-Express* noted:

'The young woman presented a bedraggled appearance. She wore many flying ribbons, which on close inspection were seen to be advertisements for factories, medicine, dry goods and every variety of proprietary articles. Her coat was covered with advertisements and her bloomer costume was similarly adorned.'⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 49, quoting *The Buffalo Express*, November 1, 1894.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 51, quoting *The Rochester Post-Express*, November 2, 1894.

Kopchovsky's unique reliance on and display of ads captured attention abroad, as well.

The Singapore Straits Times wrote about her reception in France:

'Her photographs were bought at 200 fr. a-piece. Advertisers found it a paying business to give her 100 fr. a day to distribute prospectuses. Smith's soap and Jones' pills were labeled all over the machine at 25 cents a spoke. She sampled somebody's milk, gave a certificate of its excellence, and pocketed 200 fr. She wore another enterprising firm's boots and testified to the durability. She donned all kinds of patent arrangements, and received substantial bonuses.'⁴⁷³

Kopchovsky's body, plastered with ads, muddled the divide between the private and the public spheres, as the many domestic products she advertised brought the private into the public.

Anne McClintock describes the ways in which advertising at this time brought "the intimate signs of domesticity...into the public realm."⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, as a traveling billboard, Kopchovsky's body was "traffick[ed] promiscuously across the threshold of private and public."⁴⁷⁵ Through Kopchovsky's innovative advertising approach, she offered the intimacy of her body and the products she wore to the public, blurring the boundaries between the private/domestic sphere and the public sphere and the global market. Kopchovsky's bicycle, body, and the ads she solicited confounded any neat division between public and private; this confusion was itself an active form of resistance to the hegemonic power that shaped the boundaries of her West End life.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 73, quoting *The Singapore Straits Times*, February 14, 1895.

⁴⁷⁴ McClintock 209.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 209.

Performance-as-Resistance

Kopchovsky's resistance to the boundaries separating the public and private spheres was facilitated by the public nature of her resistance. Riding a bicycle on the open road with advertising ribbons streaming from her exposed body, Kopchovsky's escape and liberation from respectable domesticity was very much on public display, demanding an audience. Robin Kelley writes about the importance of public space as a site of Black working-class resistance and survival. In the Jim Crow South, public spaces represented "the most repressive, violent aspects of race and gender oppression."⁴⁷⁶ And yet, acts of resistance performed in public space also guaranteed an audience, ensuring that "no act of defiance was isolated. Nor were acts of defiance isolating experiences."⁴⁷⁷ Despite the real dangers in open defiance, public resistance had the advantage of drawing more attention to the grounds for protest and resistance while also affording a modicum of protection from isolation; resisting in public could be a strategy for solidarity and survival. Finally, the "dramaturgical quality" of public resistance suggests pleasure and play, as well.⁴⁷⁸ The story of Kittie Knox offers an excellent example of the pleasure, solidarity, and survival found within Black public resistance.

In July of 1895, Knox competed in and won a Waltham, Massachusetts bicycle costume contest in her homemade gray knickerbockers, bicycle cap, and gaiters.⁴⁷⁹ It is remarkable that Knox won, given the controversy that both knickerbockers and Knox's

⁴⁷⁶ Kelley "We Are Not What We Seem" 110.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁹ Finison 25.

racial identity would have inspired in the audience. Charles Percival, an officer in the LAW's Massachusetts Division Board and a judge of the Waltham costume contest later remarked:

She got it because she won it, her outfit being far superior to her competitors'. I remember when the awards were made, quite a number hissed, but this was attributed by all the papers to the crowd's dislike of knickerbockers, but I at the time knew it was because we had given the prize to a colored girl. It seemed hard to the women present that a colored woman should best them in dress.⁴⁸⁰

Kelley writes about the importance of clothing and “dressing up” for the Black working-class as “an act of transgression.”⁴⁸¹ For Knox, a lower middle-class mixed race woman, appearing in home-made knickerbockers to compete for a prize in a sport that was almost exclusively white, upper- and middle-class, and held largely conservative views about what respectable women may wear (namely, long skirts), her first prize win was an enormous achievement and act of resistance. Knox's bicycle costume was akin to the many other ways that Black people used clothing to “public[ly] challenge...the dominant stereotypes of the black body...[B]y their dress and by their leisure, black people took back their bodies.”⁴⁸²

A few weeks later, the League of American Wheelmen (LAW) held its first national meet since the passage of the color bar amendment in 1894.⁴⁸³ Convening in Asbury Park, New Jersey, thousands of cyclists arrived to race, socialize, and participate

⁴⁸⁰ “May Be Racing Today.” *The New York Times*, July 10, 1895; Finison 25.

⁴⁸¹ Kelley “We Are Not What We Seem” 86.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ “The Colored Man and the League,” *Good Roads*, Vol. 5, 1894, 102-103. Establishing a color bar for the LAW was first discussed in 1893, but it didn't pass until 1894. The decision to prohibit cyclists of color from becoming members of the LAW was disputed for many years, especially by the Boston delegation where Kittie Knox was a member. See my Introduction for more on the LAW's color bar.

in cycle tours throughout the area.⁴⁸⁴ Perhaps due to her recent costume contest win, Kittie Knox went, too, drawing much attention to what became a public defiance of racial segregation in cycling.

Knox attended the segregated LAW meet as part of the Boston delegation, where she had much support from established white League members.⁴⁸⁵ She likely knew that her attendance would be noticed and interpreted as an act of resistance to segregated rules on cycling.⁴⁸⁶ The *New York Times* and several other leading newspapers took interest in Knox and monitored the controversy surrounding her presence at the meet. On July 9, 1895 the *Times* reported: “This afternoon Miss Knox did a few fancy cuts in front of the clubhouse and was requested to desist. It is thought that this episode will result in temporarily opening the color line question. Some of the Asbury Park wheelmen officials, it is said, will protest against permitting Miss Knox to remain a member of the league.”⁴⁸⁷ Three days later, the *Times* continued its coverage of Knox, remarking on her beauty and the challenge to racial discrimination that her figure represented:

The pretty and young cycling women down here all wear the walking-length skirts, and the costume that the bloomerites call irrational. That is all the pretty ones, except the mulatto girl from Boston, Miss Kitty Knox, who was first discriminated against on account of her color. She wears bloomers and is so very attractive that a lot of white men wearing League of American Wheelmen colors, and who had as well been in some other business, are constantly dancing attendance on her. These men say it is to show that the league makes no discrimination against colored persons, and believes in equal rights. These young fellows made her quite the lion of the evening at the ball last night by dancing with her, and she enjoyed the sensation she created as the only colored person in

⁴⁸⁴ Finison 1.

⁴⁸⁵ “Invaded by Bicyclists,” 2; Finison, 28 – 29.

⁴⁸⁶ Finison 28.

⁴⁸⁷ “Invaded by Bicyclists,” 2.

the building. She headed a run by a party of wheelmen to Pleasure Bay, Rumson and Seabright this morning, and was at the races in the afternoon.⁴⁸⁸

According to the *Times*, Knox was creating—and enjoying—what Kelley might describe as “a dramatic opposition to Jim Crow before an audience.”⁴⁸⁹ Her prize-winning yet controversial cycling outfit, the performance of “fancy cuts” on the bicycle, and dancing the night away at a segregated ball: these were deliberately public, spectacular, dramatic acts of resistance. The press’s coverage of this event is perhaps unreliable, indulging in layers of illicit and erotic pleasures—at once scolding the men for paying too much attention to Knox, blaming Knox for causing a disturbance, and enjoying the re-telling of such a salacious scene.⁴⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Knox’s choice of protest was decidedly performative and pleasurable. Hunter points to immigrant, working-class, and Black women as key to resisting and transforming “public amusements.”⁴⁹¹ She credits women like Knox for “their defiance of the Victorian standards of ‘true womanhood’ that defined respectability as middle-class propriety [and] provoked controversy.”⁴⁹² In this instance, such attention from the press and from other LAW members at the meet led to sustained coverage about the LAW’s controversial color bar. It also led to Knox’s significant, if temporary, celebrity status.⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸ “Fine Racing by Cyclers,” 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Kelley “‘We Are Not What We Seem’” 107.

⁴⁹⁰ Finison 36-37. Several newspapers note especially that white women in attendance left the ball in protest when it became apparent that Knox had no plans to stop dancing.

⁴⁹¹ Hunter 154.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

⁴⁹³ Finison 38.

The celebrity and focused attention on the pleasures and controversies of Knox's sensational appearance at the LAW is an important form of resistance to racial inequality. Yet, Finison notes that Knox's individual efforts did not lead to any permanent change to the LAW's rules about segregated cycling.⁴⁹⁴ While this is true, Kelley argues that such "outrageous public displays of resistance that left witnesses in awe" were not always intended to "lead directly to improvements in conditions."⁴⁹⁵ Sometimes it's enough just to have a good time. Engaging with the body as an instrument of pleasure *rather than labor* signaled autonomy, self-possession, and rejection of the concept that Black bodies' value is determined by the worth of their labor. Indeed, the pleasure of resistance, of taking one's body back—even if outrageous and temporary—was nevertheless hugely impactful on the personal and community level.

Spectacle-as-Survival

As I demonstrate above, Kopchovsky, too, laid claim to the power, pleasure—and profitability—of her body-as-billboard as an act of resistance against the expectations of society. However, rather than make an overt political statement about the boundaries erected to contain the ambitions of women, immigrants, or Jews, Kopchovsky channeled the massive publicity she garnered in order to secure the funds she needed to survive her global tour. Kopchovsky was not particular about the *kind* of publicity she received: good

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39. The LAW's color bar was not officially removed until 1999, over one hundred years after Knox's protest (239).

⁴⁹⁵ Kelley "We Are Not What We Seem" 87.

press, bad press—it was all the same.⁴⁹⁶ For example she responded to some bad press with this statement in *Cycling Life* on January 24, 1895:

‘Did you see the scorching the reporter for the cycling column of a daily paper gave me? Wasn’t it great? Just what I wanted. Thought he was worrying and mortifying me. I’m going to write up some beautiful “roasts” of myself and send them to some of the leading dailies, and I’ll get all the free advertising and notoriety I want, and everybody will be on the lookout for me. Then people will flock to see me and buy my cheap souvenirs, over which they can lift their hands in thankfulness that they have not the courage to make themselves wheeling advertisements for the sake of husband and children, and at the same time envy me my hardihood and business sense.’⁴⁹⁷

She suggests here that she has transformed herself into a “wheeling advertisement” to support her family, which, in turn, makes her the object of disgust, fascination, and envy. A public exhibit, Kopchovsky craved, and was economically dependent upon, “making as big a spectacle of herself as she could.”⁴⁹⁸ She was a gifted performer. Described as a “one-woman show,” a “one-woman carnival on wheels,” a “hustler” and “illusionist,” a “global celebrity” and a “charlatan” variously throughout Zheutlin’s accounting of her skill as a performer, it is doubtless that Kopchovsky was adept at making herself a profitable spectacle.⁴⁹⁹

As a global celebrity and cycling advertisement, Kopchovsky succeeded in transforming her global bicycle tour into (temporary) economic independence and self-transformation. She crafted narratives about her journey that were unmistakably about mobility, liberation, and defying the boundaries of womanhood; but they were also about

⁴⁹⁶ Zheutlin 77.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 44, 3, 93, 63, 77, 143.

consumption and pleasure. Kopchovsky was often described as full of laughter, ready to offer an outlandish story, an autograph, or an interview—in exchange for a price. Indeed, part of her pleasure was making a buck. Garvey argues that advertisements and consumption, too, “seemed to offer itself as a sphere of free play and pleasure.”⁵⁰⁰ For Kopchovsky, advertisements—and the pleasures they promised to consumers—granted her a sense of independence.

The spectacularly constructed narrative of her journey, her bicycle, which symbolized freedom and escape, and the ads that covered her body, suggested a fantastical frivolity and fun to all those whose paths she crossed. Everything about Kopchovsky was a deliberately constructed and performed narrative. Spectacle—via the bicycle, her riding costume, her outlandish stories, and the ads she wore—was her badge of resistance and key to her survival. There was, it would seem, no essential, unchangeable core of “truth.” The perversity of Kopchovsky’s infidelity to a single narrative, gender, identity, or origin story recalls the particular radical potential of the feminist cyborg.

The Perverse Pleasures of the Cyborg Revolution

In the foundational text “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Donna J. Haraway defines cyborg politics as a call against the destructive essentialism of feminisms that insist upon the

⁵⁰⁰ Garvey 6.

category of “woman” as an innocent, unchanging, and unifying whole.⁵⁰¹ The cyborg myth playfully, radically, dangerously rejects the conventional dualisms that have ordered our world, for example male/female; machine/human; whole/part; reality/appearance; truth/illusion.⁵⁰² Haraway writes against essentialized notions of

⁵⁰¹ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 157. Haraway’s cyborg feminism is rooted in the theoretical contributions and experiences of women of color. Michelle Bastian reminds us of the political objective of coalition and affinity politics that Haraway had in mind when offering her cyborg manifesto. Aiming to move beyond the essentialism of white hegemonic feminism, Haraway took inspiration from U.S. third-world feminism, and especially from scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, in developing a feminist politics that rejected the (false) unity and dualisms of Western feminism (Bastian 1033-34). In addition to theoretical inspiration, Haraway uses the bodies of women of color as metaphors for the cyborg body, “suggest[ing] that ‘women of color’ might be understood as a cyborg identity, a potent subjectivity synthesized from fusions of outsider identities” (Haraway 174). But this inspiration can easily be understood as appropriation. Although, as Bastian argues, “Haraway’s cyborg figuration is a response to the criticisms women of color have made on hegemonic feminism,” Haraway’s cyborg is not, it would appear, innocent of engaging in politics of erasure and oppression. For example, Paula M. L. Moya critiques Haraway’s postmodernist “theoretical misappropriation of women of color” (Moya 128). Moya argues that a postmodern account of identity is that which is “unstable, shifting, and contradictory” (Moya 134). Indeed, Haraway—as Moya’s primary example of the postmodern theorist—confirms this understanding of identities as “contradictory, partial, and strategic,” and the cyborg creation that Haraway identifies as a feminist future takes pleasure in the “permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints” it must hold (Haraway 154). This partiality appears to translate for Moya as a total erasure of difference: “Distinctions dissolve as all beings (human, plant, animal, and machine) are granted citizenship in the radically fragmented, unstable society of the postmodern world. ‘Difference’ is magically subverted, and we find out that we really are all the same after all!” (Moya 134). Ironically, according to Moya, Haraway’s rejection of the dualisms of essentialism may have led her to unwittingly invest in the equally troubling binary of essentialism/postmodernism. Instead, Moya argues in favor of a “realist theory of identity” which takes into consideration the social location of subjects and understands identities as multiply determined and changing without being entirely unstable (Moya 136, 139). Moya’s critique is scathing, and not without merit. I believe she is right to seek a theory that must take into consideration the social location of subjects and the real effects of oppression, and she is certainly not alone in pointing to the frequent misappropriation of the work of women of color by white feminist scholars; but I see slippage between the way Moya’s realist theory conceptualizes the *changeability* of identity and the postmodern, cyborg notion of identity as *unstable*. I suggest that cyborg feminism might be more appropriately applied if we use it to focus not on the how the cyborg unhelpfully positions identity “as an entirely willful construction” (Moya 132) but rather on how “becoming cyborg is...an almost unbearable requirement for survival” (Bastian 1038). Thus, in my analysis, I examine the ways in which cyborg politics might be a useful lens through which to explore the survival of the New Woman cyclist, namely, Annie Kopchovsky. See Michelle Bastian, “Haraway’s Lost Cyborg and the Possibilities of Transversalism,” *Signs* 31, 4 (Summer 2006): 1027-1049 and Paula M. L. Moya, “Postmodernism ‘Realism,’ and the Politics of Identity: Cherrie Moraga and Chicana Feminism,” *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 125 - 150.

⁵⁰² Haraway 177.

identity, arguing that “gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism.”⁵⁰³ In other words, with her cyborg myth, she is able to offer the possibility of a genderless world by investing in a figure that is unfaithful to the conventional categories of identity that refuse partiality, intersections, and overlapping.

Importantly, this cyborg is “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.”⁵⁰⁴ Although Haraway writes about the late twentieth century and the cybernetic technologies that were increasingly altering human/machine relations, Annie Kopchovsky is an excellent example of Haraway’s cyborg creation: cycling around the world, Kopchovsky is a reinvented creature of human/bicycle, expertly blurring the boundaries between reality and the fictional narratives she spins about her journey and her identity. Her narrative, created and lived as a cyborg-cyclist, is a story about stories. Analyzing the newspaper trail Kopchovsky left in her wake, Zheutlin determines: “She made no effort to stick to a single, consistent, intact story.”⁵⁰⁵ Rather than consistency, Kopchovsky chose vibrancy; rather than wholeness, she chose partiality, assemblage. Preferring innovation to innocence, Kopchovsky is the poster-child for Haraway’s cyborg myth.

Weaving together an imaginative self that is “disassembled and reassembled,” that is regenerated not reborn, even Annie Kopchovsky’s official birth records are inconclusive. The place and date of her birth is changeable, another example of the

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵⁰⁵ Zheutlin 86.

unfixedness of her identity.⁵⁰⁶ But this example of assemblage should remind us that not only was Kopchovsky's regeneration and changeability a function of her talent for reinvention and spectacle, but also a function of her precarious status as an immigrant, woman, and Jew. Haraway argues that to be marked as Other is already "to be multiple, without clear boundary, frayed, insubstantial."⁵⁰⁷ Thus, Kopchovsky, as a cyborg-cyclist, is capable of transgressing and recreating boundaries of all sorts (and, as a perpetual Other, she already was).⁵⁰⁸

For example, Kopchovsky succeeds in confounding the boundaries of appropriate gender and sexuality while touring the globe. From the beginning of her cycling journey, her claim to femininity was highly contested even as she relied on her identity as a woman to garner notoriety and spectacle. Her appearance—particularly the clothing she wore—transformed her into an ambiguously gendered creature.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁰⁷ Haraway 177.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.



Figure 32: Annie Londonderry in *Cycling Life*, October 1894

Peter Zheutlin describes the visual aspect of Kopchovsky's transformation from a woman into that which resembled a man:

In Buffalo, Annie decided that even bloomers didn't provide enough comfort, though they were an improvement over skirts. At the boys' department of a Buffalo clothing store she purchased a pair of pants for five dollars, cut several inches off the legs, and secured the bottoms, knickerbocker-style, with elastics. She also donned black stockings, gaiters, and a blue yachting cap to go with her tweed coat and vest, which the *Buffalo Illustrated Express* dubbed 'an extraordinary and exceedingly unfeminine costume.' Indeed, she was now dressed as a man.⁵⁰⁹

Appearing in this masculine riding costume, Kopchovsky's transgressive gender presentation was not favorably looked upon in France. Comparing Kopchovsky to the conventionally feminine women of France, a columnist from Lyon remarked:

⁵⁰⁹ Zheutlin 50.

‘Truth be told, Miss Londonderry is not of [the French woman’s] race, not even...their sex. She belongs to that category of neutered beings, single women without a husband or children, that social evolution and the increasing difficulties of existence [have] given birth to especially in America and in England...

Miss Londonderry belongs to this third sex. It is enough to see her masculine traits, her muscled physique, her athlete’s legs, her hands which appear strong enough to box vigorously, and everything masculine which emanates from her energetic being...⁵¹⁰

In this passage, we are reminded of the ways in which McClintock instructs us to see race, gender, and class as articulated categories that “come into existence *in and through* relation to each other.”⁵¹¹ McClintock elaborates on the inter-dependence of these categories of identity: “the rhetoric of *gender* was used to make increasingly refined distinctions among the different *races*...Similarly, the rhetoric of *class* was used to inscribe minute and subtle distinctions between other *races*.”⁵¹² Here, Kopchovsky’s masculine appearance and behavior speaks not only to her transgressive gender presentation, but also raises questions about her race, or nationality. Likewise, her “racial” identity as an American (even though, as a Jewish immigrant, her “racial” identity in America would be even further contested) helps to determine her gender and sexual deviance. Identifying Londonderry as a member of the despised “third sex,”⁵¹³—

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁵¹¹ McClintock 5.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 55, emphasis hers.

⁵¹³ Identifying Kopchovsky as a member of the “third sex” poses a variety of important questions to consider in future work. In what way does the New Woman and her bicycle complicate not just appropriate gender performance, but also sexuality? Moreover, Kevin P. Murphy calls attention to how terminology such as “third sex” was used not only to pathologize nonnormative gender and sexuality in medical discourse, but that politicians and journalists “utilized the concept of a third sex to make sense of threats to the [binary, two-party] system” (14). Placing Kopchovsky’s adventure within the historical moment of sexological and political debates about “inversion,” the “third sex,” and anxieties around the perversion of “homosexuality,” the contested sexualities of women cyclists become articulated through disruptions to gender, class, and racial norms. For more on the gendered, sexual, and political meanings of the “third sex,”

an identity linked to foreignness—this reporter seeks to distance France from the dangers of such horrifying boundary-crossing.

But even beyond the radical potential Kopchovsky's example demonstrates—beyond the transgressed boundaries around birth, origin, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, motherhood, and the domestic expectations of Victorian womanhood, always already marked as Other—Kopchovsky's journey was not about salvation, but about survival. Indeed, Haraway asserts that “Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other...The tools are often stories, retold stories, versions that reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities.”⁵¹⁴ Kopchovsky found power and pleasure in the written word and in the stories she told and retold, publicizing her journey and reinventing an identity as the unmarried and adventurous Annie Londonderry, globe-trotter, in newspapers around the world. Living “on the edge of reality and fiction,” Kopchovsky wove narratives that satisfied her needs, “chang[ing] her story to suit her mood or situation, painting a confusing picture of her background.”⁵¹⁵

Confusion was part of the appeal. Haraway argues that “Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism. That is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate

see: Kevin P. Murphy, *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, & the Politics of Progressive Reform*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵¹⁴ Haraway 175.

⁵¹⁵ Zheutlin 70, 59.

fusion of animal and machine.”⁵¹⁶ Kopchovsky was never interested in setting the story straight. For her, there were few possibilities available in the wholeness or the “truth” of her identity. As Jewish immigrant and working mother, Annie Kopchovsky’s options were limited, her expectations clear. And yet, as a cyborg-cyclist and story-teller, Annie Londonderry was regenerated over and over again; her truth was noise, confusion was her comfort. This is how she was able to survive, and, for a short time, thrive.

Harmful Pleasures of the Cyborg-Cyclist

The cyborg myth well describes Kopchovsky’s hybridity as a New Woman/cyclist, her disassembled and reassembled self, her powers of subversion and transgression, and the way in which she transforms her Otherness into noise, regenerated stories, and potent tools for survival. But the contradictions within the cyborg myth also help to explain the larger contradictions of the bicycle as a “harmless pleasure.” Haraway allows that “from one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control...From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid...of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints.”⁵¹⁷ The failure of this cyborg-cyclist to dismantle all oppressive structures should not surprise us. After all, the cyborg is *essentially* nothing, refusing unity in favor of the risk and possibility of multiplicity. Urging her readers to “see from both perspectives at once” Haraway’s cyborg allows us to examine the

⁵¹⁶ Haraway 176.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

ambivalent position of the bicycle in the hands of the New Woman as a vehicle capable of further domination and social control (as I have demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3) and/or subversion and liberation (as I have suggested in chapters 1 and 4). Indeed, this argument is fundamentally against unity—against “the feminist dream of a common language, [which] like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of perfectly faithful naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one.”⁵¹⁸

Insisting upon the wholeness, wholesomeness, harmlessness, and commonality of the New Woman’s pleasure of liberation via the bicycle is to ignore the ways in which these pleasures may contribute to imperialist fantasies of white, domestic, heteronormative womanhood. But rejecting the potential of the New Woman cyclist to create and find radical pleasure in her liberation is also a mistake. As we have seen in the stories of Annie Kopchovsky and Kittie Knox there is “*pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries.”⁵¹⁹ This pleasure is decidedly *harmful* to hegemonic whiteness, empire, and heteronormativity. Whether in the form of costume contests, crashing segregated balls, or scheming a spectacular global escape, Kelley and Hunter remind us that there is real political resistance in leisure, play, and public performance. Likewise, Garvey and McClintock insist upon the significance of spectacle, advertising, and the complicated narratives of global consumption to the pleasures, survival, and escape of women like Kopchovsky and Knox. Despite their sometimes ordinary, sometimes exceptional identities and talents, despite their lack of faithfulness to a cause, narrative, or fixed

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 150, emphasis hers.

identity—or perhaps because of all these things—as cyclists and performers, Kopchovsky and Knox took their bodies back and played. The *harmful* pleasures of these cyborg-cyclists remind us that another version of the feminist dream is one that rejects the “common language” of invisibilizing unity, and instead embraces “a powerful infidel heteroglossia.”⁵²⁰

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

EPILOGUE

The liberation of white women has always existed in tension with the oppression of people of color. That truth was made painfully clear in a recent video capturing the interaction between a Black birdwatcher and a white dog-owner in New York City's Central Park in May 2020. After asking a white woman, Amy Cooper, to leash her dog in accordance with Central Park regulations, the birdwatcher, Christian Cooper (no relation), recorded her as she hysterically proclaims that she will call the cops on him: "I'm going to tell them there's an African-American man threatening my life."⁵²¹ Dangerously and deliberately leveraging the power of her whiteness over his Blackness, she then calls the police, registering her entitled sense of fear and her outrage at being scolded and limited by a Black man. This action is not only a particularly distasteful example of racist entitlement; it is also a potentially lethal one at a time when police killings of people of color are tragically common. Her liberation, she implicitly tells us, her ability to walk with an unleashed dog wherever she pleases is more important than his life. This white woman is prepared to seriously harm a Black man to secure her pleasure of unrestricted mobility. The politics of white women's movement, liberation, and pleasure are far from harmless.

* * *

⁵²¹ "Video Shows White Woman Calling Police on Black Man in Central Park," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2020.

The women I study in this dissertation all found great power and even liberation in their abilities to move through the world as New Women cyclists. In the 1890s, their mobility *was* revolutionary. And yet, as I have demonstrated, their movements, words, actions, and interactions were not always, as Willard would have us believe, moving in that spiral of progress, “moving upward all the time.”⁵²² I argue that their pleasures were not harmless. Rather than revolution and liberation, the New Woman cyclist was equally capable of contributing to systems of oppression. Indeed, the story of the New Woman cyclist is not a simple story of women’s liberation, largely because the women who rode were not simple and carried with them hegemonic narratives of conquest, imperial nostalgia, and racial and class privileges. Throughout this dissertation, I have therefore aimed to complicate the familiar (whitenormative) feminist progress narrative associated with early bicycle ridership by exploring how this protagonist largely participates in hegemonic power and imperial expansion while making space for Other(ed) protagonists of this history that demonstrate moments of resistance.

I began by discovering what a queer approach to the archives and a feminist reading of personal narratives might bring to spaces of supposed unknowability. In re-interpellating Ada Florence Smart, I challenged the way that historical narratives reproduce hegemonic, heteropatriarchal stories about women’s lives and liberation. In this case, unknowability—the perhapses, may have beens, and probablys—helped fuel an invisibilizing narrative about women cyclists of the 1890s. Giving Ada a name, I found

⁵²² Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 34.

liberatory potential in applying queer and feminist intersubjective approaches to historical research, even if the subjects I studied were not themselves always contributing to liberatory politics.

Applying careful historical analysis and close reading of New Women cyclists texts in chapters two and three uncovered hegemonic narratives of conquest and nostalgia for imperialism that were deeply embedded in the supposedly utopian and unconventional politics of riders and writers like Frances E. Willard and Elizabeth Robins Pennell. For these women, the bicycle was a tool that helped white women claim space in new ways. This claiming was not innocent, even if it was well-intended.

Recalling the good intentions of “slummers” in the 19th century, Seth Koven acknowledges “just how difficult it was—and is—to translate the desire to be good into actually doing good for others,” and hopes that examining the histories of other well-intended, yet misguided philanthropists might “inspire and chasten those intent to better the world to reflect deeply on the implications of the choices made by like-minded men and women a century ago.”⁵²³ Willard’s bicycle treatise and Pennell’s travelogue stand as examples of how white women’s lack of responsibility and recognition of their roles in structures of power result in maintaining rather than undermining hegemonic power. Willard’s efforts toward a Christian socialist utopia and Pennell’s claims to unconventionality become empty and even harmful when they are backed by rhetorics of conquest and imperialist nostalgia rather than conscientious recognition of the material

⁵²³ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 22.

realities of their worlds and the spaces through which they are privileged to move. As both women's stories demonstrate, neither the potential for new world-making nor one's apparent commitment to political "progress" or unconventional ways of interacting with people and place can guarantee absolution from participation in structures of domination.

These are real harms that were not simply incidental to, but the direct result of the New Woman cyclists' pleasures. On the other hand, the pleasures of Annie Kopchovsky and Kittie Knox stand as examples of political resistance to expectations of domesticity and/or racial segregation. The blurred boundaries, unknowable identities, and playful "fancy cuts" cut deep in the calloused flesh of whiteness and heteropatriarchal hegemony.

I am not trying to simplify these women into caricatures of im/purity. Neither Ada, Willard, Pennell, Kopchovsky, or Knox were purely anything. But their identities and bodies matter. Their relative positions in the world influenced how they moved through it and how they moved it in return. What I as a researcher choose to examine and what my position in the world brings to the intersubjective way in which I research their lives also matters. With this framing, I find that the pleasures of New Women cyclists like Ada, Willard, Pennell, Kopchovsky, and Knox caused different kinds of harm to the status quo.

Acknowledging the fundamental contradictions inherent in these (and any) women, Haraway's warning (and promise) that the "cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history" reframes once again the stories of Knox and Kopchovsky as stories of

pleasure and survival as resistance.⁵²⁴ Is re-framing the New Woman cyclist's history through the lenses of pleasure, survival, and cyborg assemblage enough to complicate the historical construction that celebrates the progress narrative of the whitenormative citizen woman? Can this re-constructed history stand in solidarity with Amy Brandzel's call for a "total transformation," of the "normative telos of feminism"?⁵²⁵

This project, although necessarily centering the white New Woman cyclist as my subject, is not a recuperative history. Taking seriously Brandzel's criticism of how feminist history problematically "provid[es] a rationale and a future that is motivated by and through narratives of the past," I have attempted to re-construct a handful of past narratives in the hopes that this construction may open up new possibilities for imagining our future.

The critical intervention I offer is in the way I have re-constructed the (still whitenormative subject-oriented) history as non-recuperative, non-salvageable, and ultimately as a rejection of dominant progress narratives. Brandzel calls for "feminist scholars [to] be willing to think of feminisms' history and futurity as...necessarily immersed in...subjectivity, power relations, and knowledge production."⁵²⁶ Engaging in queer and feminist methods of knowledge production, I trace the movements of several New Women cyclists, examining their rhetorical (and literal) attachments to conquest and/or liberation and investigate moments in which they are able to reinscribe and/or

⁵²⁴ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 150.

⁵²⁵ Amy L. Brandzel, "Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women's Studies," *Feminist Studies* 37,3 (Fall 2011): 527.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 528.

resist the boundaries of domesticity, racial segregation, gendered bodies, borders, and even of historical narrative. I therefore attempt to complicate the whitenormative citizen woman subject, and the historical narratives that describe her, even if I am not always able to de-center her.

I argue that we must infuse the history of the New Woman cyclist as a progress narrative toward a liberated citizenship with histories of the New Woman's reliance on and contribution toward narratives of conquest, whiteness, and nostalgic empire. I thus seek to engage in "the messiness of colonialist and racist paradigms" that finally "disengages [us] from the narrative of citizenship in all of its progressive glory."⁵²⁷

Although my project necessarily features the whitenormative citizen woman, I hope that in re-constructing her history, and by opening space for Other(ed) New Women cyclists like Knox and Kopchovsky, her place in the past and future of feminism will be continually contested and set in relation to narratives of empire, whiteness, complicity, and resistance.

* * *

As I write the closing words of my dissertation, the lives of nearly everyone around me have been thrown into a tumultuous and precarious space of unknowability. Not the kind of unknowability that theorists (like me) enjoy reflecting on from afar, thinking up new ways to organize or think or experience the world. Instead, this kind of unknowability is up close and personal. It's scary, and has real, immediate and long-

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 525, 529.

lasting consequences for the lives of my loved ones and countless strangers. In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic obliterated normalcy and replaced it with a kind of unknowability that is petrifying, immobilizing. And on May 25, 2020 George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police officers, sparking protests and massive resistance to decades of unchecked police brutality against people of color. These protests were met with more violence at the hands of police; but the movement in support of Black lives and against the white supremacist systems that deny people of color their humanity and dignity has continued to gain momentum across the United States and around the world. The urgent immobility imposed by the coronavirus has combined with—and indeed highlighted—the urgency for a movement for racial justice.

And already, this urgent, terrifying, and powerful moment of unknowability is beginning to transform how we imagine and fight for a better world. In our case today, for a healthier and more racially and economically just post-pandemic world. Free healthcare for all, more protection and economic justice for essential (and non-essential) workers, defunded and dismantled police, and yes, perhaps even bicycles have a role in transporting this revolution toward a realizable vision for the world.

The bicycle and its many riders are not *purely* anything. Bikes allow for tremendous agility and access to various terrains and spaces that are difficult to control or classify. They have been used to quell protests and contribute to America's militarization efforts; and they have contributed to women's rights, economic access, and environmental justice work. They do not promise liberation, but they *can* offer it. It's the riders who have the power to steer.

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