

**“Suffragettes of the Harem”: The Evolution of Sympathy and the Afterlives of
Sentimentality in American Feminist Orientalism, 1865-1920**

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
English in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This project examines narrative encounters in space identified as “harem,” produced by authors with biographical ties to the vanguard of the American Suffrage Movement. I regard these feminists’ circulations East, to the domestic space of the Other, as a hitherto unstudied, yet critical component of transnationalism in the history of U.S. Suffrage. This literary record also crucially reveals the extent to which sentimentality was plotted as a potential force for the reform of other cultures. An urge to sympathize denied in the space of the harem illustrates the colonial anxieties that subtended sentimentality’s prospective deployment beyond national borders. In five chapters on the work of Anna Leonowens, Susan Elston Wallace, Demetra Vaka Brown, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Edith Wharton, I examine how Suffrage-minded authors writing the harem strategically abandon an activist praxis of fellow feeling. Such a reluctance to transform sentimental literature into a colonial literature consequently informs that genre’s postbellum decline. The sentiments that run dry for American feminists in the harem additionally foreground the costly failures of Wilsonian Idealism, a doctrine that appropriated a discourse of sentimentality in order to script the United States’ expanded involvement in global affairs.

Dedication

For my copy editor, Toni, and my accountant, Big Jim.

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Introduction: “What’s de harem?” Suffragists Define the Harem and its Sentiments in the Postbellum

It is not surprising that much ignorance should prevail in the Occident concerning the true character of the women of the Orient, and, inasmuch as the sole knowledge of the individuality and of their intellectual capacity is derived from the stories of women tourists, usually frivolous and only able to converse with the inmates of the harems through interpreters, and from the rare and derogatory remarks of the male natives, who affect a profound contempt for the fair sex, it has been taken for granted in this country and likewise in Europe that the mental caliber of the inmates of the seraglios is exceedingly low and even degraded.

— “Influence of the Harem: Crimes Perpetrated with Impunity within Its Doors,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 18, 1898

Miss Adams and Miss Sadie Adams were aunt and niece, the former a little, energetic, hard-featured Bostonian old-maid, with a huge surplus of unused love behind her stern and swarthy features. She had never been from home before, and she was now busy upon the self-imposed task of bringing the East up to the standard of Massachusetts. She had hardly landed in Egypt before she realized that the country needed putting to rights, and since the conviction struck her she had been very fully occupied. The saddle-galled donkeys, the starved pariah dogs, the flies round the eyes of the babies, the naked children, the importunate begging, the ragged, untidy women, – they were all challenges to her conscience, and she plunged in bravely at her work of reformation. As she could not speak a word of the language, however, and was unable to make any of the delinquents understand what it was that she wanted, her passage up the Nile left the immemorial East very much as she had found it, but afforded a good deal of sympathetic amusement to her fellow-travellers.

— Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Desert Drama: Being the Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898)

Let’s start with the problem of establishing a definition. Let’s start on a raft, a few days upriver from Cairo, Missouri, at a moment when the work of attributing meaning becomes mired in the hermeneutics of suspicion. ““What’s de harem?”” Jim asks Huck, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), during discussion on the life and times of King Solomon (111). Not to neglect subsequent events in the same fictional universe, this conversation takes place well before Huck and Jim’s sojourn

across North Africa in a hot-air-balloon – before Jim becomes stranded atop the head of the Great Sphinx of Giza and besieged by belligerent Cairenes.¹

According to Huck, Solomon's harem is "the place where he keeps his wives" (111). Jim's ignorance of patently obvious common knowledge prompts some juvenile chiding: "don't you know about the harem?" (111). In a flash of awareness, Jim recollects the term but defines it against some of its most common associations in the West: "A harem is a bo'd'n-house [boarding house], I reck'n. Mos' likely dey has rackety time in de nussery. En I reck'n de wives quarrels considerable...Bekase why would a wise man want to live in de mids er sich a blim-blammin all de time?" (111). Solomon's appropriation of a harem is, to Jim, a marker of poor judgment: "dey say Sollermun de wises' man dat ever live. I doan take no stock in dat" (111). Not so much denoting sexual domination or polygyny, the harem is here a tableau of domestic chaos *in extremis*.

Solomon's private life administering an overcrowded harem has also impacted his career as a jurist: "You take a man dat's got 'bout five million chillen runnin' roun' de house, en it's diffunt. *He* as soon chop a chile in two as a cat. Dey's plenty mo'. A chile er two, mo'er less, warn't no consekens to Sollermun, dad fetch him" (113). Jim's inversion of the Judgment of Solomon, which Huck tries mightily to correct, recasts the king's verdict to cut a child in half not so much as a ruse designed to flush out an impostor, but as an illustration of how an aberrant domesticity can impose conceptions of sublegality and subhumanity upon the marginalized. His domestic situation has rendered Solomon something of a sociopath, oblivious or

¹ In *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894).

indifferent to the feelings and situation of others.² The fragmentation of an individual alluded to here – the literal act of chopping a toddler into half-pieces threatened in the Old Testament – also mirrors Jim’s fractional reduction, by law and custom, into only 3/5ths of a man. His cultural dispensation is, likewise, itself enforced through a peculiar set of institutionalized faux-domesticities (such as the “Big House”). The scene’s patina of stock minstrel repartee conceals the rejectionist register within Jim’s radically re-contextualized interpretation of scripture and, with that, his counterexegetical role in Huck’s eventual conversion to the cause of abolition.

The dialogue also conceals yet another crucial inconsistency. “Harem,” in the sense of the word debated over by Huck and Jim, occurs nowhere in the body text of the English-language Bible in the 19th century.³ Huck has evidently picked up the word *off-book*, so to speak. This is not to say that “harem” is not a useful vehicle for explaining Solomon’s domestic arrangement, Absalom’s public indiscretions with his father’s concubines, or Esther’s court intrigues. Still, the reasons behind its insertion into a child’s biblical instruction – for all its unsavory, libidinal implications in the West – remain unclear.

It does, however, beckon to the primary agents of Huck’s moral reconstruction, identified in the opening chapter of the novel: his acting legal

² Via Jim’s interpretation, Solomon comes to resemble Shahryār, the despot of the *One Thousand and One Nights* (كتاب ألف ليلة وليلة). Shahryār’s intentions to marry and then execute a new bride every day border on the genocidal.

³ See Malamet, 785-6. “Harem” is, nevertheless, utilized in abundance in 19th-century biblical encyclopediae, commentaries, annotations, and in ethnographies reconciling modern Eastern cultures to a biblical past. See, for example, Smith, 1806-7; Sanford, 423; and Clarke, 1025. “Harem” would only be translated into vernacular editions of the Bible published in the second half of the 20th century, and then largely limited to the Book of Esther. See, for example, Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1946), New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963), the English Standard Version (ESV, 1971), The New International Version (NIV, 1973), and the New Living Translation (NLT, 1996).

guardian, the Widow Douglas, and her sister, Miss Watson. The reader can almost hear in Huck's euphemistic definition of "harem" ("the place where a king keeps his wives") Miss Watson's prim, equivocal substitutions of *heaven* and *hell* as "the good place" and "the bad place," respectively (17). For Jim – and, as the reader is left to imagine, for the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson – figurative deployments of the harem Orientalize and thereby estrange the otherwise paradigmatic social structures of a biblical patriarchy and its modern patrician analogues. Even in a setting of the novel that is homosocially male, the reformatory influence of the two sisters remains liminal but very present. In this moment and *in absentia*, the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson are tasked with giving voice to Mark Twain's career-long contempt for forms of romanticized violence.

The discourse imbricated into this key exchange from *Huckleberry Finn* betokens a forgotten, yet once pervasive, association that existed between women reformers in the United States and the figuration of the Eastern harem. In late-19th- and early-20th-century American cultural representations, "the Eastern Question" and "The Woman Question" are asked together and overlap with remarkable frequency. In order to better map out and understand this relationship, the following study specifically examines how authors connected to the Suffrage Movement in the United States document their personal encounters in the space of the Eastern harem. In casting the locus of the harem as a scene of subjection, meriting the reader's sympathies (or not), Suffragists abroad determined the politically significant role sympathy and sentimentality would play in the production of American colonial discourse. Engaging the textual politics of refashioning sentimental literature into a

colonial literature, Suffragists gauged their own viability as colonial agents and the political consequences of such a complicity.⁴

Spanning the interval from the close of the American Civil War (1861-1865) to the years of the First World War (1914-1918) and the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1920), this study coincides with Suffrage's five decades in the political wilderness, following its expunction from the Radical Republican platform late in the 1860s. Suffragist harem writing is one forgotten dimension of transnationalism in a movement that, until recent years, had been understood through a fundamentally local-national lens, which confined women's activism to within the borders of the United States.⁵ Contrary to a history of the Suffrage Movement that remembers feminists turning to the newly incorporated territories of the American West for legislative inroads to national franchise – a historicization that in many ways recapitulates the geographic parameters and routes of Manifest Destiny – this study explores Suffragists' complementary circulations East, to the domestic spaces of the Other.

A mainstay of Orientalist representation, the harem (variously transliterated in English-language sources as haram, harram, hareem, harim, hhareem, and so on) served as a blanket term designating conventions of women's segregation and seclusion from non-familial men, in cultures of Asia and Africa.⁶ The term additionally identifies the architectural infrastructure through which such prohibitions were enforced as well as the individuals upon whom the prohibition fell. The

⁴ I here refer to Lata Mani's understanding of colonial discourse, as encompassing "the knowledges that developed alongside, mediated, and helped secure European conquest and domination, and...the rhetorical strategies that predominated in the representations of colonized people societies and cultures" (3).

⁵ Hoganson, 11; Mann, 461-2.

⁶ See definition of "harem" in *Oxford English Dictionary*.

oppressions that the harem almost automatically gestured toward had long provided a rhetorical leverage point for Western feminists, who could catalyze arguments on behalf of expanded civil and economic liberties for women through figurative recourse to Oriental despotism. The enforced passivity alleged of the harem inmate was regularly framed as existing in intimate correspondence to the legal and customary restrictions and immobilities imposed upon women in the West.

As the United States gradually edged toward assuming the status of a colonial power with territorial holdings overseas, depictions of harem suffering stood poised to legitimate and mobilize American colonial intervention. The mistreatment of the vulnerable has always been the low-hanging fruit of colonial polemic. Within this context, Suffragist travel writers had access to a particularly powerful generic convention and typological index geared specially toward representing suffering and subjection: American sentimental literature. In this study, I understand American sentimentalism as both a non-mimetic fictional and non-fictional literary form, which is authored predominantly by women, is centered around domestic spaces, and is highly attentive to bonds of genuine affect enjoined among characters. Through its structure and style, sentimentalism resorts to examples of the protracted suffering of dispossessed individuals in a way that directs the reader to attach negative affect to the structural and cultural violences of human institutions.⁷

The prospect of sentimentalizing anguish felt in harems abroad – performing what I refer to as the *geopoliticization of sentiment* – presented one model for women’s participation in a culture of U.S. overseas colonialism only then emerging.

⁷ I here refer to the sense of structural violence and cultural violence advanced by Johan Galtung, which regards the harm inflicted through the sometimes invisible, systemic barriers or cultural conventions that prevent marginalized groups from meeting basic needs as a form of violence.

Colonial collaborations among Suffragists could foreseeably alleviate the dispensations of their “sisters in bondage” – a term I take from Harriet Jacobs/Linda Brent and Lydia Maria Child – and potentially contribute to more momentous global awakenings among women (8 & 47). I regard as literal (perhaps more so than originally intended by the author) Jane Tompkins’ characterization of sentimentalism in *Sensational Designs* (1985) as “a blueprint for colonizing the world in the name of the ‘family state’” (144). Rather than attending to the comparatively more provincial concern of how domestic sentiments might infiltrate and shape the American public sphere, Suffragists’ harem writing in the postbellum is attentive to the porousness of the affective boundaries separating American sympathy from the perceived apathy of the planet.

And yet, for postbellum Suffragists given the means and opportunity to document lived experiences in the harem, the distress of the powerless woman cloistered inside was anything but a hard-and-fast actuality. Instead, the conventional motif of harem oppression emerges as one connecting link within a larger nexus of mutually reliant Orientalist and colonialist significations – and little more. Notwithstanding the tremendous political capital that stood to be gained through Suffrage’s alignment with the colonial and its deployment of sentimentalism’s “radically transformative power” in narrating American expansionism and overseas acquisition, Suffragists repeatedly opt out of sentimentalizing the harem (Baym xxviii). Harem writing resorts instead to interrogations of various political and moral philosophies of sympathy and community in order to plumb the epistemological constraints that mediate and restrict representations of the psychological or affective condition of the Other. In doing so, Suffragist authors go so far as to scrutinize hitherto understudied, post-Darwinian theorizations of a human evolution activated

via widening spheres of sympathy, in which biological, cultural, and intellectual advancement are triggered through expansions in the human capacity for conscientiousness and mutual regard.

This period nevertheless marks the decline of sentimental literature.⁸ Reaching peak popularity between 1820 and 1870, sentimentalism's market share steadily dwindled in the coming decades. It would be gradually replaced by reactionary literary modernisms such as realism and naturalism, retrenchments insulating masculine "high art" and masculinist state power against feminized mass culture and its democratizing politics, re-subsuming women as objects-to-be-reformed rather than subjective agents of reform.⁹ It is also at this moment in time, and not before, that "sentimentality" acquired a pejorative connotation suggesting fabricated, excessive, or ornamental displays of emotion.¹⁰ Because of its firm emphasis upon domestic space, the tenderness of interpersonal relationships, and woman's sphere, sentimental literature has been routinely consigned (then and now) to the waste bin of the apolitical.

Yet, literary efforts to isolate sentimental literature's apparent political register – its capacity for "turning the socio-political order upside down" – would be undertaken in domestic space abroad (Tompkins 139). I argue that the decline of sentimental literature in America stems, in part, from a dawning realization of its global-colonial potentials, which were not unambiguously benign. In the chapters that follow, authors repeatedly abandon sentimentality as part of a refusal to enlist sentiment (and themselves) in the service of mythologizing the American imperial turn. Born with love in the home, sentimentalism is killed off with *sangfroid* in the

⁸ See Lewis, *GO* 67; Baym, 22.

⁹ See Huyssen vii, 48; Lewis, *GO* 68.

¹⁰ Spark, 59.

harem. For revealing reasons, each chapter also wrestles, in its own unique way, with the legacy of Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Three of the four chapters examined in this monograph, not coincidentally, focus on texts issued by publishing houses that would eventually be consolidated into or spun off from Houghton Mifflin, the firm that began exclusively printing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1879.

In charting the work of each textual harem encounter onto sea changes within the Suffrage Movement during these five decades, this study uncovers a critical component of Suffrage internationalism as well a neglected, yet crucial, conduit of cultural exchange between citizens of the United States and nations of the Middle and Far East. The sentimentalisms (or anti-sentimentalisms) of Suffragist harem narratives expose a great deal about the affective structures and conventions of the American colonial ideology that eventually emerged from this period and has come to be known as Wilsonian Idealism.¹¹

Orientalism, Feminism, and the Harem

At least as old as European medieval polemics attacking the Prophet Muhammad for polygamy, the harem in Orientalist tradition (sometimes the “seraglio,” or the “serail”) along with its counterpart in Central and South Asia, the “zenana” (in Persian, زنانه, and in Urdu, زنانہ) had always been a byword and catchall for the spaces, ways, and means by which Eastern men allegedly oppressed Eastern women.¹² Wholly subject to the will and whim of the harem master, the inmate of the

¹¹ While “feminist” was not used broadly in the vernacular of the time, the origins of the term and its proximity to American Suffrage are explored in Chapter 1. See also Mann, 1.

¹² See Harlow, xv; Kabbani, 5.

harem (sometimes the “odalisque”) endured the baleful effects of servitude and isolation, languishing in sensuous opulence, unremitting surveillance, and abject torpor (intellectual, psychological, physical, and/or political).¹³ Amidst their widely varying cultural and architectonic expressions, all that the harems of the Orient did purportedly have in common was the regime of invalidism imposed upon their inmates. And the microcosmic domestic dysfunction enforced through the apparatus of the harem ostensibly radiated out, infecting Eastern cultures at-large in a way that perpetuated Oriental indolence and civilizational decline. Ella Wheeler Wilcox’s 1911 appeal on behalf of the internationalization of the Suffrage Movement, for example, encapsulates many of these cultural ascriptions:

The women in the harems of the east are kept in such ignorance and compelled to live such animal lives that they are a hindrance to the growth of better conditions in the world. They think of nothing but the appetites and the passion – what they shall eat what they shall wear. They are a combination of dwarfed childhood and domestic animals.¹⁴

This insinuation of essential difference among humans as a result of their various socio-cultural dispensations is odd, coming from Wilcox, the same author who, in her poem “Solitude” (1883), coins that touchstone maxim regarding the universal infectiousness of certain human emotions: “Laugh, and the world laughs with you/Weep, and you weep alone” (72). From the viewpoint of nations wrapped in the certainty of their own burgeoning modernity, the kingdoms of the Orient needed to evolve past the backwards gender relations and primitivity of the harem (for the whole world’s benefit) by any means necessary. “With all the nineteenth century’s boasted achievement, we are apt to forget how many places still sit in the twilight of

¹³ Robinson-Dunn, 120.

¹⁴ Wilcox, “Woman Must Do a Great Deal More Than Get Franchise; She Must Awaken Her Intelligence.”

barbarian stagnation,” declares a 1901 editorial in the *The Sunday Oregonian*, adding, “the sun of woman’s amelioration is visible on the harem’s horizon.”¹⁵

Applied well beyond the linguistic-orthographic influence of Arabic or the cultural-religious influence of Islam, “harem” is a loanword that has abided in the English language since at least the 17th century, precisely because the familiarizing and naturalizing work of translation has either been denied or deferred it. As the anonymous commentator of the 1898 *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* op-ed, quoted in the epigraph opening this introduction, remarks:

Europe has apparently come to the conclusion at last that it has made a big mistake in neglecting to take into consideration the harem as a factor in the course of events in the Orient. Until now the seraglio has been, so to speak, a sealed book to the Christian powers of the civilized west. In the north of Africa and throughout Asia, where the harem system is in vogue, irrespective of religious belief, since the Buddhist King of Siam, the Confucian Emperor of China, the Shintoist Mikado of Japan and the Brahmin Rajahs of India all maintain great seraglios in the same way as the Sultans of Turkey and of Morocco, the Khedive of Egypt and the Shah of Persia, no male save the sovereign is permitted to cross the threshold of a man’s zenana. The latter is closed even to the judicial authorities and to the police. Murder and crime of every conveyable character can be perpetrated behind its doors.¹⁶

Attended by connotations of polygyny, women’s incarceration, and unchecked brutality, the broadly-applied trope of the harem is the receptacle for all that the civilized conventions of domesticity in the West implacably *are not*. The harem’s distinction as such thereby merits its special nomenclature.

This is a point not lost on those against whom it engendered prejudice.¹⁷ In Grace Ellison’s *An English Woman in a Turkish Harem* (1915), for example, the

¹⁵ “Relics of Barbarism.”

¹⁶ “Influence of the Harem: Crimes Perpetrated with Impunity within Its Doors.”

¹⁷ While I would not attempt to portray the word “harem” as bespeaking or encapsulating a singular historical reality of the oppression or non-oppression of women, it is germane to the epoch examined in this study, to recognize the harem’s cultural role as an apparatus of resistance to colonial intrusion. Cultural conventions of women’s seclusion (e.g., the veil or the harem) could conceivably intensify during

narrator inquires of Turkish nationalist and feminist Halide Edib Adivar (identified as “Halide-Hanoum” in the text), “in the name of one of our prominent suffrage societies,” how their Western sisters might come to the aid of their downtrodden Eastern sisters (17). Edib replies, “ask them...to delete for ever that misunderstood word ‘harem,’ and speak of us in our Turkish ‘homes.’ Ask them to try and dispel the nasty atmosphere which a wrong meaning of that word has cast over our lives” (17). Edib’s entreaty, in effect, involves the work of collapsing the home-harem dichotomy and its construction of a cultural difference, sustained considerably by linguistic and textual representation. Speaking on the figuration of “the Turk,” Ellison imparts an intimation of the incentives underlying misrepresentation: “we judge him from the books which are written, not to extend the truth about a people, but only to sell; the West expects to hear unwholesome stories when it reads of the Eastern home” (15). Sensational literary flourishes surrounding the harem, effectively heightening the East/West counterpoise, did not hurt sales. And it was also no secret that the cultural and cartographic divisions hypostatized through the semantic operation of “harem” informed colonial ideology and practice.¹⁸

The harem’s *a priori* dissimilarity with the domestic cultural formations of the West – in a way that reifies and reinforces the racial, cultural, and intellectual superiority of the latter – is one aspect of the dialectic captured by Edward Said in his

periods of outside presence, operating to the effect that such conventions would protect women from the predations of male foreign agents. To this point, Sara Mills and Reina Lewis note that, “sati and veiling...began to function as symbols of resistance to colonial rule, rather than as symbols of the oppression of women” (8). miriam cooke adds, “there are no stories of European men raping Muslim Arab women,” and correspondingly, “the rigidity of the status of women in the family in the Arab world has been an innermost asylum of Arabo-Muslim identity” (153).

¹⁸ I examine Edib’s specific chastisement of Demetra Vaka Brown’s *Haremlik* (1909) and its harem fetishization in Chapter 3.

landmark work, *Orientalism* (1978). For Said, the Orient is not so much an object of study in itself, but a series of interdependent misrepresentations of the East, structured through the self-reflective, definitional oppositionality and Otherness of the West. In the decades since the publication of *Orientalism*, postcolonial scholars have often attempted to mitigate the purported totality and uniformity with which textual and visual Orientalist artifacts misrepresent the East/Orient in Said's interpretation. This has been a move, as Lisa Lowe puts it, "to problematize the assumption that orientalism monolithically constructs the Orient as the Other of the Occident" (116). Pointing to the multivocality of Orientalist artifacts and modes of authorship, scholars have located textual instances, however ephemeral, of resistance to and subversion of Western discourse and taxonomy. This has entailed, as Meyda Yegenoglu has it, undoing "Said's allegedly monolithic account by emphasizing the multiple and diverse positions within Orientalist discourse" (CF 69).¹⁹ Such moments of indeterminacy are, what Ali Behdad deems, "*micropractices*; that is, the specific but crucial points of its [Orientalism's] dispersed network of representations that include strategic irregularities, historical discontinuities, and discursive heterogeneity" (12).²⁰

For Anglo-American feminists, however, a sustained ideological assault on the binary between home and harem was a habitual, anything-but-ephemeral, means of crafting arguments on behalf of expanded rights for women. The rhetorical benefits

¹⁹ Yegenoglu observes Said's acknowledgement in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), of the role "feminist works play in undermining this hegemonic attitude by demonstrating the 'diversity and complexity of experience that works beneath the totalizing discourses of Orientalism'" – a point I return to below (68).

²⁰ For a discussion of how Michel Foucault allows for moments of counterdiscourse that are resistant to a dominant paradigm in ways that Said does not, at least in *Orientalism*, see Schaub, 308. For a short list of critical readings of interstitial moments of resistance and the problematics of monolithicity in Orientalist texts, see Yegenoglu, CF 69; Lewis, RO 180; Kuehn; Bealieu & Roberts, 3; Aravamudan, 160; and Roberts, 61.

of compromising the distinction separating Western and Eastern domesticities made Western feminists inveterate producers of Orientalist counternarrative and discursive fugue. The intimacies of juxtaposition facilitated sweeping rhetorical alignments of the various forms of oppression faced by women.²¹ Feminist argument regularly fashioned the harem not as an emblem of quintessential difference between hemispheres, but as proof of imminent resemblance and global continuity. This occurred even at the cost of re-inscribing some of Orientalism's most pernicious stereotypes (as often as they were subverted).²²

Taking as her starting point an assumption of the harem inmate's forcibly imposed spiritual and intellectual impoverishment, Mary Wollstonecraft, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), repeatedly challenges anti-feminist counterargument in Orientalized terms. Estranging Western cultural practices (to a Western audience), Wollstonecraft parallels the forces of social repression negatively impacting women in East and West alike.²³ In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Margaret Fuller forges a similar counter-exoticist equivalence: "it is idle to speak with contempt of the nations where polygamy is an institution, or seraglios a custom, when practices far more debasing haunt, well nigh fill, every city and every

²¹ As a prime example, the spatial curtailments of agency and social presence codified by Separate Sphere Ideology in the 18th and 19th centuries, which demarcated men's sphere of influence as extending to the public and the political while consigning women to the apolitical domain of the domestic, invited comparison between conventions of gender seclusion in the West and those thought to flourish elsewhere in the world.

²² As Antoinette Burton observes, "Disdain for the harem became an essential part of feminist emancipationist argument" (66).

²³ As, for example, in Wollstonecraft's introduction describing the substandard education afforded Western women: "Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio!" (9). And in her challenge to Rousseau: "Why... does he say that a girl should be educated for her husband with the same care as for an eastern haram?" (200). See also Yeazell, 75-77; Robinson-Dunn, 118, 122.

town” (58). And in what she would come to identify as her “first speech,” originally delivered in September 1848, two months after the signing of the Declaration of Rights and Sentiments at Seneca Falls, New York, Elizabeth Cady Stanton invokes the soul-crushing carceral effects attributed to the harem for the way it produces intellectual myopia and complacency among the women it imprisons:

In the Turkish Harem where woman is little above the brute of the field, where immortal mind is crushed and the soul itself is as it were blotted out, where beings God has endowed with a spirit capable of enjoying the beauties which he has scattered over the broad earth – a spirit whose cultivation would fit them for a never ending existence, in those Seraglios where intellect and soul are buried beneath the sensualism and brutality which are the inevitable result of the belief in woman's inferiority, even here she is not only satisfied with her position but glories in it. (106)

For Stanton, the psychological and social isolation attributed to the harem is never a far cry away from the domestic privations faced by American women, herself included; the self-satisfied denizens of the harem are not unlike the majority of Americans, contented with their contemporary socio-cultural dispensation. Much later in life, Stanton again strikes a universalizing tone to this effect in her autobiography *Eighty Years and More* (1897), iterating the myriad forms of women's Orientalized bondage as a means of justifying the countercultural activism of a feminist vanguard:

From our standpoint we would honor any Chinese woman who claimed the right to her feet and powers of locomotion; the Hindoo widows who refused to ascend the funeral pyre of their husbands; the Turkish women who threw off their masks and veils and left the harem; the Mormon women who abjured their fathers and demanded monogamic relations. Why not equally honor the intelligent minority of American women who protest against the artificial disabilities by which their freedom is limited and their development arrested? (317-8)

Fundamentally, affirmations of a glaring cultural relationality – even sameness – looming between home and harem are designed to activate Western cultural aversions. As Joyce Zonana describes it, “by figuring objectionable aspects of life in

the West as ‘Eastern,’ these Western feminist writers rhetorically define their project as the removal of Eastern elements from Western life” (594). Only social and legal advances for Western women could recuperate inherent difference and distinction between East and West – along with the relative superiority and exception professed by citizens of the latter – from unbearable association and likeness.²⁴

Thoroughly imbricated into the discourse of Western feminism and the American Suffrage Movement from their beginnings, the frequent, almost obligatory, recursion to the harem testifies to its significance as a contested, albeit somewhat opaque, fixture of the feminist imaginary. A topos within which self-reflexive cultural identities could be actively mediated or destabilized in politically productive ways, it is what Emily Apter calls a “universalizing master metaphor,” which reliably opened spaces for ideological slippage and play (99).²⁵ So much so, Suffragists would even come to appropriate harem accoutrement as signifiers of their own oppression. In the 1910s, American newspapers report pro-franchise marches that included participants bedizened as women of the harem, a kind of uniform for the cause.²⁶

²⁴ As Leslie Peirce observes in a history of the late Ottoman Empire, the imputations of invalidism, isolation, and apoliticality attributed to the figure of the odalisque and the space of the harem more often entailed Westerners’ projection of familiar domestic handicaps onto the otherwise politically charged zone of the harem. See Peirce, ix-x. The harem writing explored in this study often captures how travelogue *imports*, borrows, or reconceptualizes Western domestic space as *fundamentally political* through harem encounters, regularly countermanding the paradigm of Separate Sphere Ideology. See Chapter 2, for an example of this in Susan Wallace’s *The Storied Sea* (1883).

²⁵ Or as Antoinette Burton, for example, describes it, the harem is “subject to a variety of meanings in...public and private discourse” (67).

²⁶ See articles “Wear Harem Costumes Suffragists Present Feature in Big Baltimore Parade” and “In A Harem Skirt To Vote. A Washington Suffragist Proposed the New Style as a Uniform.” For the related topic of women’s appropriation of bloomers in the middle of the 19th century, see Marr, 285-8.

Revisions of the harem in feminist argument, in turn, are frequently moments of political and ideological generativity that resist otherwise ironclad discursive certainties of race, gender, class, citizenship, and culture. Subject to waves of citation, clarification, and recombination, feminist characterizations of the harem, as a result, sometimes verge into cacophonous overdetermination and hyper-attribution. Multiplicity and contradiction frequently inhabit a single text, as exemplified by Lydia Maria Child's ethnographies in her *History of the Condition of Women* (1835). In the text, Child reasserts what was, even by the 1830s, a well-worn clarification: that "harem," is, in fact, "an Arabic word signifying sanctuary," the conventions of which originate in Islamic history, namely, "the conduct of Ayesha, called Best Beloved Wife of the Prophet, and Mother of the Faithful" (53). Child is also careful to offer hedges, suggesting that her sketches do not reflect uniform or monolithic conditions among or within cultures, which are instead given over to variation and diversity. By way of example, the text provides a series of cautions against stereotyping:

The seraglios of the Sultan and his grandees do not furnish a true picture of the character and condition of the Turkish women; any more than the royal marriages and etiquette of European courts are indicative of the manners of the people. Women of the middling classes in Turkey appear to enjoy a considerable degree of freedom and consideration. (63)

In spite of caveats on behalf of cultural variability proffered by a radical progressive and abolitionist like Child, the text elsewhere lapses into very specific and heavily racialized characterizations of harem layouts. Addressing the harems of Turkish elites, Child states: "the odahlycs, generally to the amount of some hundreds, sleep on sofas in a long high gallery...the staircases to this gallery are secured by massive trap-doors fastened with bars of iron. The inner courts of the harem are guarded by black eunuchs; with muskets always in their hands, the outer by white eunuchs" (54-55).

The harem is organized in a similar way for the “grandees” of Persia: “white eunuchs guard the outside, and are never permitted to enter the interior; black eunuchs dwell round the second inner inclosure, and within are stationed elderly women to watch day and night by turns” (81). The ethnographic voice of the text seems aloof to how it racializes features of harem interiors in a manner that encodes and re-inscribes Western forms of racial prejudice onto an Eastern object of study.

Regarding the treatment of women as inferiors among the Moors, the narrator is, however, quick to remind readers of the irrationality of social norms closer to home: “illiberal and barbarous as this custom appears to us, they no doubt would regard as still more absurd the customs of the United States, which render it an abomination for two people of different complexions to eat at the same table” (238). Inconsistencies aside, Child’s Orientalism in the volume – insofar as it reveals the practices of other cultures through a lens of relativity – evidently encouraged ideological play among subsequent feminists. According to one modern biographer, it is here in the pages of *History of the Condition of Women* – specifically in Child’s description of a custom among Moorish women of keeping birth names for life – that Lucy Stone drew inspiration for the radical act of resistance embodied in her refusal to assume her husband’s surname after their marriage.²⁷

Haram, Harīm, Harem

Child’s definition supplied above is, in many ways, correct. Yet defining “harem” in its language of origin requires capturing how the rhizomatically structured lexicon of the Arabic language, like other Semitic languages, can invest a word with connotative significances beyond its formal meaning. An Arabic word’s derivation

²⁷ Million, 196.

often nests it within a clustered, mutually informative network of orthographically and homophonically similar terms, contextualizing its meaning in such a way that almost automatically generates a number of broader implied associations.

Thus, morphological variations on the triconsonantal root consisting of the characters ḥā' (ح, an aspirant), rā' (ر), and mīm (م) produce the verb *ḥarama* (حَرَمَ), which means “to declare sacred, sacrosanct, inviolable or taboo” or “to declare unlawful, not permissible, forbid, interdict, proscribe” (Weir 171-2). The root also produces the adjective *ḥarām* (حَرَام), “forbidden, interdicted, prohibited, unlawful...inviolable, taboo,” regularly used to refer to that which is sinful or profane (171-2). It also produces the noun *ḥaram* (حرم), referring to “a sacred object, sacred possession...sanctum, sanctuary, sacred precinct.” Finally, the noun *ḥarīm* (حريم) denotes “a sacred inviolable precinct; harem; female members of the family, women; wife” (171-2).

The linguistic proximity and cross-pollination of *ḥaram* and *ḥarīm* in form, provenance, and meaning, along with their shared connotative freighting, has been the source of perennial confusion and misinterpretation in Western sources, up to the present. Both heavily connoting sanctity, the two distinct words could not be more closely related and intertwined as they metonymically conflate space, architecture, convention, and even the individuals upon whom convention applies. Yet, the term *ḥarīm* more closely resembles the English-language calque “harem” and directly implicates a domestic space reserved for women, understood as sanctified. The term *ḥaram* more closely designates the consecrated space of a religious complex or expanse of hallowed ground.²⁸ *Ḥaram* is, for example, used to identify some of

²⁸ And the terms are subject to overlap – as in *ḥaram an-nissa* (حرم النساء) – in other words, “the women’s *ḥaram*” (Weir 171).

Islam's holiest sites, such as *al-ḥaram al-qudsī ash-sharīf* (الحرم القدسي الشريف), the Noble Sanctuary atop the Temple Mount in Jerusalem/al-Quds (القدس). The dual form of the plural *al-ḥaramayn* (الحرمين) is used as a moniker referring to the holy cities of Mecca (مكة) and Medina (المدينة). In a more mundane example, a term for “university campus” in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is *al-ḥaram al-jamīa'ee* (الحرم الجامعي), denoting the enclosed grounds of a college or university.

While no shortage of sober clarifications existed explaining indigenous imputations of the harem's sacrality, by the second half of the 19th century, popular Western perception and representation could not have been more different, conjuring anything but domestic tranquility and solemnity. In spite of racist disdain and attributions of the harem's evident social detriment, it is also inevitably attended by a hyperlibidinal curiosity in Western discourse.²⁹ Fantasized as a sort of “sexual playground” facilitated by the enforced sexual passivity and idleness of the odalisque, the spectral harem hosted a menagerie of non-heteronormative sexual eccentricities among its denizens, including the harem master's polygyny, sadism, and sexual dominance (qtd. in Pierce, 382).³⁰ As a vehicle of the imaginary, the harem supplied an uncanny space outside of culture into which forbidden, unspeakable expressions of sexuality could be safely displaced and named into being by ersatz observers. From the security of a cultural and geographic remove, erotic acts, construed as endemic to the harem, could be simultaneously abhorred, voyeurized, fetishized, and enjoyed as

²⁹ As Billie Melman observes, “from earliest encounters till present, the harem as the locus of an exotic abnormal sexuality fascinated Westerners” (59).

³⁰ This list might also be expanded to include lesbianism among harem inmates, forced miscegenation (especially between harem master and the white “Circassian beauties”), the castration anxiety personified in the figure of the eunuch, and so on.

Other. Through Orientalized modes of cross-cultural masquerade, transgressive scenarios could be safely performed, as they made use of foreign personae cathected with indwelling desires.³¹

Because of its utility as fantasy space, the harem is the figurative repository and storehouse for what Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One (Histoire de la sexualité, 1976)*, characterizes as the Eastern cultivation of the arts of sex, *ars erotica*. It is, in turn, subject to the glossomanical pressures of Victorian discursivization and taxonomy, identified by Foucault, that attempt to exhaustively catalogue the continuum of human sexual behavior – in this case, the sexualities specific to the figure of a primitive Other.³² It is thus somewhat unsurprising that Richard Burton would use the epilogue of his ten-volume “translation” of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (popularly, “The Arabian Nights,” 1885) – a concatenation of tales told from haremspace – to rail against claustrophobic Victorian sexual mores. It is still, nevertheless, somewhat surprising that, in so doing, Burton produces what is cited as one of the founding texts of modern Anglo-American sexology.³³ The figuration of the harem also regularly propagates a liminal jealousy, a desire to inhabit or surveil the heterotopic, anachronistic, and sacredly profane space that exists outside of the crisis-state of civilized modernity, beyond its regulatory reach and exempt from its codifications of sexual discipline and restraint.³⁴

³¹ See Lewis, *RO* 206-208.

³² 67-70.

³³ See Kabbani, 7. As Erwin Schick observes “the sexuality of the ‘other’ was a trope that played a much more central and much more polyvalent role in Western thought than is usually acknowledged. In failing to consider this variability, one runs the risk of reproducing both colonial and gender constructions of difference” (2).

³⁴ I borrow the notion of heterotopic space from Foucault’s “Of Other Spaces” (*Des espaces autres*, 1984). While the harem does not emerge as an example of heterotopic space in Foucault’s essay, the Oriental garden does, 98.

The status of the harem in Orientalist discourse, as clichéd locus of primitive gender relations and sexual dominance, does not, so much, exist independently or to the exclusion of colonialism, but operates synergistically with it. Especially by the latter half of the 19th century, the ongoing commoditization and pornification of the harem in visual and textual representation served as the operative mechanism for eroticizing colonial discourse. In a kind of colonialist bait-and-switch, harem representations sexualized the Other to the extent that the allure of sexual dominance becomes superimposed upon the political and economic interests that underwrote colonial engagement, conflating sexual conquest with geopolitical conquest.

The synthesis of sexual desire and colonial impulse in the spectral harem are not oblique in this historical moment. The romantic/pornographic subgenre of harem rescue, especially popular during this period, typically recounts a European or American male hero's liberation of a woman incarcerated within harem walls. Subtended by a colonial-erogenous intersectionality, harem rescue narrative literalizes the conflation of sexual reward and foreign intervention as it enacts the Western protagonist's usurpation of and interposition upon the sexual privileges of the Eastern despot.³⁵ Recovering the harem-interned maiden in distress almost always, as a happy byproduct, results in pro-Western regime change, embodied in the toppling, death, or abdication of the despot/sultan/haremmaster.

³⁵ A pornographic scenario with colonial subtexts could not be better typified than in "Lord George Herbert's" *A Night in a Moorish Harem* (1896). For examination of Orientalist pornography centered around the harem fantasy, see Alloula; see Micklewright & Lewis, 36; Porter, 154. Of the authors examined in the chapters that follow, Demetra Vaka Brown, would author or coauthor at least three harem rescue novelizations over the course of her career: *Sirocco* (1907), *The First Secretary* (1907), and *In the Shadow of Islam* (1911).

The Postbellum

Advances in the accessibility and speed of intercontinental travel – what Billie Melman calls the “embourgeoisement of the voyage” – giving birth to middle-class tourism in the 1860s and 1870s, provided American women with expanded means and opportunity to venture abroad and produce first-hand accounts of *bona fide* harems (99).³⁶ Since non-familial males (especially male foreigners) were denied access, Western women had the sole privilege of turning cultural informants, reconnoitering harem interiors and generating narratives not easily invalidated by their Western male counterparts. Ironically, a locus so perennially understood in the West as a site of women’s subjection would, in this period, become a unique zone of discursive authority, representative agency, and income for Western women writers.³⁷

Women’s harem writing evolved into something of a cottage industry – so much so, that one English travel writer complains, in 1871, of the difficulty of visiting the choicest Turkish harems, overbooked due to the influx of Westerner tourists vying to secure invitations.³⁸

³⁶ The chapters that follow supply a variety of reasons for international travel and relocation, including, expanded professional demand for women educators among non-Western regimes in the process of reform/modernization/Westernization, the diplomatic appointment of a spouse, Holy Land tourism, repatriation, and so on.

³⁷ See Micklewright & Lewis, 1.

³⁸ In Annie Harvey’s *Turkish Harems & Circassian Homes*. C.f. Micklewright & Lewis, 9. Encapsulating the frequency and sensationalism with which harem writing would be produced in this era, Grace Ellison offers a quasi-parodic procedural catalogue of typologies toward which the material should gravitate:

The veiled Turkish woman is always a source of unending interest. A chapter, at least, on harem life will always add to the value of the book; for the word “harem” stirs the imagination, conjures up for the reader visions of houris veiled in the mystery of ages, of Grand Viziers clad in many-coloured robes and wearing turbans the size and shape of pumpkins, and last, but not least, is supplied for the reader’s imagination a polygamous master of the harem, they have made him the subject of their coarsest smoking-room jokes. (15)

The harem, as it finds expression in the writing of Suffrage-minded authors, functions as what Mary Louise Pratt identifies as a colonial contact zone, “where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (4). Yet the trajectories, parameters, and spatialities in which such contact occurs, in this case, diverges fundamentally from more conventionally understood modes of exchange. Unlike the borderland or the frontier regularly invoked in masculinist colonial paradigm, contact and discourse produced in the harem occurs uniquely in domestic spaces. Even so, the harem retains the contact zone’s potential to reveal both the ambivalence of the colonizer and the inconsistencies within totalizing regimes of colonial discourse.³⁹

In recent decades, such scholarly attention has increasingly shifted toward the historical unevenness and inconsistencies of what Anne McClintock identifies as “the gender dynamics of imperialism,” where the unique, differential forms of women’s colonial participation heightened the capacity to produce resistant meanings (5). Authors writing the harem are by no means reluctant to utilize and then invert the scopophilic, libidinal appeals of the harem tableau in order to reorient its erogenous-imperial gaze toward the perceived severities of women’s dispensations therein. Consequently, if the colonial gaze of Orientalism may be understood as a heterosexed male gaze resting upon a female object, I read the textual interventions of Suffragist authors upon the harem as appropriating and counter-configuring that gaze in a way that reconstitutes the focal objects of Orientalism, potentially unseating its androcentric and Eurocentric biases. To this end, Suffragist harem accounts are frequently forced to confront the discrepancies that arise and persist between

³⁹ These accounts also operate against a growing cultural-representational paradigm, with its own Orientalized undercurrents, that idealized Western women’s invalidism. See Dijkstra.

Orientalist-colonialist certainty and personal experience. In such instances, Suffragists are pressed to ask how empirical divergence from representational convention resituates the terms under which Western women had historically conceptualized and indexed their own oppression.⁴⁰

Suffragist forays to harems abroad and the literary output that followed also inevitably speak back to the setbacks and frustrations that persisted on the homefront. Following the Civil War, the objective of winning women's franchise was gradually purged from the progressive Republican agenda; suffrage was effectively downgraded to fringe-issue status, pending legislative assurances of voting rights for black men. I examine the subsequent rift that emerged within the Suffrage Movement surrounding the dilemma of postbellum de-prioritization in Chapters 1 and 2. In spite of these political disappointments, Suffragists, in the intervening years, traveled to harems abroad as one strategy for regaining urgency and relevance for their cause.

Because legal arguments on behalf of the vote often rested upon claims of women's status as citizens, paradoxically, nowhere are assertions of national inclusion and privilege more thoroughly substantiated than in the crucible of the Eastern harem.⁴¹ Narrating personal resistance to the erotic and tyrannical seductions of the harem master while fending off her impending integration into the harem is, for a Suffragist, the equivalent of defying the sensuous attractions of the renegado and of "going native." The preservation and assertion-under-duress of cultural identity, individual agency, and chastity (with its attendant paranoias of miscegenation and

⁴⁰ See Lewis, *RO* 96. See also Pohl, 127.

⁴¹ Mann, 465.

racial degeneracy) can be understood as documenting and substantiating Suffragists' arguments on behalf of national membership and civic inclusion.

The international circulations of American Suffragists in this era additionally demonstrate the worldwide scope and outlook with which members of the Movement formulated an ideology of global sorority. In this respect, harem writing is exploratory and gauges what tentative intellectual and affective ties American Suffragists might forge intersectionally with their "sisters in bondage," hitherto silenced by the quietus of the harem. This period additionally marked the proliferation of international Suffrage organizations, which, among other aims, had the ambition of incorporating denizens of the harem into an Anglo-American-led global feminist front.

Authors representing indigenous feminist movements in countries with harems would, in the opening decades of the 20th century, begin to publish their own resolute clarifications, placing checks upon such internationalist pretenses toward the universal representation of women.⁴² Often skeptical of an internationalist vanguard's visions of planetwide participation and affiliation, American Suffragists grappled with the ongoing dilemma of whether their activism was necessarily regimented and expressed through the isolated individual or through various national and global collectivities – a concern that resurfaces repeatedly in the following chapters, as a result of contact with the figure of the forcibly isolated odalisque.

Concurrent and codependent with considerations of feminist internationalism, harem writing also measures the feasibility of American Suffragists' assumption of a "white woman's burden," a woman's reformative agency operating in complement to

⁴² Developments I examine in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

the masculinist and paternalist work of colonialism. The harem's attributions of being developmentally backward and hypersexualized – both symptoms of dysfunctional domestic and familial arrangements – begged for the remedial and tutelary efforts of Western women, who could hypothetically refashion harem space into home space.⁴³ Dubbed “maternal imperialism” by Antoinette Burton in her study of the origins of the British Suffrage Movement within Victorian imperial culture, such a conscription would further corroborate women's claims to citizenship and franchise through their inclusion in the acculturative work of colonialism (49).⁴⁴ The problematics of Suffragists' contradictory self-positioning as both internationalist first-among-equals and potential instructors in the ways of civilization would loom large by the turn of the century.

Beginning with the Grant Administration's aborted plans to annex the island of Santo Domingo in the 1870s, the United States Government started, during this era, formulating possible iterations of an American colonial presence overseas. Accordingly, what had formerly been a vague disdain for the harem, felt at a geographical remove, transformed ultimately into an applied problem, as novel colonial ventures abroad subsumed *bona fide* harems within the supranational domains of the United States. The American annexation of the Philippines in 1898 encompassed much of the Sultanate of Sulu (in Jawi, سلطنة سولك) and its imperial

⁴³ By exerting a colonial influence limited to the domestic space of the Other, female colonial agents could foreseeably take advantage of a viable loophole in Separate Sphere Ideology.

⁴⁴ For examination of maternal imperialism (also referred to as “colonial feminism”) and for the ways feminism was “used to promote the culture of the colonizers and undermine native culture,” as Leila Ahmed phrases it, see also Burton, 2, 66; Grewal, 12; DelPlato, 15; Mills & Lewis, 8; Chadwick, 203 (Ahmed 167).

harem.⁴⁵ Incensed at discrimination facing Mormons (themselves a regular target of Orientalized, xenophobic polemics), an editorial in the *San Francisco Call* condemns the placatory treatment shown to the Sultan of Sulu by the United States Government and protests the incorporation of his majesty's harem "under the flag and jurisdiction of the United States."⁴⁶ The article continues its jeremiad, "we extend our jurisdiction" over a former sovereignty whose "religion is Mahometan" and whose "institutions are polygamy and chattel slavery." A reminder of the inevitable cultural frictions and identitarian incompatibilities accompanying territorial expansion, the far-off absorption of a royal harem did not bode well for an American national identity at least nominally predicated upon the stalwart rejection of Oriental bondage and tyranny.⁴⁷

Unlike the inception of the British Suffrage Movement within the contexts of the British Empire's long-established culture of imperialism, overseas colonial culture in the United States – and the contributions women might make toward it – remained theoretical and contingent during this period. In *Suffragists in an Imperial Age* (2008), Allison Sneider documents Suffragists' assumption of both colonialist and anti-colonialist vocabularies in the decades following the failed annexation of 1870.⁴⁸ Attuned to recent political developments, Suffragists often framed the issue of franchise relative to American colonial objectives. Undeniably, a great deal of

⁴⁵ The Sultanate was a Muslim state that at time comprised southern islands of the Philippine Archipelago as well as parts of present-day Malaysia and Indonesia.

⁴⁶ "Sultans, Sulu and Utah." For examination of the Orientalization of the Mormons and national anxieties surrounding Utah's 1896 admission to the Union, see Marr, 185-218; and Jones.

⁴⁷ Marr, 20-45.

⁴⁸ In 1898, the issue of American imperialism would freshly re-divide the leadership of the Suffrage Movement into opposed camps. See Hoganson, 10-2; Mann, 465-8.

political cache stood to be gained through feminists' alignment with national expansion.⁴⁹

Because the harem, as a spatial and cultural formation, had been able to withstand the forces of Western colonial mastery, literary reconnoiters inside harem walls consequently gauge Suffragists' unique potential contributions as civilizing/colonial agents. Not by accident, the memoiristic narratives examined in this study happen to surveil royal harems in a handful of non-Western sovereignties not yet colonized by European powers by the second half of the 19th century: Siam, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire, each of which stood on the threshold of impressment into colony or client state.⁵⁰ Time and again, it seems, Orientalism in the United States is given over to anxious periods in which rugged masculinist agencies abroad are revealed to be inadequate or compromised in some way. Such periods of crisis call for the compensatory reappraisal of women's special access and agency.⁵¹

As they fall in and out of step with American colonial ambitions, Suffragist dispatches from the harem conversely alter the terms upon which its members negotiated the Movement's rightful identity and scope. Moreover, I argue in this study that the discourses surrounding American Suffrage and American colonialism in this era are reciprocal. In writing the harem, Suffragists regularly attempted to influence, inform, and even *reform* an American colonial praxis then being speculated

⁴⁹ See also Mann, 465-6.

⁵⁰ It is important to note here how schemata for colonization or reform/modernization/Westernization (instituted from within or by an outside power) almost always involved dissolving royal harems. More than symbolic, deharemization could undermine dynastic political power and legitimacy annulling polygamy as a traditional means of maintaining multiple confederational alliances among the various provinces, vicereencies, or substates within a state.

⁵¹ A theme revived in the post-9/11 era in the film *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), in the television series *Homeland* (2011-present), in the novel *Florence of Arabia* (2012), and elsewhere.

upon by a nation eager to differentiate its foreign interventions against those of other world powers.

Globalizing Sentiment

Conscripted into what Jacques Derrida deems a “demand for narrative of the other,” Suffragist authors are specifically tasked with re-validating age-old Orientalist claims about the litany of abuses suffered by the odalisque at the hands of the harem master (*DR* 260). As I have suggested above, American Suffragists had at their disposal a particularly apropos literary tradition with which to portray suffering and forward affective appeal: American sentimental literature. Narrated through the struggles and sorrows of a protagonist, sentimentalism indicts a prevalent social injustice and the socio-economic conditions or institutions underwriting that injustice, exposed through scenes of the hero’s victimization. Calamities befalling a sentimental protagonist arise from any number of instances of outrageous fortune: parental abandonment or ineptitude; domestic violence; bondage; social ostracism; poverty; pregnancy out of wedlock; illegitimacy and orphanage; forced migration; or economic predation, just to name a few. Regularly forced to contend with and suppress grievous emotion, the sentimental hero combats her social marginalization through sustained personal virtue, genuine kindness, and a tenacious inclination toward domestic industry.

Crucially, the sentimental protagonist redresses her social misfortunes through special recourse to the sympathetic bonds she has established with characters outside the confines of her immediate family. The non-sanguineous nexus of altruism and kinship constructed during the course of the narrative ratifies an imagined community, animated by reciprocal concern and care. This collective, mimicking

both family and nation, becomes a type of social safety net, protecting its members against the further vicissitudes of disenfranchisement and social invisibility. Through sentimentalism's direct and indirect appeals to sympathy, the reader is exhorted to *feel along with* and thereby become a shareholder in the narrative's affective commonwealth, unified in opposition against the institutional injustices identified in the text.⁵²

If the reader is unable to make some more tangible, effectual contribution, he or she can still aid the cause by discerning the remote feelings of the Other and sending *feeling along*, as a form of remittance. "They can see to it that *they feel right*," *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeals to readers in its concluding pages (495).

Revesting even the most powerless, abject reader with a planet-wide, telepathic, and transformative agency of his own, the text avows, "an atmosphere of sympathetic influence encircles every human being; and the man or woman who *feels* strongly, healthily, and justly on the great interests of humanity, is a constant benefactor to the human race. See, then, to your sympathies on this matter!" (495). Consequently, characters' teary-eyed, faithful submission and forbearance displace an urgency and impetus to activism and reform out into the world of the reader. In this process, the protagonist's articulation of pain (suppressed, but perceptibly visible, audible, and therefore discernible) makes legible a social ill that had formerly been culturally peripheral or occluded. The reader's induction into the text's conclave of mutually held sentiments arises primarily from a newfound intelligibility and familiarity with the hero's distress and victimhood.⁵³

⁵² See also, Baym, ix; Barnes, 11.

⁵³ See Dobson, 267.

Following Nina Baym and Janet Barnes, I understand the sentimental tradition in America as beginning with what Baym deems the “domestic seduction novel” of the late-18th and early-19th century, in which the ostracism and excommunication of a pregnant, single woman allegorizes the severed family and civic ties of a newly independent nation (xxix). The subsequent sympathetic appeal that follows attempts to therapeutically conjoin the disparate parts of a newly minted American body politic, for lack of some more viable ethnic, hereditary, racial, ideological, or cultural common denominator. As Shirley Samuels remarks on the double work of the genre, “America sentimentality appears as a national project: in particular, a project about imagining the nation’s bodies and the national body” (3).⁵⁴ While the protagonist in American sentimental narrative is archetypically a young woman, the genre’s characteristic sensibility toward ecumenical inclusion allows for the propagation of fellow feeling out to the Other in a way that surmounts differences of race, gender, class, culture, and spatial proximity – but only to a degree.

For the manner in which it imagines human sociality animated through the exchange of sympathies, American sentimental literature of the 19th century is directly indebted to moral sense doctrine (or the theory of moral sentiments), formulated during the previous two centuries.⁵⁵ Holding that naturally occurring, beneficent feeling, extrinsic to reason and thought, is instinctual and universal among individuals, moral sense doctrine understands sympathy as the essential binding force underwriting human social organization and community formation.⁵⁶ Since people are intrinsically good, malicious acts perpetrated by individuals are the result of their

⁵⁴ See also Barnes, 115.

⁵⁵ Prominent 19th-century authors of sentimental literature, like Susan Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe, are known to have actively read and steeped themselves in the lights of the Scottish Enlightenment. See Noble, 64.

⁵⁶ See F. Kaplan, 25-37.

being led astray by external, malignant social forces and are redeemable. As Fred Kaplan describes this phenomenon, “everyone...has the potential for the awakening of the moral sentiments, which are the prime constituent of human nature, given to us by a Universal Maker whose sectarian limitation as a Christian god does not prevent his smiling on all humankind” (60). To feel correctly about others and be felt for correctly by others around you is to cultivate social harmony in a way that resembles maintaining a well-kept home.

In this monograph, I understand sympathy according to David Hume’s characterization in *Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), in which it represents an almost magical, transportive phenomenon, “which takes us so far out of ourselves, as to give us the same pleasure or uneasiness in the characters of others, as if they had a tendency to our own advantage or loss” (579). This is to say that sympathy allows the individual to inhabit the mind of another in a way that offsets the primacy of individual interest, effects feeling, and guides benevolent action. Accordingly, I employ the notion of a “sentiment” as the discrete, interior affective state or non-ratiocinative intuition produced through the operation of sympathy; “sentimentality” refers to the cultural conventions surrounding the externalized expression of interior sentiments, be it in-person or via textual representation.

Reacting against both the perceived egoism of Hobbism and formulations of the divinely imparted, innate precepts of Scholasticism’s natural law, the British Empiricists prized sympathy uniquely for its enigmatic, cohesive power. In conversation with lights like John Locke, Francis Hutcheson, and Anthony Ashley Cooper (Earl of Shaftesbury), Hume, in a flurry of superlatives, writes of sympathy’s centrality to human communities: “no quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with

others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own” (316). Vivifying a capacity to discern approbation or blame in others while perceiving external approbation or blame in one’s own actions, sympathy also serves as the basis for a moral sense that delimits the distinction between social vice and social virtue.

This affective stakeholdership, imparted by sympathy and pinioned through shared valuations of right and wrong, solidifies the possibility of social coexistence among members of a collective.⁵⁷ Yet, in spite of sympathy’s dynamism and intracommunal permeability, these same 17th- and 18th-century moral philosophers are often keen to place spatial and perceptual limitations on the seemingly unfettered operation of sympathy – with its boundaries concentered, variously, around body, culture, and nation (and no farther).⁵⁸ Despite such restrictions, the continued outgrowth of sympathy, in one iteration of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, represented the most likely – and, perhaps, the least violent – means by which disparate human communities could be inducted into a global commonwealth.⁵⁹

To flash forward to the middle of the 19th century, sentimentalism appears perfectly primed to exercise this amalgamating, cosmopolitanizing force – but for those enclaves of humanity forcibly and hermetically sealed off from it. A consolidating agency could, however, surmount the partition of the harem, in part, by rendering the citizens of the harem susceptible to sympathetic gravitations. This would initially require an act of representation that would make legible the oppression of the odalisque, suffering under the burden of the institutional and cultural forces responsible for her imprisonment and degradation. Sentimental conventions could

⁵⁷ Barnes, 20; Todd 27.

⁵⁸ Barnes, 4, 20.

⁵⁹ Pagden, 272.

conceivably lend a plaintive voice to compensate for what was perceived as a representational caesura. Not only was the blind of the harem thought to obscure and stifle articulations of agony pent up behind its walls, but the odalisque was, as a result of her confinement, conceived of by Orientalist convention as chronically incapable of feeling, sensing, or articulating her own personal pains. Once given rightful access to their own feelings, it is repeatedly imagined that women of the harem were bound to actualize and then exert their own socially unifying sentimental influences. Such an agency would transform a harem-ridden nation's public sphere and operate toward the ends of national development, civilizational progress, and even human evolution.

An association implicitly making a linkage between millennial sentimentality, women's exceptional agencies, and American foreign intervention was, in fact, put forth at the seminal moment of the U.S. Women's Movement. In Elizabeth Cady Stanton's address to the Seneca Falls Convention on July 19, 1848, she lays siege to the institution of the "Education Society" – a women's charitable endeavor seeking to raise money in order to send promising young men to seminary. That the same young man, whose education was paid for by women, would return home to preach women's submission and obedience from the pulpit represents an outrage to Stanton. His efforts, instead, are better spent toward the amelioration of women's unfortunate situation abroad:

I think a man, who, under such conditions, has the moral hardihood to take an education a the hands of woman, and such an expense to her, should, as soon as he graduates, with all his honors thick upon him, take the first ship for Turkey, and there pass his days in earnest efforts to rouse the inmates of the harems to a true sense of their degradation, and not, as is his custom, immediately enter our pulpits to tell us of his superiority to us, "weaker vessels," – his prerogative to command, ours to obey, his duty to preach, ours to keep silence.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ "Address Delivered at Seneca Falls – July 19, 1848."

At the same time, the ever-proliferating efforts of men to alleviate cultural dysfunction and vice domestically appear, to Stanton, increasingly ineffectual and incomplete. Her formula for remedying social ills, in both national culture and internationally, involves integrating the unique agentive capacities of women: “Verily, the world waits the coming of some new elements, some purifying power, some spirit of mercy and love...there are deep and tender chords of sympathy and love in the heart of the downfallen and oppressed that woman can touch more skillfully than man.” As if testing Stanton’s hypothesis, the texts examined in each of the following chapters imagines a scenario in which the infusion of Western sentiments and a sentimental education (along with its attendant domesticizing impulses) serve as key ingredients propelling reform/modernization/Westernization in the haremized parts of the world. Alternatively, these same texts wrestle with the potential consequences of how scenes of suffering could also be circulated domestically to warrant and legitimize military or mercantile colonial interventions.

For these authors, the affective labor of geopoliticizing sentiment from the vantage of the harem ultimately entails the production of sentimental appeal surrounding a member of another culture, well beyond national peripheries – a figure about whom sentimental literature had previously been circumspect.⁶¹ As Glenn Hendler observes in *Public Sentiments* (2001), “the limits of a politics of affect

⁶¹ I would contend that other examples of American sentimental literature recount and sentimentalize characters’ forcible induction into and victimization within the nation (e.g., sentimental narratives of slavery) or forcible expulsion to national peripheries or blindspots (e.g., sentimental narratives recounting cases of poverty, captivity/abduction, or removal/forced migration) of the marginalized or vulnerable, already on the cusp of Otherness. I also regard the sentimental captivity/abduction narrative as narrating the retention of national identity and membership when the national body is extracted outside the confines of national culture. See Burnham, 4.

become apparent when it comes up against any significant cultural experiential difference between the subject and object of its paradigmatic act of sympathetic identification” (8). To lay claim and lend melancholic voice to the suffering of the odalisque via recourse to an inferential sympathy is, accordingly, regarded as a notional and epistemologically unstable act. A sentimental portrayal of the miseries of the harem also meant incorporating the inmate into a sentimental body politic of which she was not necessarily a consenting, receptive member.

Manifesting an affinity with James Baldwin’s objections to sentimentalism in “Everybody’s Protest Novel” (1949), the inmate of the harem defies a discrete correspondence within the taxonomic and indexical categories definitively set “in this most mechanical and interlocking of civilizations” (15). This disjuncture results in her reduction to caricature, re-enacts her marginalization, and bespeaks the political turbulence of the United States’ unstable globalized presence in the wide world. Not party to the “race of neatly analyzed, hard-working ciphers,” the inmates of the harem, like the sentimentalized victims of American chattel slavery, refuse any conformity with the clear-cut sentimental typologies and “emerge for what they are: a mirror of our confusion, dishonesty, panic, trapped and immobilized in the sunlit prison of the American dream” (19). Suffragist authors reporting from the harem during this period consequently appear increasingly cognizant of the problematic political freight of sentimentalizing their “sisters in bondage.”

Works by Anna Leonowens, Susan Elston Wallace, Demetra Vaka Brown, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman place a variety of limitations and conditions on the authority with which harem pathos may be represented. In doing so, they anticipate the question put forward by Gayatri Spivak of whether the otherwise silent, indeterminate Orientalized woman-cast-as-victim can be authentically and faithfully

represented through the garble of textual corruption and sympathetic interpersonal translation.⁶² Anticipating Baldwin and Spivak, Suffragist authors in the following chapters repeatedly interrogate various moral and political philosophies of sympathy, including moral sense doctrine and its outgrowths, for cautions supplied against the adoption of a universal code of sentimentality. In dramatically different ways, each chapter captures how the outward bounds of moral sense doctrine foreshadow sentimentality's impending paradox in the harem. Harem writing, in turn, amounts to a process of discovery that plumbs the compatibility of affect, the propriety, and the identity politics contained within the act of supplying a tentative voice and affect to an ultimately unknowable subject, alleged to suffer alone and in silence.

Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the Harem

Despite the evident political register and global potencies of a distinctly feminine mode of sentimentality, such a connection would habitually and doggedly remain something of a non-sequitur in American culture at-large. Take, for instance, Nat Love/Deadwood Dick's *The Life and Adventures of Deadwood Dick* (1907), where the author, ending his recollections of a childhood born into slavery, proclaims, "Harriet Beecher Stowe, the black man's Savior, well deserves the sacred shrine she holds, along with the great Lincoln, in the black man's heart" (13). At first glance, the sentimental shrine to Stowe remaining "in the black man's heart" suggests the patent absence of more tangible *aides-mémoires* in the material world. But that Love need make such an emphasis in the first decade of the 20th century suggests that Stowe's

⁶² A question Spivak would ask over the figure of the immolated *sati/suttee*, another mainstay of Orientalist polemical representation. See Spivak, 285.

role in precipitating the Civil War and Emancipation in the United States, through a work of sentimental fiction, represented an enigmatic causality.

That a literature written primarily by and for women, venerating the sanctity of domestic intimacies above all else, could mobilize public opinion and effect revolutionary political change, as it had done in the 1850s, evidently did not compute. For the way it concretizes what would have formerly been perceived as an illogicality, Lincoln's apocryphal epithet of Stowe as "the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war" is a feature of history that evidently required cultivation – a genealogy I explore in Chapter 1 (qtd. in Vollaro 18). The individual responsible for generating Lincoln's sobriquet for Stowe, Annie Adams Fields, is referenced in this study for her direct ties to Houghton Mifflin and to at least two of the authors profiled.

The dawning realization and gravity of how political power could be generated and cultivated in domestic space, to world-changing effects, would also have to be fleshed out by postbellum Suffragists writing from the harem. To this end, each piece of harem writing in this study references, in dramatically different respects, the legacy of Harriet Beecher Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. If Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* helped to bring about abolition in the United States, it stood to reason that globalizing Stowe's sentimentality could help to end the forms of bondage thought to exist in the harem, which were widely considered to be indistinguishable from chattel slavery in the Americas.

The work of making sense of the political functionality and valence of American sentimentalism would be reanimated by critics a century later. In the decades since Ann Douglas famously consigned sentimentality to a state of ineffectual apoliticality in *The Feminization of American Culture* (1977), as an

example of “the political sense obfuscated or gone rancid,” critical attitudes have branched into two general schools of thought (254). A number of scholars consider sentimentality as engaging “a popular feminist counterpolitics,” representing “an index of women’s political engagement in reform movements such as abolition and protests against Indian removal” (Chapman & Hendler 6). Alternatively, some understand sentimentalism’s overt or covert politicality as the unalloyed helpmeet of territorial acquisition, policies of racial exclusion, and U.S. imperialism. As Amy Kaplan writes, such domestic literature “relies on, abets, and reproduces the contradictions of nationalist expansion” (584). “Where the domestic novel appears most turned inward to the private sphere of female interiority,” Kaplan continues, “we often find subjectivity scripted by narratives of nation and empire” (601). And Lauren Berlant proclaims, “embedded in the often sweetly motivated and solidaristic activity of the intimate public of femininity is a white universalist paternalism, sometimes dressed as maternalism” (6).⁶³

Whether taken as countering or collaborating with dominant culture, the probing affective presumptions of sentiment repeatedly arrive at an impasse in the harem. When confronted with sentimentality’s uncertain ramifications abroad, would-be sentimental agents stop short of sentimentalized depictions of suffering and remain instead at a non-positional flatness of affect. As these literary encounters acknowledge the epistemological maxima of sympathy and community-through-sympathy, they repeatedly intimate an awareness of the colonial censures and expansionist violences that the geopoliticization of sentiment might abet. Sentimentalizing the harem potentially meant authorizing colonial actions to remedy

⁶³ For a summary of contemporary critical backlash against sentimentalism, see Weinstein, 2-3.

the alleged cause of newly legible human hardships overseas. Equally so, appointing Suffragists as agents of a nascent American colonial apparatus came with the weighty proviso that such efforts could very well work to reconsolidate and shore up the same national-imperial hegemony responsible for American women's oppression in the first place.

My intention is to suggest an intermediary position between the two critical positions on the politics of sentimentality described above: sentimental literature *can and does* script expansion and empire, but Suffragist authors in the postbellum show the counterpolitical acumen to preempt or foreclose sentiment in the space of the harem. Counter to the projection of sympathy and cross-identificatory strategies of literary sentimentalism, Suffragist harem writing haywires sympathy in order to leave the harem affectively estranged. The odalisque's alterity and psychological condition remain rigidly intact; she is left quintessentially unknowable and her condition remains outside the speculative reach of interventionist diatribe. The subsequent intellectual labor by Suffragists – of denaturalizing structures of affect – decenters and undercuts colonial claims to the legitimate knowledge of and will-to-power over the Other.

Each chapter that follows features, as emblemization of the way sympathy is rigidly constrained to the perceiving subject, a moment of failed ekphrasis. The knowing gaze upon an Orientalist objet d'art (be it statuary in a Siamese temple, a portrait of the Virgin Mary, or an impressionist painting) is denied penetration, terminating at a surfactant or dermal level. Vision is also fragmented, deflected, or rebuffed, leaving intact the interior crypticity of a focal object, an instance of what Joan DelPlato deems a "challenge to the fictive mastery implied by the perspectival model of visibility" (84). Fashioning the harem as a site of scopic (and affective)

bafflement and inscrutability, these phenomena not only reassert the limitations of sentimental inference and representation, but rebuke the lurid representational imaginings and projections of visual and textual Orientalisms, crafted to compensate for epistemological and taxonomic blindspots overlaying the Other (84).⁶⁴

In this study, I posit that the popular postbellum decline of the sentimental genre originates not in the evolving literary sensibilities of an American reading public but within feminists' growing ambivalence toward mustering sentiment in order to authorize the United States' widened colonial presence overseas. The ongoing problematization of sentimentality in Suffragist harem writing amounts to a subtle form of anti-colonialism, running counter to the occasionally robust endorsement of colonial alignment and American-led internationalism professed by members of the Suffrage leadership during this era. The ambivalence and deferrals often engendered by a narrator's malaise in the harem muddies any pretense to clarity within an emerging American colonial discourse and anticipates the apositionalities of postcolonial theory, articulated in the latter half of the 20th century.⁶⁵ I also interpret the sentimental nullifications of Suffragist harem writing as intuiting and resonating, in meaningful ways, with the deWesternized spirit of postcolonial feminisms that would emerge thereafter.

This study also asks how Suffragist narratives intuit and attempt to inform an inchoate discourse of American globalism and liberal internationalism that would materialize from this era. I end this study in the years immediately preceding both the ratification of the 19th Amendment and failures of Wilsonian Idealism, both of which

⁶⁴ For examination of the hybridities and resulting crypticity of the Orientalist artifact, see Bohrer, 34.

⁶⁵ See Donadey, xxi-xxii; DelPlato, 19. For examination of ambivalence in colonial discourse, see Bhabha, 138-9.

embody crises of political representation long deferred. Despite its eventual failure, Wilson's 1918 pledge of self-determination for all peoples entails some imputation of sympathy, parity, and dignity to the colonized and the conquered. Seeing through such a commitment evidently required major affective contributions from American women. Speaking on the enterprise that would "lead the world to democracy" at the close of the Great War, President Wilson asserted this much in a September 1918 address to the U.S. Senate, advocating the ratification of the 19th Amendment:

We shall need them in our vision of affairs, as we have never needed them before, the sympathy and insight and clear moral instinct of the women of the world. The problems of that time will strike to the roots of many things that we have not hitherto questioned, and I for one believe that our safety in those questioning days, as well as our comprehension of matters that touch society to the quick, will depend upon the direct and authoritative participation of women in our counsels. We shall need their moral sense to preserve what is right and fine and worthy in our system of life as well as to discover just what it is that ought to be purified and reformed. Without their counsellings we shall be only half wise. (148-9)

Echoing the presentiments voiced by Stanton 70 years earlier, Wilsonian Idealism would succeed the rugged diplomacies of the Big Stick and the Gunboat in the United States. As such, I take Wilson's tentative marshalling of women's sympathies (pending their securing the right to vote) as the subsumption of a discourse of sentimentality into the lexicon of American state power, to be exercised extranationally, well beyond the confines of the nation-state. And Wilson's is not a sympathy without condition. In 1890, mulling over why politicians fail as authors and why authors fail as politicians, Professor Wilson describes the varied types of sympathy in his "Leaders of Men":

That the leader of men must have such sympathetic and penetrative insight as shall enable him to discern quite unerringly the motives which move other men *in the mass* is of course self-evident; but the insight which he must have is not the Shakespearian insight. It need not pierce the particular secrets of *individual* men: it need only know what it is that lies waiting to be stirred in the minds and purposes of groups and masses of men. Besides, it is not a

sympathy that serves, but a sympathy whose power is to command, to command by knowing its instrument. (213)

Wilson's version of sympathy closely resembles the Orientalized eugenics of sentimentality proposed in the work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, examined in Chapter 4, as it enlists the penetrative discernment to anticipate and know what is best mandated and proscribed for the Other.

This extension of a paradoxical sympathy for the Other (that can sympathetically discern what is best) has served as a rubric for American colonial and mercantilist engagement in the world ever since 1920. Empires are regularly constructed and sustained through the erection of anti-sympathetic psychological barriers between citizen and noncitizen, buttressed by the pathological lack of familiarity and mutual awareness that ensues. In this study, I question the atypical pretensions to sympathy and affective knowing that has structured American foreign policy and public intercourse for much of the 20th century and all of the 21st. This study ultimately asks how and why Suffragist authors writing the harem (and refusing to pathetize it) helped to forestall the sentimentalization of American colonial discourse for nearly half of a century.

Chapter 1: “An architectural Sabbath”: Anna Leonowens, Fourierism, and Sentimental Assimilations in the City of Women

“What was said there in is for a princess considered by the Speaker or Writer as proper or suitable to be head on my *harem* (a room or part for confinement of Women of Eastern monarch*) there is no least intention occurred to me even once or in my dream indeed! I think if I do so, I will die soon perhaps!”

*A parenthetical drollery inspired by the dictionary.

— A Letter from King Mongkut, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870)

With the discovery of Tahiti, declares Fourier, with the example of an order in which “large-scale industry” is compatible with erotic freedom, “conjugal slavery” has become unendurable.

— Fragment, Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (*Das Passagen-Werk*, 1939)

It's a very ancient saying,
But a true and honest thought,
That if you become a teacher,
By your pupils you'll be taught.

....

Getting to know you,
Getting to know all about you.
Getting to like you,
Getting to hope you like me.

— *The King and I* (1951)

In the second installment of Anna Harriette Leonowens' memoirs, *The Romance of the Harem* (1873), the narrator, Anna, is forced to bear witness to the torture and execution of the refractory concubine, Tuptim. Sentenced to die for her attempted escape from the harem and for refusing to reveal accomplices, Tuptim's grim end resembles that of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom; the consonance between the names “Tuptim” and “Tom” further facilitates their association. As punishment for Anna's efforts to intercede on her behalf, the tyrant-king Mongkut orders that Tuptim be put to death in front of Anna's Bangkok residence, decreeing that “scaffolds...be set up before my [Anna's] windows” (35). Mongkut's edict

thrusts Tuptim's state-sponsored, public execution into uncomfortable proximity with the domestic sanctity of Anna's home, pitting separate spheres in direct, intimate conflict with one another.

Forced not only to witness Tuptim's murder, Anna is intensively compelled to *feel* it as well. "When the first blow descended on the girl's bare and delicate shoulders," Anna recalls of Tuptim's trial, "I felt as if bound and lacerated myself, and losing all control over my actions, forgetting that I was a stranger and a foreigner there, and as powerless as the weakest around me" (32-33). When the king denies Anna's petition for clemency, she claims, "I started to my feet as if I had received a blow" (34). Seemingly obliged to arrogate some portion of Tuptim's agony and *feel along* with her, Anna implicitly clues the reader into doing the same. Shuttering her windows to Tuptim's scourging upon the gallows – thereby skirting representation of the spectacle of sensationalist and graphic violence before her – Anna remains close at hand and is nevertheless prodded, by what is termed the "ironic processes of mental control," to imagine (qtd. in Engle & Arkowitz 61).¹ "My windows were closed upon the scene...Tuptim had so strong a fascination for me that I could not withdraw, but leaned against the shutters, an unwilling witness of what took place, with feelings of pain, indignation, pity, and conscious helplessness which can be imagined" (37). By suggesting that the scene of torture below *can* be made sensible through the reader's recourse to lurid imaginings, the narrative obliquely challenges the reader *not* to visualize and empathize.

Anna's seeming obligatory suffering-by-proxy embeds a plaintive voice into what was formerly a remote and cryptic anguish, now made palpably intelligible to

¹ It is by this same process, we are defied *not* to think of pink elephants.

the reader through her intermediary. It also compensates for Tuptim's enduring silences, as she bears herself throughout the ordeal with "the air of one who suffered, but who was too proud to complain" (27).² The repeated pretension of accessing some version of Tuptim's interior torment utterly collapses the epistemological barrier otherwise separating victim and bystander (and reader). Through Anna's labor of affective actualization and surrogacy, *The Romance of the Harem* very nearly flouts the caveats placed upon the authenticity of sympathetic sensations enumerated by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). In spite of its extraordinary role in perpetuating human community, sympathy, for Smith, is firmly limited to the operation of the perceiving subject's imagination. Referencing, like Leonowens, a moment of torture, Smith attests, "though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did and never can carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations" (ii). The actual torment inflicted upon the Other is ultimately unknowable to the non-suffering, though well-intentioned witness. Leonowens' representation of Tuptim's affliction also contravenes admonitions made by Gayatri Spivak a century later, which channel Smith, regarding the illegitimacy of the politicized imposition of voice and affect onto the formerly silent subaltern. Spivak's attention falls specifically upon the ritual of *sati/suttee*, a mainstay of 19th-century Orientalist polemic, with which Tuptim, through her eventual immolation, is implicitly aligned.³

² Throughout her persecution and torture, Tuptim is portrayed repeatedly as remaining mute. Her suffering is vocalized only through a death knell emitted *in articulo mortis*. See, for example, *RH* 23; 37.

³ A relationship noted by Ann Kaplan, 43.

The episode beginning *The Romance of the Harem*, “Tuptim: A Tragedy of the Harem,” lays blame for Tuptim’s persecution and death squarely upon the structural violences perpetrated through the institution of Siamese harem concubinage. It is the contention of this chapter that Anna’s hypersentimental expropriation of Tuptim’s agony is but one ingredient in the long-distance, transcontinental importation of a sentimental praxis designed to challenge the harem state of Siam and instigate cultural revolution in that far-off nation. By virtue of her personal relationships at the time she composed her memoirs, Leonowens’ narrative of sentimental geopoliticization acquires evolutionary dimensions.⁴

Despite perennial emphasis placed on her Englishness, Anna Leonowens would write both books recounting her experiences as governess to the Siamese royal family as a recent transplant to New York State, living for stretches in New Brighton, Staten Island; the Catskills; and Manhattan.⁵ Both Francis George Shaw and George William Curtis, individuals specially acknowledged in the respective prefaces of Leonowens’ two memoirs – *The Romance of the Harem* and, prior to that, *The English Governess at the Siamese Court: Being Recollections of Six Years in the Royal Palace at Bangkok* – had maintained close personal ties to the Brook Farm Phalanx in the antebellum. The potential influence of this disenchanted postwar coterie of veteran Brook Farmers on Leonowens’ literary output has gone unnoticed in scholarship. While later in life, Leonowens would rise to national prominence in Canada for her advocacy of women’s suffrage, she managed, during her residency in the United States, to ingratiate herself within an interpretive community that had, before the Civil

⁴ Leonowens stipulates that “Siam” is not an appellation used the Siamese themselves, but is observed by the international community. Siam is instead known to its people as “Muang Thai’ (the kingdom of the free)” (*RH* 1).

⁵ Morgan, *BA*, 168.

War, been a major voice of agitation on behalf of expanded civil liberties and franchise for women.⁶

To drastically different degrees, Shaw and Curtis, via their Brook Farm connections, link Leonowens to Associationism in the United States and to the vision of utopian socialism and stadial evolution propounded by François Marie Charles Fourier.⁷ Credited with originating the term “feministe,” Fourier considered the interrelated objectives of architectural reform and women’s emancipation as the prime determinants of a culture’s advancement.⁸ While both texts contain a Fourierist inflection, the different extents of Associationist adherence distinguishing Curtis and Shaw help to contextualize the sweeping discrepancies between *The English Governess* and *The Romance of the Harem*, texts published within three years of each other and purportedly documenting the same experience.

Anna’s emphatic detestation for the detrimental social impacts of the harem resonates with Fourier’s own pronounced antipathy to spatial technologies of women’s oppression, among which the harem is regularly singled out as an object lesson. In Leonowens’ memoirs, the harem in question is that of the Nang Harm – “Harm” being an etymological derivative of the Arabic “harem.” It is a “prison-world” that resembles a self-contained state-within-a-state (*RH* 22). As a key mode of subjection in the Nang Harm, women are forcibly coerced into performing all the professional roles and functions of the state. Merging Fourierist and sentimental

⁶ For Leonowens’ activities and notoriety as a member of the Canadian Suffrage Movement, see Luke, 335; Dow, 112; Morgan, *BA* 202. This would include her election as president of the Woman’s Suffrage Association in 1895.

⁷ In this chapter, I will use Fourierism and Associationism interchangeably. Fourierist Associationism is not to be confused with the Associationism, a theory of philosophy and psychology asserting that association of sensations and ideas comprise the contents of thought.

⁸ Goldstein, 92.

conventions, Leonowens' work makes the weighty claim that architectural reform accompanied by an education in sentiment – imparted primarily through a guided reading of American sentimental literature (and one novel in particular) – can foment sentimental-feminist awakenings, national transformation, and socio-cultural evolution abroad. Via the geopoliticization of American sentimentality and the enhanced elocution of Siamese national pain, Siam becomes de-haremized and is rapidly and bloodlessly ushered into a Western-style version of sentimental modernity. In this scenario, Leonowens closes the caesura that was understood to preclude women's private, domestic sentiments from exerting influence upon public reform.

Reorienting Fourier's preoccupation with a utopian economy of maximum pleasure, Leonowens interjects sentimentality's receptivity to pain into her Fourierist emplotment of the liberation of Siam. With American sentimentalism and Fourierist feminism co-resident in her oeuvre, new sentimental comprehensions enable Siam's evolution away from a repressive, dystopian economy of pathos, doled out through the cultural operation of the Nang Harm. For the way she refurbishes Fourier's notion of stadial evolution, Leonowens' governess memoirs invite useful comparison with her contemporary, Karl Marx, who modifies Fourierism in a very similar way, albeit toward a slightly different set of teleological objectives. Marx would discard Fourierism's feminist complexion in order to formulate a model of stadial evolution driven by androcentric proletarian awakening and insurgency, well removed from the domestic sphere.⁹ Still, both Marx's and Leonowens' evolutionary schemata (and, for that matter, the Asiatic Mode of Production of the former) require an Oriental despot, who monopolizes national surplus value or national surplus pleasure, respectively. A key difference is that Leonowens' contact with just such an Oriental despot is more

⁹ See Sawyer, 40-6, 188-9.

empirical and direct. To this end, it appears that ample creative license is taken so that the literary approximation of the historic King Mongkut (Rama IV) can more convincingly play the part. Leonowens' parallels with Marx, via their shared Fourierian inheritance, also informs the 20th-century rediscovery of her work, during which it was repurposed, in part, in order to corroborate the West's sentimentalized counterargument against the global proliferation of Communism.

Deploying a model for stadial/socio-cultural progression similar to Marx's, Leonowens envisions the succession of events leading up to emancipation in Siam as tightly adhering to a conception of unilinearity, where cultural developments abroad neatly conform to a pattern of societal advancement already validated in the West. As a result, the parallelisms of Anna's campaign of stadial-evolution-via-sentiment oblige both reformative agents and events of change in Siam to imitate or recapitulate historical precedents previously set in the United States. Building upon objections made by James Baldwin in "Everybody's Protest Novel," Lauren Berlant acknowledges that "sentimentality signifies redefinition," adding that, "in the U.S. the definitions of power, personhood, and consent construe the scene of value in the political public sphere in such a way that any account of sentimentality has to be an account of change and of an ideology of change that explains what gets to count as historic change" (647-8). Even as it champions a national phenomenon of trickle-up, sentimental assimilations – so that events in Siam *may count* as historic change – Leonowens' duology maintains a subtle conviction that such conversions are only short-lived and skin deep. Both *The English Governess* and *The Romance of the Harem* subtextually bridle at the transformations they otherwise overtly champion, as individuals and events are forced to comply, in legible and over-precise consistency, with sentimental typologies and categorizations previously established in the United

States. Rather than wholeheartedly reconciling Siamese history to this set of expedient Western antecedents, Leonowens' memoirs maintain a liminal ambivalence toward the totality of assimilation and the fluidity of essential identities, which Fourierism, sentimentalism, and colonialism each take as a given.

Suspicion lingers not just toward the incongruities underlying the assimilation of the Siamese into "civilized" sentimental Westerners but also toward the assimilation of Suffragists into the matrix of American overseas colonialism only then taking shape. To this point, I also read Leonowens' literary output against the historical backdrop of the U.S. Government's nascent interest in the acquisition of territorial holdings abroad as well as the marginalization of the Suffrage Movement during the Reconstruction Era. During this period, propositions suggesting the geopoliticization of sentiment were countered by anti-expansionist reservations about the moral intelligibility of democratic sympathies that the United States stood poised to export to the rest of the world.

Anna in America

In the fall of 1872, Annie Adams Fields, the influential spouse of publisher James Fields, would arrange a meeting between Harriet Beecher Stowe and an ardent admirer, Anna Leonowens. Margaret Landon, the author responsible for Leonowens' 20th-century revival, would later imagine this encounter in *Anna and the King of Siam* (1944). According to Landon, Stowe embraced Leonowens "as if she had known her for a lifetime" (385). The instant familiarity between the two strangers is hardly surprising, given that this was the second time in her life that Anna Leonowens would come to know a woman named Harriet Beecher Stowe.

A likely topic of conversation at that meeting would have surrounded the climactic sequence of Leonowens' soon-to-be-published second book about her experiences in Siam – specifically the conversion narrative of one Lady Sonn Klean, a Burmese noblewoman and consort to Mongkut. Sonn Klean's experience reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) – implicitly undertaken at Anna's behest – has so moved her that she vows, “never to buy human bodies again.” Sonn Klean, “wishful to be good like Harriet Beecher Stowe,” holds a ceremony of manumission in her home, freeing 132 household “slave-women with their children” (RH 249). The text is careful to mark the date of the occasion, “the 3d of January, 1867,” or two days shy of the fourth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation (248). Not content to merely be inspired by Stowe, Sonn Klean takes the additional step of adopting the author's name as her own, and thereafter “to express her entire sympathy and affection for the author of ‘Uncle Tom's Cabin’ ... always signed herself Harriet Beecher Stowe” (249). The signature line of an 1872 correspondence from Sonn Klean to Leonowens, excerpted by Landon in *Anna and the King of Siam*, records this rechristening somewhat differently and in a manner suggesting a hybridity of names, rather than the outright substitution of one for the other. It reads, “Your loving pupil, Son Klin. Harriet Beecher Stowe.” (qtd. in Landon 383).¹⁰

Sonn Klean's self-reinvention is by no means an isolated incident and serves instead, through its sequential situation and emplotment in *The Romance of the Harem*, as preamble to and bellwether of more momentous events. Five years after Sonn Klean's individual contribution to abolition, King Chulalongkorn, Anna's former pupil, makes good on an old promise, decreeing “that from the first day of

¹⁰ For clarity, I will primarily use Leonowens' transliteration of the name, “Sonn Klean,” as opposed to that recorded by Landon, “Son Klin.”

January, 1872, slavery shall cease to be an institution in our country, and every man, woman, and child shall hold themselves free-born citizens” (268).¹¹ Delivered exactly on the ninth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the king’s edict again constellates with a significant date in American history. A correspondence between historical figures also benefits more than a little from the phonic harmony of “Lincoln” and “-longkorn.” In total, the history of Sonn Klean’s conversion reveals how her participation in a pioneering sentimental reading counterpublic and her voluntary self-assimilation in the image of a particular Western persona stimulate subsequent events in Siam, all of which resemble recent American history.¹²

Sonn Klean’s apparent recapitulation of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s identity utilizes an almost reflexive equivalence, increasingly drawn in the 19th century, between chattel slavery in the Americas and harem slavery in the Orient. To this point, Leonowens’ memoirs (especially *The Romance of the Harem*) are heavily populated with inmates of the harem explicitly identified as slaves. In Siam, “woman is the slave of man,” and “polygamy – or, properly speaking, concubinage – and slavery are the curses of the country” (*RH* 11; 10). Whether the lack of distinction

¹¹ That Chulalongkorn did embark upon a path of widespread reform is not historically disputed. This would include an 1897 edict creating countrywide, municipal-level women’s suffrage. As historian Katherine Bowie argues, such an innovation would make Thailand “the second country in the world to enact female suffrage” (709).

¹² This successional history of emancipation in Siam, first tentatively narrated by Leonowens, is later emphatically taken up and completed by Landon, who has the benefit of historical perspective. Landon also unambiguously affirms the veracity and impact of Leonowens’ contribution to change in Siam. Enumerating the reforms of King Chulalongkorn, *Anna and the King of Siam* attests:

It was through the principles laid down in her teaching that he had formed the plans by which he had transformed his kingdom... In Siam the current of change was running deep and strong and true, full of promise for the future, because it was a changed based on the idea of the worth of a human being as Anna had helped instill it into the monarch – a change based on democratic principles. (387)

Landon’s claims to this effect would fall under major scrutiny during the course of the 20th century.

thought to exist between slaveries is historically legitimate or a grave, Eurocentric misapplication, the cause of securing abolition in other countries, by the 1870s, would become increasingly coopted by colonial interests as an acceptable *casus belli*.¹³ The attributed hemispherical correspondence between forms of bondage also gestures to ways in which international anti-slavery efforts could be innovated upon or modified. If the public energies peaked and mobilized by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could contribute so much to the eradication of slavery in the United States, it stood to reason that similar energies could be activated among cultures abroad, to challenge the slavery thought to reside in the harem – even perhaps, through a reading experience of the very same text.

Weighing against what it interprets as the plight of global slavery, Leonowens' testimonial of Sonn Klean's transformation inverts a conventional narrative of Protestant missionary conversion and soteriology. It is a conversion not predicated upon a guided reading experience of the Bible and religious instruction in Christianity, but one brought about, radically, around a contemporary sentimental text. The narrative skirts profane irreligiosity by taking advantage of Mongkut's express injunction against any proselytization in the Nang Harm, a stipulation excerpted in a letter from the king that begins *The English Governess*.¹⁴ As a key point of divergence, traditional missionary narrative regularly relies upon a Calvinist or quasi-Calvinist rhetoric of anti-sentimentality, emphasizing the fallen quality of the

¹³ For a brief description of both indigenous and scholarly rejections of this comparison, see, for example, Zilfi, 97. For description of expanded British interventions and tightening of imperial controls in the Khedivate of Egypt in the 1870s, justified upon the work of eradicating harem slavery, see Robinson-Dunn, 52-3, 120-4.

¹⁴ ““You will do your best endeavor for knowledge of English language, science, and literature, and not for conversion to Christianity”” (*EG* vi).

unsaved, examples of grotesque inhumanity among cultures in the mission field, and the lowness inherent to unredeemed human nature. Only by importing foreign missionaries and Christian doctrine from abroad are these earthly qualities alleviated. Contrarily, the conversion of Sonn Klean involves the awakening of a sympathy that, while latent, occurs naturally within an inherently benevolent human nature. The sentimental awarenesses activated towards the structural violence of chattel slavery through the exposé of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are reapplied by Anna to induce similar sentimental awakenings toward analogous social conditions in Siam. Sonn Klean (whether now “Harriet Beecher Stowe” or “Son Klin.Harriet Beecher Stowe.”) is the first among an embryonic sentimental readership of affective *évolué*, whose sympathies and sensibilities propagate out to the culture at-large and trigger broader revolutionary currents.

That *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might play a role in combatting harem slavery in the Orient was not a point lost on the eponymous Harriet Beecher Stowe, who would eventually come to embrace the tale of her Siamese doppelganger. In an 1878 correspondence, Stowe would request of Leonowens, through Annie Fields, testament of the novel's global legacy. “Can you get this note for me to Mrs Leonowens who was governess to the King of Siam?” Stowe would inquire, “I am making out a history of Uncle Tom and have asked her for some facts of its influence there” (qtd. in Gollin 146). Leonowens, by then living in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where in addition to her pro-suffrage work had co-founded the still extant Victoria School of Art and Design (now the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), responded, relaying a condensed version of the Sonn Klean story.¹⁵ In her correspondence, Leonowens

¹⁵ For a celebratory piece on its founder, see “Introducing Anna” on the NSCAD website.

characterizes the anecdote as “the particular incident from one of my books which proves the influence of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ on the Amelioration if not Abolition of Slavery in Siam” (qtd. in Gollin 146). Stowe’s new introduction to the 1878 Houghton Osgood re-edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* excerpts Leonowens’ letter and would be anthologized in Houghton Mifflin reprints for the remainder of the 19th century.¹⁶

To give an account of Leonowens’ personal history leading up to her meeting with the originary Harriet Beecher Stowe requires confronting some of the discrepancies that arise between the autobiographical backstory she would produce later in life and details that have since come to light. Based on information she related to her children around the turn of the century, Anna Leonowens was born Anna Crawford in Wales (“I believe I was born in Wales”) to a major in the East India Company Army (qtd. in Morgan *BA* 3). Immigrating to colonial India from the United Kingdom as a teenager, Anna married a sergeant; his unexpected death forced her to take up a profession.¹⁷ Anna taught in Singapore before being commissioned to serve as governess to many of the 82 children Mongkut had fathered as king of Siam.¹⁸ Leonowens remained in Mongkut’s employ for five-and-a-half years.¹⁹

Leonowens relocated to the United States in 1867, and the heft of personal connections she forged among the Boston Brahmins undoubtedly helped to propel her books’ publication and subsequent popularity. With sections serialized in *The Atlantic*

¹⁶ Parfait 122-3; Morgan, *BA*, 197. See also the 1896, 1899, and 1910 Houghton Mifflin reprints of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the introduction to 1896 *The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe*.

¹⁷ Habegger, 7, 15.

¹⁸ Kepner, 23.

¹⁹ Morgan, *BA* 34; Habegger, 4.

– a periodical then also owned by James Fields and co-edited by Fields and William Dean Howells – *The English Governess* was published in 1870 by Fields, Osgood and Company.²⁰ James R. Osgood and Company, a consolidation of what, as the frontispiece of *Romance* notes, was of late “Ticknor & Fields, and Fields, Osgood, & Co” published *The Romance of the Harem* in 1873 (i).²¹ Almost from the outset, reviewers in the United Kingdom and in English-language sources in Southeast Asia raised questions about details in Leonowens’ account, suggesting that some appeared to be factually suspect. Responses to the duology within the United States, however, bore no such misgivings. As Alfred Habegger observes in his recent biography *Masked* (2014), Leonowens’ literary reception in America was almost uniformly “ardent and supportive,” and her account was generally considered as being grounded in the truth (7).²²

Virtually forgotten in the intervening six decades, Leonowens’ opus was rediscovered by Landon, an American missionary who had been deployed to Bangkok during the 1920s and 30s.²³ Landon re-novelized Leonowens’ two books, consolidating them into *Anna and the King of Siam*. Within less than fifteen years of its 1944 publication, Landon’s bestseller had inspired a motion picture, *Anna and the King of Siam* (1946), and a stage musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *The King and I*

²⁰ Kepner, 26. Howells would become editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic* in 1871 and remain in that position for ten years. See Sedgwick, 113.

²¹ Osgood would undergo another merger into Houghton-Osgood in 1878 and finally become Houghton-Mifflin in 1880. Gollin 132-4; Parfait 122-3.

²² For description of Leonowens’ substantial reception in the United States, including a positive review in *The New York Times*, see Habegger, 6. For challenges regarding factuality levelled by critics abroad, see Morgan, *RH* xxiii; Morgan, *BA* 175; and Habegger, 4; 284-5.

²³ Kepner, 2.

(1951), which would be adapted into a film of the same name in 1956.²⁴ As a result of Leonowens' 20th-century renaissance, investigations into her origins story revealed that a number of elements had likely been fabricated. She was born Anna Edwards (not Crawford) in the Presidency of Bombay (not Wales) to an East India Company private (not a major); Leonowens had lived and taught in Malaya, Singapore, and Australia.²⁵ Of Leonowens' married life, Alfred Habegger remarks, "the man she married was not an officer but a clerk...at the time of his death he was managing a hotel in Penang [Malaya]" (12). The name "Leonowens" also constitutes something of a neologism, a merger of the former middle and surname of her husband, Thomas Lean Owens; he is reported to have originated and favored the modification himself.²⁶

Such mystifications of her past seem to have allowed Leonowens to evade the social prejudices that might be engendered against her for her humble upbringing, her modest circumstances, or her rationale for the "unfeminine" pursuit of seeking employment as an educator. It likely also allowed her to camouflage her race.²⁷ In his 1976 biography of Anna Leonowens' son, *Louis and the King of Siam*, William S. Bristowe, an English science writer and career arachnologist, would initially suggest that Leonowens had manipulated details of her life and had done so with the underlying motive of concealing her mixed descent as an Anglo-Indian.²⁸ As Bristowe alleges, Leonowens "may have had what was commonly called 'a touch of

²⁴ To be fair, 20th century revamps of the Leonowens narrative preserve a trace of their original intertextual relationship with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Tuptim's performance of "The Small House of Uncle Thomas," in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The King and I*, encodes her resistance to Mongkut through her quasi-sentimental, error-prone theatrical interpretation of the story of Eliza's escape in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

²⁵ Habegger, 6, 12, 109-112.

²⁶ Habegger, 9; Morgan, *BA* 70; Morgan, *RH* xiv; Dann, 117.

²⁷ Bristowe, *LL* 30; Morgan, *RH* xiv.

²⁸ For his research on spiders, see, for example, Bristowe's *The Comity of Spiders* (1941).

the tarbrush' in her veins" (27). If she was, in fact, "guilty" of "passing," she did so at a time in the second half of the 19th century when the systemic racism and social ostracism faced by Anglo-Indians had become increasingly virulent.²⁹

Of the history of Leonowens' reception as a writer one aspect has remained constant. The bulk of her literary celebrity and circulation has come, lopsidedly, from American audiences – in Leonowens' lifetime and ever since.³⁰ Contrary to an attitude of skepticism and sober correction proffered by sources well versed in the imperial culture of the British Empire, Leonowens' favorable American reception came as, at its core, it supplied a highly palatable thematic message to readerships in the United States. Namely, via the narrative of Stowe, Sonn Klean, and Chulalongkorn, it recovers some transcendent value from the otherwise prodigious bloodshed of the American Civil War. Contemporary citation of Leonowens' work among a Boston-centered coterie of progressive feminists and sentimental authors imparts some sense of its resonance in America. Emily Dickinson's editor and the long-time Suffrage advocate who presided over the marriage of Lucy Stone and Henry Brown Blackwell, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, refers to Leonowens as an expert on East Asian matters in his *Common Sense About Women* (1881), specifically during examination of the Suffrage-relevant topic of women's status as voters and as

²⁹ Barred from posts in the colonial administration and army, Anglo-Indians, as Indira Ghose remarks, "by the nineteenth century had become the laughing stock of British society and...are always vilified and derided in British texts" (148). See also Mizutani, 15-22. In order to maintain some distinction between author/historical figure and narrator/character, I refer to the former as "Leonowens" and to the latter as "Anna."

³⁰ Excluding the 1946 film adaptation, *Anna and the King of Siam*, shot in the United Kingdom, all the filmic adaptations of Leonowens' narrative have been produced in the United States, including *The King and I* (1956), the television series *Anna and the King* (1972), the film *Anna and the King* (1999), and the animated film *The King and I* (1999).

citizens among world cultures.³¹ “The Story of Boon” (1874), a poem by sentimental novelist and activist for Native Americans, Helen Hunt Jackson, is inspired by a section of *The Romance of the Harem*. Hunt Jackson footnotes the poem as being “strictly true” and “told by Mrs. Leonowens, the English Governess at the Siamese court” (220).³²

An 1882 compilation of correspondences penned by the recently deceased Lydia Maria Child, published by Houghton Mifflin, includes an 1873 thank-you letter addressed to Child’s friend Francis George Shaw, acknowledging her receipt of a copy of *The Romance of the Harem*. Child thanks Shaw for the “beautiful present...so orientally gorgeous, yet so tasteful” (216). Child transitions to some of the text’s broader themes:

I shall not live to see the universally acknowledged brotherhood of the human race, but I rejoice over the ever-increasing indication of tendencies toward such a result; among which the mission of Mrs. Leonowens is very significant. The book, though unavoidably painful in some respects, was very fascinating to me...How the proclamations of the young King of Siam concerning the abolition of slavery and the brotherhood of religions thrilled through me! God bless him! I want to send him something. And those tender-hearted women of the harem whose hearts melted over ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ and whose reverence was bestowed both on Jesus and Buddha, because they recognized a tender self-sacrificing spirit in both! (216-7)

Child’s own sentimental reading of the book nicely distills the selective appeal of *The Romance of the Harem*. Namely, it suggests the hard-won lessons of the Abolition Movement in America could be repurposed and applied in other parts of the world. Sentiment “tendencies” could be awoken abroad, through an education and training in

³¹ Higginson, 276. See McMillen 2015, 76.

³² Referring to the harem inmate Anna identifies as her source, Hunt Jackson reports that Anna took the account “from Choy’s own lips” (220). For Hunt Jackson’s attitude toward Leonowens, see Phillips, 130-1, 143. See also *Siam: Or, The Heart of Farther India* (1886) by Mary L. Cort, American missionary to Siam, for Cort’s repeated citation of Leonowens, 59, 90, 156, 181, 273, 383.

the global extension of mutual concern, inducting Others into an imagined community of unbounded fellow feeling and “brotherhood,” all to millenarian effect.

Francis George Shaw gifted *The Romance of the Harem* to Child as a literary production with which he, in fact, had been personally involved. Of only two individuals thanked in the acknowledgements section of *Romance*, Leonowens praises Shaw for his special contribution. “I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Francis George Shaw for valuable advice and aid in the preparation of this work for the press” (i). The dateline of the preface places Leonowens’ dedication at “New Brighton, Staten Island,” where she had taken up work as principal at a day school for girls and where Shaw and his family had built an estate in 1855.³³ Leonowens’ personal introduction to Shaw would very likely have come by way of family ties. In the preface of *The English Governess* three years prior, Leonowens singles out Shaw’s son-in-law, the “Hon. George William Curtis of New York” for his input, among “all my other true friends, abroad and in America” (vii). The superlatives Leonowens reserves for Curtis and Shaw in each respective text occlude what the two men notably have in common, beyond relation by marriage. Both participated in the utopian experiment undertaken at the Brook Farm commune, located in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, during its heyday in the early 1840s. This shared feature of their past also points to a subject upon which both men held dramatically opposing views: the philosophy that the commune would come to espouse as orthodoxy, Fourierism. Curtis’ antipathy for Fourier’s utopianism is matched only by Shaw’s robust and very public endorsement.

At the time of its founding in 1841, Brook Farm had not been conceived of as a uniquely Fourierist venture. For the first few years of its existence, the commune

³³ Foote, 71; Habegger, 318.

had been inclusive and open to members' diverse philosophical orientations and preferences – a period Perry Miller would later refer to as the “transcendental picnic” (qtd. in Francis 68).³⁴ Fourierism would only later be adopted as Brook Farm's *de facto* ideology in January 1844, making the commune one of around thirty Associations or Phalanxes, as Fourierist communities were called, inaugurated in the United States during that decade.³⁵ The gradual transition to doctrinaire Fourierism at Brook Farm bears a number of marks suggesting that it was the subject of interpersonal frictions. A transcendental picnicker, Curtis joined the Brook Farm Phalanx in 1842. By 1843, he had already departed, partly out of protest for the increasing Fourierist inclination at the commune. “Reform is organized distrust,” Curtis rails against the presumptions of Fourier and his fellow utopian socialist Robert Owen, in a letter written during his time at Brook Farm, “it says to the universe fresh from God's hand, ‘You are a miserable business; lo! I will make you fairer!’ and so deposes some Fourier or Robert Owen to improve the bungling work of the Creator” (qtd. in Cary 25-6).

Later becoming a noted abolitionist and Suffragist, Curtis gained literary acclaim in the antebellum for two Eastern travelogues, *The Howadji in Syria* (1851) and *Nile Notes of a Howadji* (1852). In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a fictionalization of his Brook Farm experience published by Ticknor and Fields, the author identifies a number of contemporary literary talents who might well recollect their time at Brook Farm. Hawthorne ends the conceit by suggesting that “even the brilliant Howadji might find as rich a theme in his youthful

³⁴ Francis, 83-4; Cary, 15-38.

³⁵ Hayden, 35; Foote, 43. The term “phalanx,” or “finger bone,” conventionally denotes a tightly arrayed, probing vanguard military formation. See Skelton & Dell, 24.

reminiscences of Brook Farm, and a more novel one...than those which he has since made so distant a pilgrimage to seek, in Syria and along the current of the Nile” (6). That *even* Curtis could produce some valuable account of his Brook Farm experience insinuates, indirectly, that his experience was less than ideal. Elsewhere in *The Blithedale Romance*, the topic of Fourier arises as a subject of parody and source of dissension among characters. When the narrator, Miles Coverdale, plies the Curtis-esque *refusenik* Hollingsworth with “several points of Fourier’s system,” outlined in what Coverdale himself thinks of as “horribly tedious volumes,” Hollingsworth grumbles, “let me hear no more of it....I never will forgive this fellow” (64; 65). Despite his prior estrangement from the Brook Farm Community, Curtis would maintain notoriety in Suffrage circles, most notably for his July 1867 speech at the New York Constitutional Convention, pleading to insert language on behalf women’s franchise into state law.³⁶

In contrast to Curtis, it is difficult to say if Brook Farm made a Fourierist out of Frank Shaw or if Shaw helped to make Brook Farm exclusively Fourierist. Won over to transcendentalism by friends such as Child and Margaret Fuller, Shaw would distinguish himself in the antebellum as a friend to progressive causes and early supporter of the immediate abolition of chattel slavery. Shaw had purchased a tract of land in West Roxbury, adjacent to Brook Farm in 1840, prior to the establishment of the commune, and resided there with his family.³⁷ While direct evidence of his influence among commune members at Brook Farm is lacking, Shaw proved to be a trenchant advocate of Associationism.

³⁶ See Curtis, “Equal Rights for Women,” published in Stanton and Anthony’s journal, *The Revolution*.

³⁷ Both of Frank Shaw’s daughters would marry former Brook Farmers. For more on Shaw’s anti-slavery activism and patronage, see Kesten, 18, 171; Foote 2; Lader, 280.

Fourierism in America

But what did the philosophy of Charles Fourier entail?³⁸ Specifically, Associationism envisions altering the built environment in order to achieve the dual objectives of unencumbering human sexuality and unlocking women's agencies. Fourier believes that any number of cultural ills – including oppressive social hierarchies, individual isolation, gender discrimination, or discontent rooted in sexual frustration – are sustained and codified by architectural technologies. Bad institutions, buttressed by repressive cultural spatialities, negatively condition human behavior and detrimentally shape human identity. Margaret Fuller annotates Associationism in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845): “Fourier says, As the institutions, so the men! All follies are excusable and natural under bad institutions” (111-2). This is to say that Fourierism is primarily attentive to the ways in which lived space dictates the structure of social relations and human community, operating from the outside-in. In the quotation above, Fuller misattributes, at least temporarily, Fourier's particular emphasis on gender.

Fourier's solution for reforming architecture in order to combat human oppression comes in the form of the phalanstère, often anglicized as phalanstery or phalansterie [Figure 1]. It represents an attempt to draft the blueprint for a structure within which spatial and architectural obstacles to both individual contentment and collective social harmony (or non-aggression) have been eradicated. Fourier biographer Jonathan Beecher characterizes the phalanstery as “an architecture that

³⁸ Charles Fourier is not to be confused with fellow countryman and contemporary Jean-Baptiste Joseph Fourier, the mathematician who accompanied Napoleon on his invasion of Egypt and whose pioneering work on thermodynamics included the discovery of the Greenhouse Effect. See Herivel.

would break down the walls between people and families and make possible the multiplication of bonds between the members of a community” (CF 245).³⁹ The phalanstery is specifically comprised of a mixed-use industrial and residential complex unified by a central promenade, interwoven with connecting corridors and ample open space. The phalanstère’s decidedly agoraphilic layout is engineered, theoretically, to increase the number of positive social encounters among members of a community/phalanx. Endlessly multiplied avenues of social contact are designed to reduce the psychological detriments of individual seclusion and render the fabric of lived space open to unfettered mobility and *ungendered*. With countless vectors of uninhibited, classless freedom of movement, “the phalanstery becomes a city of arcades,” Walter Benjamin observes in his unfinished *Arcades Project* (5).

Through the phalanstère, Fourier also envisions a cultural formation enabling members of a phalanx to rapidly pursue and gratify ephemeral passions, approaching what he refers to as the “ANALYTIC AND SYNTHETIC CALCULUS OF PASSIONATE ATTRACTIONS AND REPULSIONS” (capitalization Fourier’s, qtd. in Beecher CF 66). Parsing through his idiosyncratic catalogue of passional impulses, Benjamin conjures Fourier’s elaborated attempt to coordinate and systematize the social interactions of a utopia, in which conflicting human urges are perfectly offset and counterbalanced:

The highly complicated organization of the phalanstery appears as machinery. The meshing of the passions, the intricate collaboration of *passions mecanistes* with the *passion cabaliste*, is a primitive contrivance formed – on analogy with the machine – from the materials of psychology. The mechanism made of men produces the land of milk and honey. (5)

On a more practical level, Fourier’s utopian arrangement means non-specialized vocational training for both women and men, in opposition to professional

³⁹ See also Goldstein, 92.

specialization and the *ennui* of workaday monotony. It also involves open, non-monogamous freedom of sexual expression, even among sexual minorities, and concentrated community efforts to comfort the romantically rejected.⁴⁰ Such conditions meant that individuals could gravitate to the most fulfilling form of labor (sexual and economic) they might choose at a given moment, selected at personal whim in order to reduce dissatisfaction. A regulatory body appointed to measure and legislate the proper passional harmony of a phalanx, Fourier institutes a “Court of Love,” with an administration consisting solely of worldly women.⁴¹

Above all else, Fourierist architectural reform is most heavily oriented toward the emancipation of women (economic, sexual, psychological). As Beecher explains, Fourier “saw the servitude of women as a ‘blunder’ that victimized society as a whole” (*CF* 208). So much so, the treatment of women relative to the stadal progress of cultures begets a Fourierist theory of history. “The extension of the privileges of women,” Fourier exclaims, “is the fundamental cause of all social progress” (qtd. in Beecher *WR* 92). Fourier insists that the condition of women in any given cultural or historical epoch “forms the PIVOT OF THE MECHANISM...whose absence or presence determines changes of period” (capitalization Fourier’s, qtd. in Beecher *WR* 95). In his *Theorie des Quatre Mouvements* (1808), he is explicit:

Social progress and changes of period are brought about by virtue of the progress of women toward liberty, and social retrogression occurs as a result of a diminution in the liberty of women. Other events influence these political changes; but there is no cause which produces social progress or decline as rapidly as a change in the condition of women. (qtd. in Beecher *WR* 92)

The greater liberty and agency apportioned women within a culture appears to have a ripple effect, engaging other socially transformative energies. The social and

⁴⁰ Beecher, *CF* 309-12. Manuel and Manuel, 670.

⁴¹ Beecher, *CF* 307.

psychosexual dysfunction among societies in the European and non-European world alike, for Fourier, radiate from the conventions of gender segregation and servility enforced by its cultural institutions. In Fourier's praise for Tahitian culture – upon which Benjamin remarks in the epigraph opening this chapter – instances of stadial progression or lagging are not adjudged in blanket terms, flattening cultures of East and West into a convenient binary of civilized or uncivilized, but are evaluated contingently on culture-by-culture basis.

Consequently, the stifling psychological regime and carceral practices of *couverture* observed in the West, for Fourier, like many of his contemporaries, share imminent resemblances with the alleged oppression of women in other world cultures. On the situational necessities of individual acts of oppression in various backward ages, he writes:

If in the barbarous order it is necessary to brutalize women, to persuade them that they have no souls, so as to dispose them to allow themselves to be sold in the market or shut up in a harem, it is like necessary in the civilized order to stupefy women from their infancy, so as to make them fit the philosophic dogmas, the servitude of marriage, and the debasement of falling into the power of a husband... Now, since I should blame a barbarian who trained his daughters for the usages of the civilized state in which they will never live, I should likewise blame a civilized man who trained his daughters in a spirit of liberty and right peculiar to the sixth and seventh periods, which we have not attained. (78)

Lumped together, both Eastern and Western examples of women's subjugation pale in comparison with their dispensation in Fourier's as-yet-unrealized utopia.⁴² Fourier elsewhere arranges echelons of stadial evolution into neatly periodized matrices, correlated to the cultural privilege of women that characterizes (and determines) each

⁴² Fourier also praises the Japanese, along with the Tahitians, for the lack of strictures placed on women and the resultant industrial/economic advancement of both cultures. Beecher, 208.

particular evolutionary interval.⁴³ The social and legal status of women, according to Associationist thinking, indexically constitutes the prime determinant, the deciding factor, and the best measure of a culture's advancement.

Incident upon the proximity and relativity among cultures, the Associationist model of stadial evolution takes for granted that all cultures must progress, without deviation, through gradients of a single evolutionary rubric. Following a unilinear arc toward a utopian endpoint, cultures must pass sequentially through stages of developmental expression that are virtually universal. Consequently, the potentials for linear backsliding and stadial degeneration are very real. In an example repeatedly given by Fourier, the renewed subjection and domestic incarceration of women – or other erosions of women's status – can possibly stymie social harmony, halt advancement, and effect retrogression to a lower state of culture.

As byword for a repressive architectural formation that broadly corrupts a culture through its operation upon women, the figuration of the harem repeatedly factors into Fourier's cautions regarding the dangers of cultural degeneracy and the fluidity with which such regressions could occur. "The simple adoption of closed harems would speedily turn us into barbarians, and the mere opening of the harems would enable the barbarians to advance to civilization," he warns (qtd. in Beecher *CF* 92).⁴⁴ An emblem of women's victimization and the despot's monopolization of

⁴³ See, for example, Fourier's chart reproduced in Beecher, *CF* 258.

⁴⁴ Emmeline Lott's *The English Governess in Egypt: Harem Life in Egypt and Constantinople* (1865) is perhaps the closest literary relative of Leonowens' *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* and *The Romance of the Harem*. Much like Leonowens, Lott claims in the text to have served as governess in the Egyptian royal household during the reign of Khedive Isma'il Pasha (إسماعيل باشا) in the 1860s. Lott, in fact, reproduces a Fourierist mantra in *The English Governess in Egypt*, the harem being "the reason why Turks and Egyptians will always remain semi-barbarians, until a radical change can be effected in their families by means of education" (9).

sensual pleasure, the harem is construed as a vestigiality of lower cultural states and an object lesson in how architecture can galvanize cultural stagnation. The harem, it seems here, is never too far removed from undermining civilized culture and, while left unstated, Fourierism does not prohibit international efforts to monitor and remediate the corrupted (and possible corrupting) cultures of Others.

By the 1840s, Frank Shaw would come to appropriate and expand upon a raft of Fourierist themes. Among Shaw's somewhat sparse lifetime literary output, his 1845 essay "Women of the Boston Antislavery Fair," published in the Brook Farm periodical, *The Harbinger*, stands out for the way it applies party-line Associationist philosophy to the American scene and beyond. Cribbing *La Theorie des Quatre Mouvements* nearly verbatim, Shaw proclaims:

The social condition of woman is the pivot, the determining character, of each phase of social progress, and without a change in that condition, no change from one period to another is possible. To exemplify; the Turks may adopt most of the institutions of civilization, excepting monogamy, but so long as they retain their harems, they will remain barbarous; while we, on the other hand, need only to adopt that style of life, to fall at once from civilization to barbarism. (17)

Shaw here updates Fourier, who died in 1837, by alluding to the first wave of the Tanzimât Reforms (تنظيمات), a regime of internal modernization/Westernization inaugurated by Ottoman Sultan Mahmut II (محمود ثانی) in 1839.⁴⁵

Channeling an Associationist orthodoxy, Shaw also makes the radical claim that the then embryonic campaigns against American chattel slavery and on behalf of women's rights should be combined. The fusion of Abolitionism and feminism, a merger that could prove generative for both causes, must nevertheless follow one key

⁴⁵ Following the sultan's death in that year, the Tanzimat Reforms would be carried on by his successors. See Zürcher, 50-70.

condition. Addressing his intended audience – the abolitionist women of the article’s title – Shaw argues that, as a prerequisite to women’s successful activism against slavery, they must necessarily reorient their reformative energies toward the goal of securing civil liberties for themselves. Since women’s “social condition” is “the gauge of the progress which the race has made,” Shaw vows that there is “no hope for the chattel slave but in the annihilation of all kinds of slavery,” assuring a female readership that “they can do nothing efficiently for the freedom of others until they are themselves free” (1; 17). For Shaw, reform is superfluous when it fails to address the foundational cause of cultural dysfunction. “We call, then, upon the noble women who now use their efforts for the liberation of the chattel slave, to turn their attention to their own condition, and to that of their sex throughout the world” (17). Shaw’s prioritization is a matter of honoring the proper stadial sequence of causation that always begins with women. Countering more traditionally conservative advocates of abolition, like Catharine Beecher, who limited the proper spatial expression of women’s activism to the confines of the home and to a sphere of domestic intimacies, Shaw is explicit upon a topic that Fourier left unarticulated. To Shaw’s mind, women should rightly internationalize the feminist movement and alleviate the condition of their “sex throughout the world” in order to actualize utopia beyond the confines of the home and the nation.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In Catharine Beecher’s “An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism” (1837), the author chides the public activism of the Grimke sisters and others, deploying a Humean rhetoric suggesting the impropriety of women’s activism in the public sphere. The *faux pas* of women’s public activism is metonymically connect with the impropriety of activism in one section of the country designed to “to awaken public sentiment against a moral evil existing in another section of the country” (8). Beecher asks, “Are not the northern and southern sections of our country distinct communities, with different feelings and interests?” (12). The overreach of her fellow Abolitionists reminds Beecher, in many ways, of “the Atheist school,” consisting of utopian socialists like “Robert Owen and Fanny Wright” (120).

Concurrent to Shaw's feminist agitation, Fourierist undercurrents also fed into the early stirrings of the American Suffrage Movement in the 1840s, specifically around the figure of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton had visited Brook Farm briefly during the 1840s, and the so-called Burned-over District of upstate New York, which encompassed the village of Seneca Falls, was home to no fewer than eight phalansteries.⁴⁷ Hobbled by a withering sense of intellectual and physical isolation following her relocation to Seneca Falls in spring 1847, Stanton recalls, a half-century later, the "mental hunger" she experienced, in *Eighty Years And More*:

I now fully understood the practical difficulties most women had to contend with in the isolated household, and the impossibility of woman's best development if in contact, the chief part of her life, with servants and children. Fourier's phalansterie community life and co-operative households had a new significance for me. (147)

A feeling of sequestration within the walls of her rural home was, for Stanton, a vindication of Fourier's appeals to feminist architectural reform and one of the driving forces underlying her call to convene the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.

Reforming Haremspace

Consonant with her contacts with Associationism and sentimentalism in the United States, Leonowens' first book begins upon a point of convergence and vigorous agreement between the two, architectural reform. Glossing over life before Siam, *The English Governess* starts abruptly with Anna's arrival in Bangkok and her preoccupation with the procurement of a "tolerable house" (73). I refer to this fixture of sentimental literature as *econoforming*, or the improvisation of homespace out of less than ideal material conditions. A narrative of broader cultural transformation in Siam, in fact, begins with Anna's domesticizing mission to recuperate a Western home

⁴⁷ Hayden, 50.

from Siamese living space, an act of re-spatialization that is the equivalent of a Fourierist evolutionary innovation.

Rejecting Mongkut's initial demand that she take up residence within the harem, Anna withholds her services as governess, for a period of months, until the king observes the contractual stipulation that she be provided with a suitable domicile. It is the first object of contention in the protracted battle of wills between Anna and Mongkut. Elevating the mundane work of househunting to high sentimental melodrama, the crucible of econoforming affords Anna opportunity to exhibit class sensibilities and a particular expectation to republican domesticity. The king's initial concession is a dwelling consisting of "two squalid rooms at the end of a Bangkok fish-market," located on an "execrable lane" in a "suburb of disgust" (73; 68; 69). When offered the apartment by a royal official, Anna, convulsed, "dashed the key from his hand... caught [her] boy up in [her] arms, cleared the steps in a bound, and fled anywhere, anywhere" – a momentary flight reminiscent of Eliza's evasion of slave catchers in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (69). A second home, offered as a compromise, strikes Anna initially as "almost picturesque" but suffers from a long-standing dereliction and requires the exertion of homemaking energies to salvage a former state of domesticity: "it was clear that soap and water without stint would do much here toward the making of a home for us" (74). The dwelling is tenanted by "such filthy filth, so monstrous in quantity and kind, – dirt to be stared at, defied, savagely assaulted with rage and havoc" (74). The elevated, faux-epic, martial allusions deployed hint at a tentative equivalence between the militarized and the domesticizing conquest of a foreign landscape.

The challenge, faced by Anna, of househunting and homemaking upon the inhospitable terrain of Siam comports with a similar convention in the sentimental

novel. As a defensive reaction, the sentimental hero, faced with social isolation or estrangement, attempts to engineer domestic amenities out of meager circumstances. Distinguishing a recurring sentimental motif, Nina Baym understands the sentimental protagonist, charged with “winning her own way in the world,” as reflexively adopting “a pragmatic strategy for dealing from a weak position with the threats and aggressions of the powerful” (11; 43). This almost always means, I would argue, contriving some semblance of a domestic infrastructure from a hostile environment in order to accommodate a particular set of domestic and affective behaviors. In Anna’s case, the sentimental mainstay of econoforming is applied abroad and becomes a counterpart action to the process of colonialism/settlerism that can be understood as terraforming – a voluntary or involuntary set of practices designed to condition a heterotopic landscape and biome to suit particular economic or cultural needs.⁴⁸

Crucially, the conversion of homespace is conducive to the generation of sentiment. The labor of housekeeping “exultingly” completed, Anna cradles her son in her lap “in celebration of our glorious independence,” a moment conspicuously utilizing rhetoric of national liberation (76). For Anna, “prepared to queen it in my own palace,” the homey scene also serves as a mnemonic tripwire, producing an effusion of emotionally charged nostalgia:

Smiling at my own small grandeur, came tender memories crowding thick upon me, – of a soft, warm lap, in which I had once loved to lay my head; of

⁴⁸ Emmeline Lott’s narrator in *The English Governess in Egypt* also undergoes a similar dilemma of extemporizing recognizably Western domestic space from what she regards as substandard material conditions in the harem. Upon discovering that palace officials have failed to supply her with a contractually stipulated, European-style room of her own, the narrator protests, championing her expectation and right to a particular domestic standard. In the room in question, the narrator records that, “there were neither pillows, bolsters, nor any bed-linen...Not the sign of a dressing table or a chair of any description, and a total absence of all the appendages necessary for a lady’s bedroom – not even a vase” (41).

a face, fair, pensive, loving, lovely; of eyes whose deep and quiet light a shadow of unkindness never crossed; of lips that sweetly crooned the songs of a far-off, happy land; of a presence full of comfort, hope, strength, courage, victory, peace, that perfect harmony that comes of perfect faith, – a child's trust in its mother. (76)

The privacy and sovereignty secured through the assumption of a domestic enclave in Siam serves as a bulwark against otherwise compromising, outside intrusions into Anna's personal life. As the Siamese premier presses Anna, during an initial meeting, with questions regarding her age and marital status, she deflects, riposting "that his Excellency had no right to pry into my domestic concerns" (*EG* 17). The concurrence of domesticity and sentimentality, each generating the other, intimates their mutual interdependence in the text and signals that additional sentimental awakenings can, in fact, econoform haremspace.

And it is no mystery what rival cultural institution Anna's efforts at econoforming and sentimentalization are designed to contrast and oppose. The Siamese royal harem, the Nang Harm, is translated as "Veiled Women" by Anna (*RH* 12). "Every harem is a little world in itself," she observes as a generality, but, by magnitude of scale, this harem constitutes a fully autonomous, self-sustaining microstate (*RH* 107). The Nang Harm has a "permanent population...estimated at nine-thousand," where "live none but women and children" (*RH* 13; 12). Anything but a conventional tableau of Oriental indolence, its labor force is "composed entirely of women – some who rule, others who obey and those who serve" (*RH* 107). Conscripting women into every vocational role without exception, the social organization of the Nang Harm thrusts its citizens into all the agentive offices and functions that comprise the messier business of a state: "this woman's city is as self-supporting as any other in the world: it has its own laws, its judges, police, guards, prisons, and executioners, its markets, merchants, brokers, teachers, and mechanics of

every kind and degree; and every function of every nature is exercised by women, and by them only” (RH 13). It is “the Amazons” of the Nang Harm who “daily administer justice to the inhabitants of this woman’s city,” superintending the exaction of state violence (RH 12-3). The bureaucratic and legalist instruments of Mongkut’s will and persecutions, women are shown trying, passing judgment, sentencing, imprisoning, torturing, and (it is implied) executing Tuptim in *The Romance of the Harem*.

Through her special access to the Nang Harm, Anna reconnoiters a protected domestic zone where custom, shored up by architectural technology, had traditionally rebuffed the efforts of would-be colonizers, missionaries, and mercantilists attempting to infiltrate and gain sway. Performing another generic modification upon sentimental literature, Anna recasts the domestic informant of sentimental literature into colonial informant. Turning a catalogic eye on her environs, Anna yields a wealth of politically sensitive information on what would otherwise be domestic eccentricities. Given her situation, Anna’s observations on intracourt alliances, rivalries, political leanings, personal vices, and other matters become actionable special intelligence. Also laid bare are the material and logistical specifics of court life: physical descriptions of court inhabitants, schematics of the palace infrastructure, the whereabouts and regular movements of the royal family, their preferred modes of travel, and so on.⁴⁹ As it relates this information, the narrative attempts to revise conventionally understood spatial dimensions of colonial intervention and the agentive capacities women might serve therein, substituting masculinist colonial violence with the decidedly less gory work of colonial homemaking and

⁴⁹ In the case of Emmeline Lott’s *The English Governess in Egypt*, the reader is struck by the author’s near-obsessive commitment to nuanced material inventories of harem interiors.

surveillance.⁵⁰ Through its mooring entirely in a domestic theatre of operations, Leonowens' activism leaves inviolate the spatial restrictions of Separate Sphere Ideology and neatly sidesteps antebellum objections to women's political agitation in public.

As it dilates the domestic sphere to subsume the civic and the political, the heterotopic domestic-space-of-the-Other and feminist netherworld that is the Nang Harm both strangely and intimately comes to resemble the Fourierist phalanstery. Fourier's Court of Love, governed by women alone, antipodally mirrors the court of women ministering law in the Nang Harm. One designed to end women's oppression and one alleged to propagate and perpetuate it, the phalanstery and the harem, for all their apparent differences, appear to have very similar architectural layouts and compositions. Echoing Leonowens' assertion that "every harem is a little world in itself," a similar sense of confluence is acknowledged by Roland Barthes in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1980). To Barthes, the phalanstery is aligned with the "harems" that individually are like a "city" and a "world in miniature" in Sade's *Juliette* (1797), the harem and phalanstery each being the "nearest equivalent" of the other (17). The intersections and affinities between seeming antipodalities – what Barthes refers to as the "junction of extremes" – registers as a caution of just how freely opposing ideological correlatives can be appended to structures that are otherwise identical in appearance, even to the extent that one is conceived of as serving as the social and evolutionary remedy of the other (108).

⁵⁰ The texts' ambition to political relevance is borne out in archival materials that have surfaced in the century-and-a-half since Leonowens' stint as governess. Susan Morgan documents evidence that Leonowens served as an unofficial diplomatic backchannel on at least one occasion during her time in Siam, relaying a private communique from the British Consul to Rama IV, regarding offsetting French economic exploitation. See Morgan, *BA* 153-4.

Suffering and Sentiment in the Two Nang Harms

Even as it purports to relate vital details of court operation, each volume of Leonowens' duology casts the social impacts of the Nang Harm in very different lights. The relative upsurge in the frequency with which women are depicted suffering under the despotism of King Mongkut increases sharply between *The English Governess* and *The Romance of the Harem*, placing distinct generic, stylistic, structural, and thematic demands upon each text. The stark divergences correspond to the differing degrees of Fourierist dogmatism separating George William Curtis and Frank Shaw.

“A bricolage of the styles and conventions of travelogue, memoir, domestic realism, and sensation fiction,” *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* – which acknowledges the Fourier-averse travel writer Curtis – behaves more consistently like travelogue (Green 52). It remains more heavily invested in commentary on regional ethnographies, history, and the geography of Siam and neighboring states. The text frenetically intersperses Anna's personal narrative with Mongkut's biography, his dynastic line, Siamese folklore, recent diplomatic developments in the region, local color, Buddhist theology and symbology, an account of Anna's excursion to the recently rediscovered “Naghkon Watt” (Angkor Wat), an appreciative study of the temple complex's stone carvings, and so on (304).

The English Governess treats King Mongkut not so much as Oriental autocrat brutalizing the inmates of his harem but focuses instead, parodically, on his brutalization of the English language – one feature that has been faithfully reproduced in 20th century revivals, uniformly to racist effect. Enlisting Anna as his personal amanuensis, “the king's taste for English composition had, by much exercise,

developed itself into a passion...in the pursuit of it he was indefatigable, rambling, and petulant. He had ‘Webster’s Unabridged’ on the brain, – an exasperating form of king’s evil” (254-5). Anna is conscripted by the king into drafting his English-language diplomatic communiques and chastising letters-to-the-editor of anti-royalist regional newspapers. Exhausted by “endless translations” and “correcting, copying, dictating, reading,” Anna’s eventual decision to depart Siam, at the conclusion of *The English Governess*, is contextualized largely as the result of the exploitative editorial responsibilities foisted upon her by Mongkut (269; 270).

While Anna identifies herself as intercessor “between oppressor and oppressed” in “cases of torture, imprisonment, extortion,” episodes depicting such incidents never fully materialize in *The English Governess*, save for a single prominent exception (270). Sonn Klean, initially identified through Anna’s over-literal translation of her name, “Hidden Perfume,” is shown sequestered in the Nang Harm’s royal dungeon (105). A poorly timed petition for a court appointment has stirred ethnic and inter-familial rivalries among the royal family and provoked the ire of the king. In addition to her incarceration, Mongkut orders that Sonn Klean be flogged “till she confessed her treacherous plot” and “beat...on the mouth with a slipper for lying” (109). Yet the exaction of this sentence is ultimately rendered innocuous through the operation of a particular failsafe, women’s homosociality and mutual concern in the Nang Harm. Sonn Klean’s “stripes were administered so tenderly,” and the reason for such frugality is explained by way of footnote, “in these cases the executioners are women, who generally spare each other if they dare” (109). Beyond fellow feeling, the threat of retaliation upon anyone who would carry out such corporal punishment to its full extent ensures that the penalty is enforced with extreme moderation.

The protective backstop that is communal sympathy in *The English Governess* utterly vanishes in *The Romance of the Harem*. The text acknowledging the influence of the diehard Fourierist Frank Shaw, Leonowens' sequel becomes a demonstrative, case-in-point verification of Fourier's utopian feminism. Abandoning disinterested ethnography, *Romance* dedicates itself to an elaboration of the draconian system of torture and public humiliation meted out to inmates of the harem. No longer subject to caricature and vignettes regaling his linguistic eccentricities, the Mongkut of *The Romance of the Harem* is also more inclined to an unrepentant and suspiciously true-to-form Oriental despotism. The episode recounting the prosecution and capital punishment of Tuptim is the first in a concatenation of additional tragedies of the harem, including the narratives of L'ore, Smayatee, Malee, Choy, May-peah, Sunartha Vismita, the princess of Chiangmai, and three unnamed women put on trial for witchcraft. Narratives outlining the diversity of ways in which the Nang Harm victimizes women constitute nearly the entire content of the text. If one of the strengths of sentimental literature lies in its ability to make legible the hidden violences of institutions by depicting individual instances of victimization, then *The Romance of the Harem* (and not *The English Governess*) inscribes such suffering single-mindedly and in boldface.

Beyond relating examples of victimhood in the harem, *Romance* is equally preoccupied with *how* the system of victimization operates. As opposed to a homosocial collective of women safeguarding each other from real bodily harm in *The English Governess*, the community of the Nang Harm in its sequel is animated through the individual's fear and avoidance of pain:

Here disinterestedness vanishes out of sight. Each one is for herself. They are nearly all young women, but they have the appearance of being slightly blighted. Nobody is too much in earnest, or too much alive...They are bound

to have no thought for the world they have quitted...to ignore all ties and affections; to have no care but for one individual alone, and that the master. (RH 107)

Their own agencies turned against them, the citizens of *this* Nang Harm are compelled to surveil, pass judgement, torture, and execute other women by dint of an anti-sympathetic instinct of immediate self-preservation. A reciprocating network of mutually oppressive relationships is the *modus vivendi* preserving the endemic, community-wide subjection of the Nang Harm and is seemingly purpose-built to foreclose the socially beneficial operation of sympathy within its walls.

In a chapter-and-verse Fourierist fashion, the misapplication of women's agencies in the Nang Harm of *The Romance of the Harem* is underwritten by an architectonic and spatial regime, which negatively structures behavior and preempts resistance. Description, for example, alights on a reiterated aesthetic that naturalizes the Nang Harm's program of oppression:

On the east, high above the trees, may be seen the many-towered and gilded roofs of the grand royal palace, brilliant as sapphire in the sunlight, and next to this is the old palace, to both of which is a private covered entrance for the women; at the end of each of these passages is a bas-relief representing the head of an enormous sphinx, with a sword through the mouth and this inscription: 'Better that a sword be thrust through thy mouth than that thou utter a word against him who ruleth on high.' Not far from this art the barracks of the Amazons, the women's hall of justice, and the dungeons...the beautiful temple, with its long, dim gallery and the antique style of architecture, in which I taught the royal children, the gymnasium, and the theatre. (RH 12-3)

A lexical and visual articulation betokening an anything-but-subtle warning to those who would impugn the king or the state's power, the sphinx is the mantra and visual rhyme interpenetrating daily life in the Nang Harm. In Anna's description, it is the leitmotif around which the entire Nang Harm complex is topographically emplaced – constellated via physical relation to its recreational, educational, religious, residential, legal, and penal infrastructure. Consequently, Anna elsewhere comes to interpret

“The Temple of the Emerald Idol,” a shrine adjacent to and accessible from the harem, as “an architectural Sabbath, so to speak, such as a heathen may purely enjoy and a Christian may not wisely despise” (*EG* 53). Identifying this demilitarized zone of the sacred as such designates it as a place of respite, exterior to the regimented architectonic-institutional manifestation of state control imposed everywhere else.

Validating the Fourierist attitude regarding how the built environment and institutional surroundings mold the individual and culture, the narrative contains a number of instances where institutional personae become evanescent, overlaying, what is for the narrator, a more fundamental identity. Appealing to Tuptim’s dungeon mistresses for access to the condemned woman prior to her execution, Anna has a flash of discernment. “I sat there, hopelessly looking at the Amazons, who, in the dim light of the distant lanterns overhead, seemed to me to be changed from tender-hearted women, as they were, into fierce, vindictive executioners” (*RH* 23). The suppressive institutional force of the Nang Harm is shown here as superimposition upon what Anna regards as a more foundational substrate of identity, in which sympathy and mutual aid are a matter of instinct.

Temporary unveilings that denude a superstratal, institutional identity key the reader into Anna’s strategy for how such impositions are to be undone and remediated – through sentimental catechism, appeal, and community formation, all designed to make the inmates of the Nang Harm more attentive to their own sentiments and to the sentiments of those around them. Such awakenings would be keenly repackaged eight decades later in the song “Getting to Know You” in *The King and I*, which summarily aphorizes moral sense doctrine’s emphasis on the communal operation of familiarity, sympathy, and mutual approbation (“getting to know you...getting to like

you/getting to hope you like me”).⁵¹ Equally so, the re-Anglicized “Anna Owens” begins teaching class in the 1946 British film adaptation, *Anna and the King of Siam*, with a sentimentalized preface to her students: “the usual way to begin would be with the English alphabet, but I should like to impress his majesty with the way English people *feel*...therefore we will begin by learning a song or two, or a sentence or two, which will express *English feeling*.”

For all its Fourierist affinities, accusations of authorial fabrication appear to swirl most intensely around *The Romance of the Harem*, including those reportedly levelled at Anna Leonowens by King Chulalongkorn during a personal encounter later in life.⁵² Leonowens biographer Susan Morgan suggests that the titular amendment of the term “romance,” in fact, signposts the reader to potentials for creative license taken by the author.⁵³ More paradigmatic than mimetic, the intensification of fictional embellishment in *Romance* both heavily corroborates Fourierist thinking and streamlines the sentimental appeal tendered in the narrative, even as it comes at the cost of the text’s documentary realism.

By interjecting sentimentality as a missing piece to the puzzle of socio-cultural progress in Siam, Leonowens offers a prospective amendment to the necessary sequence of Associationist stadial evolution, which is otherwise propelled solely by architectural reform and women’s emancipation. Leonowens’ modification addresses what had been an often-acknowledged Fourierist blind spot. As Walter Benjamin observes, “the phalanstery is designed to restore human beings to relationships in which morality becomes superfluous” (5). “Fourier does not dream of relying on

⁵¹ For a reading of sentimentalism in *The King and I* in its Cold War historical context, see Glassmeyer.

⁵² Dow, 122-3.

⁵³ Morgan, *BA* 202.

virtue for this,” he adds, “rather, he relies on an efficient functioning of society, whose motive forces are the passions” (16). As opposed to relying on the moral restraint of individuals to preempt amoral actions predicated upon self-interest and base temptation, dogmatic Fourierism constructs a smooth-running social mechanism that voids the need for morality, rendering it obsolete.

Symptomatic of his predisposition to focus upon the effectual, harmonious operation of institutions, above and beyond individuals, Fourier arrives only tangentially at a formulation resembling moral sense. Fourier envisions an emergent state of mutual concern among the phalanx community only once individual passions have been fully gratified through the efficient, coordinated operation of the phalanstery. A fortunate systemic byproduct of utopian orderliness, he labels this condition “Amour Celadonique” – a somewhat idiosyncratic neologism appropriated from a character, “Celadon,” in Honore d’Urfé’s novel *L’Astrée* (1607).⁵⁴ Amour Celadonique notwithstanding, Fourier remains decidedly prolix on a subject so central to the Anglo-French moral philosophy of the previous two centuries, namely, of how some species of fellow feeling might crucially enjoin and solidify community among members of a collective. Margaret Fuller comments upon the seeming indifference with which Fourier approaches the interior, sympathetic requirements upon the individual in his utopia. While Fourier represents the “apostle of the new order, of the social fabric that is to rise from love, and supersede the old that was based on strife,” his philosophy nevertheless remains “in some respects, superficial...his eye was fixed on the outward more than the inward needs of man” (110). Fourier’s personal disciple and chief popularizer in the United States, Albert Brisbane – another Brook Farm regular – is also quick to redress this apparent omission in a brief 1843 profile.

⁵⁴ Beecher, *CF* 306.

Brisbane repeatedly emphasizes that, from childhood, Fourier “possessed in an extraordinary degree the highest class of moral sentiments, such as benevolent sympathy, which extended to the whole human race” (79).⁵⁵

Even as it innovates a stronger component of sentimentality into Fourierism, Leonowens’ memoir stays true to a key tenet of Associationism: the notion of unilinear stadial evolution. Through Sonn Klean’s resemblance to Stowe and through Chulalongkorn’s resemblance to Lincoln, the climactic events leading up to harem emancipation in *The Romance of the Harem* overliteralizes Fourierist sensitivity to the causality and sequence of predictable socio-cultural development. Within the framework of Fourierist stadial theory, if all cultures are future or past iterations of a single evolutionary masternarrative, it stands to reason that in order to bring about the remediation of a developmentally lower culture, one need only use another nation’s set precedent as a roadmap. Affinities and parallels between agents and events of emancipation in the United States and Siam form a synchronicity that amounts to more than nationalistic homage. American history is repeating itself in Siam, by necessity, and it is doing so *verbatim*. Within this Fourierist emplotment, Sonn Klean’s recapitulation of Harriet Beecher Stowe represents the causal feminist trigger upon which all subsequent changes depend. Crucially, for the precedence of American history to unfold identically in Siam, an avatar of Stowe must precede an avatar of Lincoln. Reproducing the pivotal agents of change catalyzes signal events (the sentiments activated by Sonn Klean’s translation of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* recapitulating the eponymous Stowe’s authorship of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,

⁵⁵ Brisbane’s *Social Destiny of Man* (1840), a liberal English-language translation of *Theorie des Quatre Mouvements*, had crucially helped to usher Fourierism into vogue in the United States.

Chulalongkorn's edict of emancipation mirroring Lincoln's) and germinates a parallel, identical history.

Because the story of *Sonn Klean* chronicles a Siamese history that must, *a priori*, be compatible with American history, Leonowens' narrative of abolition in Siam also indirectly forwards a particular historicization of recent developments in the United States. By offering testimony on a particular, set sequence of historical events in Siam, *Romance* reciprocally emphasizes the importance of Harriet Beecher Stowe's authorship of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as the flintspark of sentimental awakening in the lead-up to the American Civil War. Stowe's precipitating influence on Abolition was, of course, anything but a concrete, matter-of-historical-certainty during the Reconstruction Era. The apocryphal epithet attributed to Lincoln, solidifying this linkage through his identification of Stowe as "the little woman who made this great war," was only first recorded more than three decades after the fact (148). It surfaces in an 1896 biographical remembrance that appeared in *The Atlantic*, on the occasion of Stowe's passing, written by Annie Adams Fields.⁵⁶ Supplying a prospective early draft of Fields' later history, Anna Leonowens originates a mythology of Harriet Beecher Stowe in Siam *and* in the United States.

Moral Sensibilities at the Dawn of the Colonial Era

Leonowens' formulations of sentimentality geopoliticized and American Abolition reinitiated abroad could not come sooner. During the Reconstruction Era, Associationism was indisputably on the decline. By the 1870s, the wide majority of active phalanxes in the United States, including Brook Farm, had been dissolved.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ For the origin of the epithet with Annie Adams Fields, see Vollaro, 20-6.

⁵⁷ Guaneri, 268, 288.

Despite a number of crushing blows to the movement, Fourier-inspired formulations of architectural reform persisted. In articles published in *The Atlantic* in 1868 and 1869, for example, Melusina Fay Peirce (then spouse of Charles Sanders Peirce) campaigned on behalf of what she called “Cooperative Housekeeping.” Drawing praise from the likes of Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Peirce proposed expanded vocational training for women, the collectivization of domestic labor, women’s receiving wages for work in the home, and the establishment of phalanstery-like communal edifices in urban spaces. Indebted to Fourier, conceptions of feminist architectural reform like Peirce’s would remain in the thinking of American Suffrage for decades to come.⁵⁸ As commune leader Steven Pearl Andrews declared in 1871, “Fourierism is not dead, merely sleeping” (qtd. in Hayden 102).

Another major setback, the partnership previously enjoyed between Abolitionists and feminists in the years leading up to the Civil War had fissured, amounting to what has been dubbed “the saddest of all divorces” (Dudden 162). Despite the considerable presence of women within the prewar Anti-slavery vanguard, antebellum disagreement between Garrisonians and political abolitionists – who differed on the proper role of women and the urgency of their cause relative to abolition – would boil over in the years immediately following the war.⁵⁹ By the late 1860s, disaffected Radical Republicans had discarded the woman’s question from the party platform. As James Goodman observes, “the abolitionists had a sense of the radical possibilities of Reconstruction, but for reasons both ideological and tactical, women were not part of their vision” (1). Suffrage would have to take a backseat to the priority of winning universal male franchise and ensuring voting rights for black

⁵⁸ See Hayden, 62-71.

⁵⁹ See Stanton, 78-9.

men, especially in Southern states, pending the ratification of the 14th and 15th Amendments.⁶⁰ It was, as Wendell Phillips declared in 1865 and thereafter, “the Negro’s Hour” – an estimation with which a considerable segment of Suffrage leadership agreed (qtd. in Dudden 8). Eventually conceding to the tactical logic of de-prioritization, Lucy Stone stated to members of Congress in 1869 that, “woman must wait for the negro” (qtd. in Dudden 165). The necessary order of events Frank Shaw had outlined in 1845, warranting the sequential primacy of women’s emancipation over the abolition of chattel slavery, had been thrown into complete disarray.

Dissent surrounding the issue of deferral and the proper sequence of emancipatory events factionalized the Suffrage Movement. The consolidated bloc that Suffrage had once represented splintered into the National Women’s Suffrage Association (NWSA), led by Stanton and Anthony, and the American Women’s Suffrage Association (AWSA), headed by a Boston cadre that included Stone, Henry Brown Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe. Resenting the relegation of women’s suffrage to fringe issue and political distraction, Stanton and Anthony abandoned their prewar reliance on an activism consisting of principled arguments on behalf of universal human rights and turned to a more expedient, tactics-based approach. This included catering support among Southern Democrats and using dog-whistle rhetoric that played to racial fears of how franchise won for black men would threaten the chastity of unenfranchised white women. Evoking racial degeneracy and civilizational backsliding, Stanton warned of “national suicide and woman’s destruction,” manifesting itself in “fearful outrages on womanhood, especially in the southern states, if black men can vote but not women” (qtd. in Dudden 3; 177).

⁶⁰ See Dudden, 4-8.

Frank Shaw's antebellum premonition, indicating that a great deal would be lost if the struggle for women's rights was ever subordinated or put aside, had, in a way, proved true.

With many of the grand utopian ambitions he had outlined in 1845 thoroughly discouraged by the postbellum period, Frank Shaw nevertheless responded to such adversity by attempting to divine utopian significances out of the otherwise grisly realities of the American Civil War. Shaw had worked personally to publicize and cultivate the growing mythos surrounding the death of his son, Colonel Robert Shaw, who led the 54th Massachusetts, “the pioneer State colored regiment of this country,” in their doomed 1863 assault on Fort Wagner, South Carolina (qtd. in Emilio 321).⁶¹ With Shaw's input, Leonowens' memoirs both divert attention away from the local political fallout caused by the rift in Suffrage and counter postbellum Fourierist disillusionment. The memoirs do so by proposing the integration of progressive women and the affective force of American sentimentality into the acculturative labor of American proto-colonialism.

Arriving in a timely fashion and imposing itself upon a topic of the moment, the publication of Leonowens' narrative also coincided with initial debates surrounding American territorial annexation of dependencies overseas. This came by way of an 1869 exploratory push, orchestrated by the Grant Administration, backing the annexation of Santo Domingo (modern day Dominican Republic). Nominally, the move would be part of a strategy designed to eradicate slavery in adjoining nations of

⁶¹ Shaw had used his political connections (and some parental guilt) to secure his son's commission as commander of the 54th Massachusetts. Foote, 2.

the Caribbean. What legal and economic status Santo Domingo might assume upon its subsumption into the Union remained to be determined.⁶²

In *Suffragists in an Imperial Age*, Allison Sneider documents Suffragists' efforts to link this proposed treaty of annexation to simultaneous, committee-level Congressional deliberations on women's franchise. Sneider identifies what appears to be, at this time, a lack of ideological orientation among Suffragists, for or against the prospect of annexation, even among the more politically engaged: "what is so striking about the parallel development of these debates is how difficult it was for women's rights activists in 1870 to frame the question of woman suffrage in colonial or anticolonial terms" (20). Suffragists "failed to develop a coherent 'imperial suffragism' that linked votes for women to women's ability to partner with men in the project of 'civilizing' the Caribbean, although they sometimes came very close to doing so" (22).

One prime point of anti-annexationist objection that did surface, even among progressives, was the danger of incongruity, moral and otherwise, separating the people of the United States and the rest of the world. Sympathetic incompatibilities, it was feared, boded ill toward the moral and civilizational identity of the would-be colonizers. Furthermore, efforts to remediate the lot of Dominicans, who were thought to be morally and intellectually incapable of being instructed, amounted to a fool's errand. Progressive Republican senator and German immigrant Carl Schurz characterized this gap, protesting that "incorporating the tropics into our political

⁶² Commissioned to lead a fact-finding mission to Santo Domingo, AWSA-affiliated Suffrage leader Henry Brown Blackwell, in published dispatches, attempts to connect the plight of women with what he perceived as broader social dysfunction. Citing the "almost Oriental seclusion" of upper-class Dominican women, Blackwell asserts that the "total abstraction of woman's influence from the domain of politics and ideas seems one cause of the want of political stability" (qtd. in Sneider 51). See also, Sneider, 33-34.

system” meant commingling with and ultimately coming under the influence of a “people who have nothing in common with us; neither language, nor habits, nor institutions, nor traditions, nor opinions, nor ways of thinking; nay, not even a code of morals – people who cannot even be reached by our teachings, for they will not understand or appreciate” (qtd. in Sneider 46-7).

Contrary to the well-weathered colonial culture of the British Empire – where it fell on deaf ears or merited complaint – Leonowens’ oeuvre documents a colonial praxis for a novice American reading public, unschooled in overseas colonialism and weary of its potential ramifications upon national culture. Still, in Siam or Santo Domingo, the successful evangelization of any gospel of sentimental modernity and pro-Fourierist assimilations ultimately relied upon both the volitional openness of those subject to re-inscription, not to mention their dexterity to change. As chance would have it, Leonowens’ narrative champions the supreme pliancy and receptivity of both the Siamese people and their culture. “I think the day is not far off,” Leonowens claims in her ethnography of the Siamese, “when the enlightening influences applied to them, and accepted through their willingness, not only to receive instruction from Europeans, but even to adopt in a measure their customs and their habits of thought, will raise them to the rank of a superior nation” (*EG* 78). A habit of uninhibited borrowing among the Siamese impels them to an irrepressible, Zelig-like inclination to mimicry:

No people in the world exhibit so many exceptional developments of human nature as the different races occupying the eastern peninsula of India. The most impressible of races, ideas and views of life take root among them such as would find no acceptance elsewhere. Supple and pliant in their bodily frames, they are equally so in their mental and moral constitution; and upon no other race has the force of circumstance and the contagion of example so potent an influence in determining them towards good or evil. (*RH* 6-7)

Unadulterated impressionability, in this exposition, permeates the intellectual and somatic being of the Siamese. Driven here by an unconscious impulsivity to fill the void of self and culture, the Siamese subject, intellectually and physiologically malleable, is sorely in need of something wholesome to emulate. A genealogical proximity to Westerners, according to the texts, additionally marks them as prime candidates for racial regeneration. Racially Other but imminently related and therefore recoverable, “there is much...probability that they belong to that powerful Indo-European race to which Europe owes its civilization, and whose chief branches are the Hindoos, Persians, Greeks, Latins, Kelts, and Teutonic and Sclavonic tribes” (*RH* 1). The “division” separating races is also only relatively recent and “could not have been later than three or four thousand years before the Christian era” (*RH* 1).⁶³

Siamese impressionability also infects cultural-aesthetic practices of liberal, open-source borrowing and bricolage. In *The English Governess*, thick description of the above-mentioned shrine located adjacent to the Nang Harm, The Temple of the Emerald Idol, reveals a conglomerated iconic array solely consisting of the *objets trouvés* smuggled out of other cultures. Bespeaking a non-discrete proclivity to pilfer far-reaching and eclectic influences, Anna records the presence of “types and emblems borrowed from the Temple of the Sun at Baalbec, the proud fane of Diana at Ephesus, the shrines of the Delian Apollo” (*EG* 51). These artifacts are the plunder of past theological conquests: “a series of trophies, gathered from the triumphs of Buddhism over the proudest forms of worship in the old pagan world” (*EG* 51). The extremity of Siamese plasticity analogizes the often hard-gained and enigmatic codes and conventions of another culture to a contagion, directly and intimately intelligible

⁶³ The narrative here claims to differ with “a majority of intelligent Europeans,” and denies that the Siamese are of “Malay” or “mainly Mongolian” origin (*RH* 1).

– infectiously so – to the Siamese themselves. The tableau amounts to a colonial provocation: in the eyes of their would-be colonizers, allowing random outside influences to continue filling in the vacuum of culture in Siam, especially among the racially proximate Siamese, is to be guilty of paternalist cultural negligence.

Countering the contentions of anti-expansionists surrounding the moral incompatibility of the Other, Leonowens’ attribution of Siamese cultural absorption implicates how a colonial tutelage in sentiment could induct Others into a likeminded sentimental community that transcends nation, race, and culture. An uncontrollable sympathetic *glasnost* in Siam, in turn, makes the moral suasions and rationalizations of an outside party swiftly intelligible and assimilable. This tentative program of total conversion is best personified in the figure of Sonn Klean, whose transformation suggests that a non-Western readership can overcome the translational obstacles and cultural nuances posed by the English script of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, partake in a supranational community of fellow feeling, and help to bring about pro-Fourierist global metamorphoses. Such a commonwealth of sentiment, however, becomes problematic as it invites the regulation and policing of sentimentality among its shareholders and demands totalizing transformations among the sentimentally redeemed.

The Limits of Sympathy

Because Fourierism renders individual and cultural identity fluidly contingent upon – and even constructed by – precursors of spatiality and institutional situation, Leonowens overtly imagines an assimilationist colonial praxis, in which the wholesale evacuation of one identity brings about the subsequent internal colonization of another. Even so, Leonowens’ Siam is replete with examples where external forms

merely overlay, without nullifying, substratal interiorities and displaced, yet intractable, significances. Instances of double vision in the text undermine the unqualified appropriation and assimilation of loan words, loan objects, and loan people in Leonowens' Siam.

In the Temple of the Emerald Idol, two artifacts of Western provenance have been unexceptionally blended into the shrine's reliquary. "On either side of the eastern entrance – called *Patoo Ngam*, 'The Beautiful Gate' – stands a modern statue; one of Saint Peter with flowing mantle and sandalled feet, in an attitude of sorrow, as when 'he turned away his face and wept'; the other of Ceres, scattering flowers" [Figure 2] (*EG* 52).⁶⁴ The incongruity of the pairing and proximity of a seemingly modern Christian piece standing alongside an artifact hailing from Greco-Roman antiquity remains rigidly evident to a Western reader. Such an editorialization – and the missionary appeal it might provoke – is, however, left conspicuously absent from the narrative. Such residual significances even ironize the scene: the weeping Peter inclines the reader to commit the pathetic fallacy of attributing his sorrow not to his textually anchored denial of Jesus but to the syncreticist *mélange* of his surroundings. Even though these *objets d'art* have been deracinated and wholly assimilated into the iconic array of another faith, indigenous (Western) meanings inextricably, albeit latently, persist and are even capable of generating new meanings.

In a disquisition on Buddhism, the Buddha is characterized as "not represented by any outward symbol" and is said to pass through a virtual infinitude of avatars with

⁶⁴ The statues are still extant and are on display at Bangkok's National Museum. One modern reviewer corrects Leonowens, identifying the pieces as allegorical representations of "Winter" and "Spring," sharing a provenance in 17th-century France. See Griswold, 179-81.

infinitely permuted outward forms, while not discarding any residual, interior import:

Through twenty-five million six hundred thousand Asongkhies, or metempsychosis, – according to the overpowering computation of his priests, – did Buddha struggle to attain the divine omniscience of Niphan, by virtue of which he remembers every form he ever entered, and beholds with the clear eyes of a god the endless diversities of transmigration in the animal, human, and angelic worlds, throughout the spaceless, timeless, numberless universe of visible and invisible life. (*RH* 9; *EG* 193)

In this theological discourse, exteriors only signify an externality and sheathing that conceals what is nevertheless residually retained and indelible.

As substratal, imperceptible significances confound perception, both texts are invested in moments where a Eurocentric gaze falters. Turning to the phantasmagorical and delusory power implicated in the Eastern concept of *maya*, Anna questions the reliability of the operation of vision upon surface:

Is it all *maya*, – delusion? I open wide my eyes, then close them, then open them again...the dim lights, the shadows blending with them, the fine harmony of colors, the wild harmony of sounds, the fantastic phantoms, the overcoming sentiment, all the poetry and the pity of the scene, – the formless longing, the undefined sense of wrong! (*EG* 45).

Anna's personal acclimation to teaching in the Nang Harm, in turn, involves the adaptation of a dual vision, attentive to the misdirectional trappings of externality. In a description of the process of educating her students and acclimating to life in Siam, Anna takes advantage of the double meaning of the word "pupil":

As, month after month, I continued to teach in the palace, – especially as the language of my pupils, its idioms and characteristic forms of expression, began to be familiar to me, – all the dim life of the place "came out" to my ken, like a faint picture, which at first displays to the eye only a formless confusion, a chaos of colors, but by force of much looking and tracing and joining and separating, first object and then groups are discovered in their proper identity and relation, until the whole stands out, clear, true, and informing in its coherent significance of light and shade. Thus, by slow processes, as one whose sight has been imperceptibly restored, I awoke to a clearer and truer sense of the life within "the city of the beautiful and invincible angel." (*EG* 101)

The amphibology of “pupil” here produces a triple metaphor, aligning Anna’s adjustment to the language and customs of her students with the dilation of the eye as it absorbs additional light (in order to augment sight) with the development of a photograph in a darkroom. By developing a praxis of vision that surmounts the cultural prejudices hidden in the act of seeing, Anna uncovers a Siamese culture that contains its own particularities, depths, and significances inexorably resident beneath the superficial.

As Homi Bhabha qualifies it, one instance of mimicry constitutes “a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable” (128). Moments of subtextual skepticism in Leonowens’ account, scrutinizing the variance between surface and depth, allegorize the distinction between mimicry and assimilation, where the presence of the former concedes the limitations of the latter. The misdirectional power of externality rebuffs a narrative of totalizing, exterior-toward-interior assimilation, vaunted by Fourierism, sentimentalism, and colonialism. A praxis that reconciles Siam to preexisting sentimental typologies, remedying its absence of culture and delivering it to a state of civilized modernity, merely overlays what is already present and shall remain so. What emerges instead is a hybridity, refashioning the transformation of Sonn Klean into Harriet Beecher Stowe more as the rechristening of Sonn Klean into “Son Klin. Harriet Beecher Stowe.” Contrast between surface and depth reassert the inscrutability of the interior psychological state of the Other and the epistemological barriers to knowing that state sympathetically, averred by Adam Smith and Gayatri Spivak. When the power of sentimentalism to

feel and penetratively know the Other is shown to fail, the subaltern is re-mystified, again becoming opaque.

Schemata of assimilation in the opus of Anna Leonowens are additionally complicated and rendered only fractional by belated accusations of her own racial passing. As her literary efforts would become the source-material and archetype for romanticized, 20th-century nostalgia for a bygone, less-byzantine age of colonial paternalism, what happens when we incorporate Leonowens' duology into the American literary tradition of the passing narrative? Who better to provide a curriculum in the affective, sometimes self-suppressing labor of feeling and acting English? Allegations of class, racial, and personal re-inscription as well as self-enhancement via fabrication, directed at Leonowens, are hardly anomalous but, in this context, resemble standard practice – what Cathy Davidson, writing on immigrant narrative, deems “almost a marker of the genre” (34). For its ambivalences toward assimilated feelings and assimilated people, Leonowens' opus behaves like a passing narrative, as it openly professes the virtues of a civilizing institution while, in whispered undertones, exposes the limits of discernment and the ultimate illegitimacy of such an ethos. Leonowens' memoirs do advertise a curriculum in the benevolent, ameliorative power and utility of tutored transformations toward Western-styled, sympathetic modernity. The subtextual ambivalence that nevertheless haunts the texts situates her literary output alongside the Suffragist authors in the chapters of this monograph that follow, where authors more vocally object to or resist the sentimentalization of the harem and the colonial practices such sentimentalizations might underwrite.

With the underlying motive of regaining some of the political traction for Suffrage in the aftermath of postbellum disappointments, Anna Leonowens

documents the reapplication and re-sequencing of recent American history in the service of (what was to the West) the politically uncomplicated issue of harem emancipation. In the narrative, architectural reform (switching the home in for the harem), guided readings in American sentimentalism, and the comprehensive sentimental assimilations that ensue produce pro-Western regime change in Siam – transpiring according to foreseeable, Fourierist benchmarks. Proffering a reformed model of colonial intervention, the narrative attempts to remedy a comparative lack and ideologically reorient the colonial ventures that loomed on the American horizon. Leonowens’ novel contribution to colonial discourse – to its conventionally assumed spatialities and methods of affect – supplies an early, tentative solution to a dilemma that has remained at the heart of ideologies of American exceptionalism ever since. That is, namely, how can the United States civilize the civilizing mission and decolonize colonialism?

The texts’ subtle interrogations of the depth and durability of sentimental transformations, elsewhere stanchly advocated, undermine the re-formation of Siamese individuals into authentic, rank-and-file *évolué*. Such a line of inquiry also strains the impending assimilation of Suffragists into colonialists, operating under the aegis of American proto-imperial authority. The conflict and resulting apositionality of Anna’s sentiments destabilizes the re-application of displaced Suffragist energies toward the speculative work of expansionism. Suffragists’ conversion into colonial agents, while serving short-term tactical interests, would not necessarily alter the residual terms of their disenfranchisement and oppression. Leonowens’ Janus-faced, simultaneous sentimentalization and anti-sentimentalization of the harem supply the curricular content of a cynical education in personal and national survival through non-alignment, in the brave new world of the global colonial imperium.

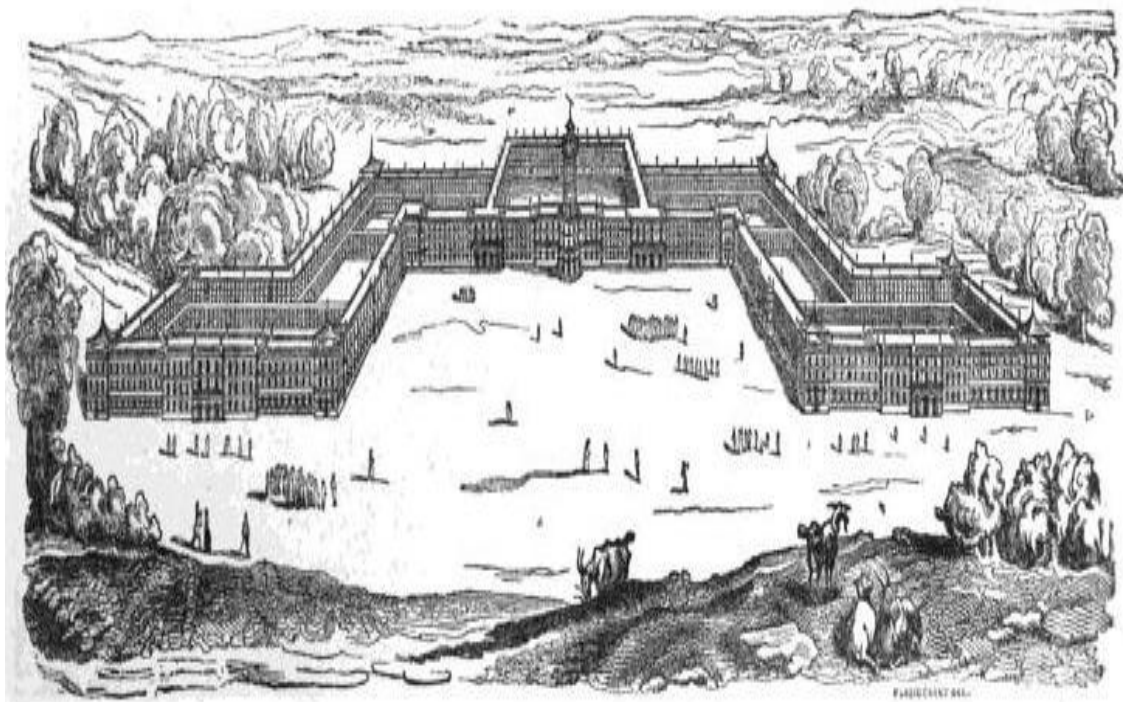
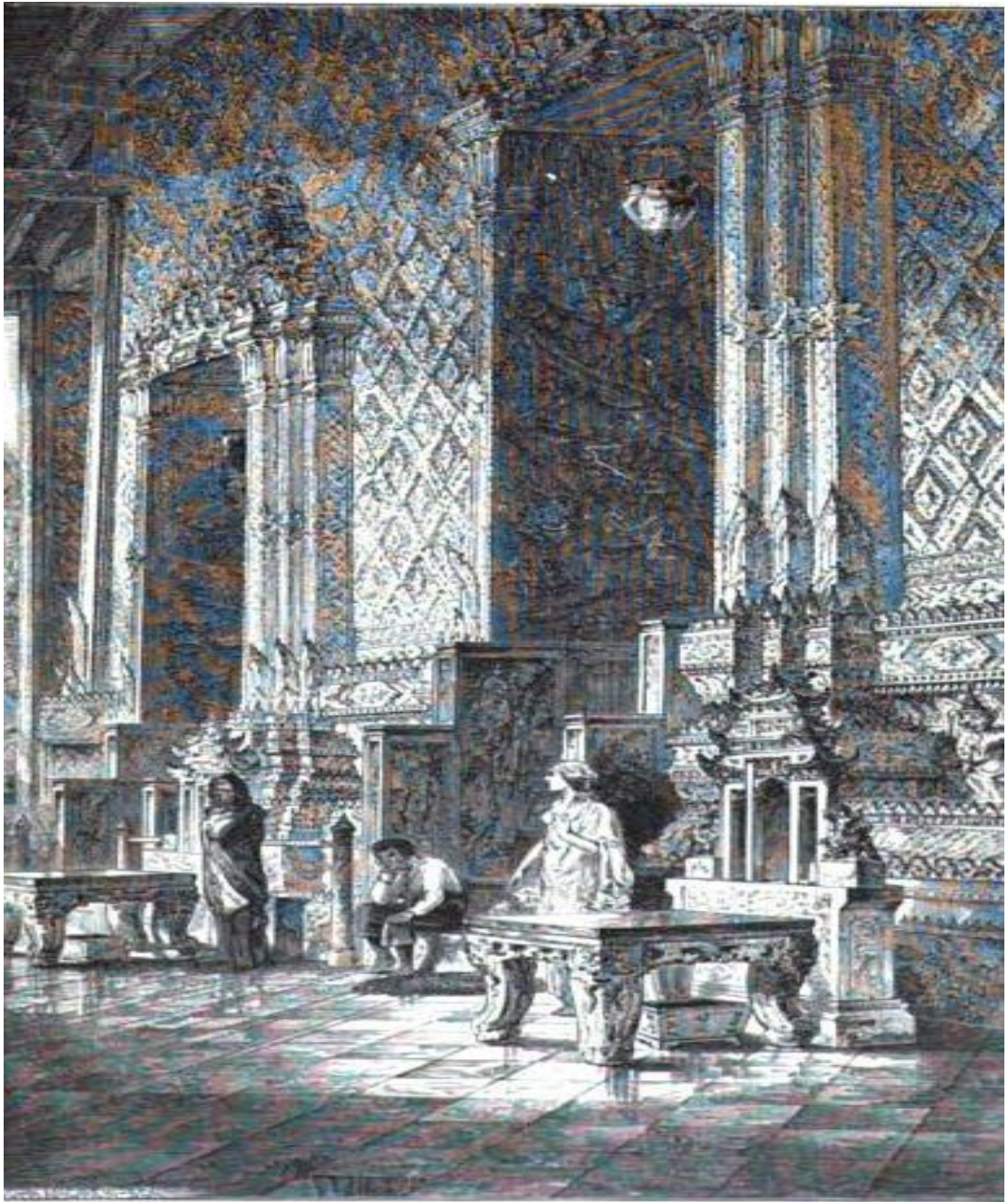


Figure 1: Fourierist Victor Considérant's concept for the phalanstère, 1836. Considérant's plan is roughly based on that of Versailles.



THE BEAUTIFUL GATE OF THE TEMPLE.

Figure 2: “The Beautiful Gate of the Temple,” from *The English Governess*. “Peter” and “Ceres” are depicted in the foreground.

Chapter 2: “Mrs. Lew Wallace Opens the Doors of Forbidden Rooms”: Sentimental Simulations and Utilitarian Orientalisms in Susan Elston Wallace’s *The Storied Sea*

“Thank you for righting us on the woman question in this latitude, where soft voices and gracious manners are the rule and seem to come by inheritance, instead of teaching.”

— *The Storied Sea* (1883)

I have always loved Art, and been thankful for the gift to discern the cunning next to the divine in the most commonplace contrivances... That is to say, to me there is Art in everything we construct.

— Lew Wallace, *Famous Paintings of the World* (1894)¹

It is an underreported nuance of history that the author of the best-selling American novel of the 19th century would strike up a budding friendship with the last autonomous sultan of the Ottoman Empire and caliph of Islam, Abdul Hamid II (عبد الحميد ثانی) – the Grand Turk himself, that perennial bogeyman of the Western world.² Lew Wallace – better known at the time for his military blunders than his writing – was appointed American minister to the Ottoman Empire by President James Garfield in 1881.³ The “intimate terms” of acquaintance between the sultan and the general quickly became the stuff of national obsession in the United States.⁴ Perhaps the best surviving evidence of a personal affection shared between the two

¹ In *Famous Paintings of the World*, Wallace provides the introduction for a compilation of the paintings exhibited at the 1893 Chicago Exposition, reproduced in the volume through the new technology of commercial print photoengraving. See McKee, 249.

² The last sultan and caliph to maintain some semblance of autonomy and control over the Ottoman Empire, Abdul Hamid II would be deposed in 1909 during the political upheavals of the Young Turk Revolution. The sultan’s deposition entailed the dissolution of the imperial harem. For more on the upheavals and deharemizations of the early 20th century, see Chapter 3.

³ The United States would adopt the title of “ambassador” beginning in 1893. See McKee, 200.

⁴ “The American Minister at Constantinople,” published in *The Boston Daily Advertiser*.

men are the *objets d'art* produced and exchanged during the course of Wallace's embassy. An amateur painter, Wallace would faithfully reproduce the likeness of Abdul Hamid in a pencil sketch and an oil painting that survive [Figure 3].⁵ Conversely, an oil painting depicting a harem scene, gifted by the sultan, still hangs in the Lew Wallace Study in Crawfordsville, Indiana [Figure 4]. Its pigments degraded and blackened over by time and the elements, the painting's original colors can only be resuscitated by a flash photograph and the production of a simulation.

Yet in 1882, the news of this unusual gift from the sultan would break in the United States and stir up controversy, albeit on unlikely terms. The July 7th *Boston Daily Advertiser* alleges that the painting violates American diplomatic protocol that forbids the receipt of gifts by officials. The newspaper also chastises Abdul Hamid for his contravention of an Islamic aesthetic tradition that frequently bans figural representation: "the caliph violates the Koran, which prohibits all pictures of living creatures." The painting – apocryphally dubbed "The Arabian Princess" or "The Turkish Princess" – depicts a young woman reclining on a leopard-skin rug, posed suggestively and in a way that clashes with her apparent age. The princess' enigmatic, anything-but-placid gaze back at the viewer is shared and reiterated by the stuffed head of the big cat immediately beside her. Her Mona Lisa smirk contrasts the spotted leopard's gaping maw and its aggressively bared fangs. The cleavages between the princess' puzzling expression and the leopard's unequivocal one stubbornly prevent the viewer from projecting any suggestion of uncomplicated, youthful docility or naiveté (intellectual or sexual) onto the princess. *This little kitten has claws.*

⁵ See Morsberger, 328, 382. One biographer describes his drawing of the sultan as Wallace's "best work of pictorial art" (McKee 217).

To understand it another way, the visual inventory of “The Turkish Princess” indemnifies it from sentimentalization. As a result, the portrait is in breach of what Homi Bhabha refers to as “rules of recognition as the unmistakable referent of historical necessity,” conventions that would otherwise authenticate and reinforce the normative certainties of colonialism, race, and gender (157).⁶ Beyond such contextual significances, *The Daily Advertiser* trusts that the painting, as a token of exchange, connotes valid and substantial (rather than evanescent and hollow) improvements for the United States’ international relations. “It is to be hoped that his [Abdul Hamid’s] intimacy with Mr. Wallace is not a mere form, but a happy essence and sound on the extending influence of this country.”

Contrary to the wishful thinking of *The Daily Advertiser*, Susan Elston Wallace, Lew Wallace’s spouse, finds the correlation believed to exist between a reproduced “counterfeit on canvas” and the thing reproduced, at best, imprecise and, at worst, highly doubtful.⁷ Accompanying her husband during his deployment to Istanbul, Susan Wallace would produce four Oriental travelogues in the subsequent

⁶ Connoisseurship of European fine arts was common among sultans of the late Ottoman, and Abdul Hamid is no exception. Prior to his accession, Abdul Hamid traveled to Europe in 1867 with his uncle, the reigning sultan, Abdulaziz, himself an a gifted landscape painter, in order to attend the International Exposition in Paris. See Freely, 269-73. For description of a recent exhibit of Abdulaziz’s works, see “A Sultan Who Loved Art: Abdulaziz and Painting.” While unattributed, the signature of the painting reads, according to Museum sources, as some combination of “C.L. Miller” or “C.F. Muller.” This name points perhaps to French Orientalist subject painter Charles Louis Müller. For description of Müller’s work, see Douthwaite.

⁷ An expression from “General Wallace and the Turkish Girl,” an article in the July 10, 1882 *Cleveland Herald*. Using a tone of near-overt lechery, the piece bemoans the painting’s simulation, in lieu of a real, as an unfortunate byproduct of Ottoman modernity: “Under the old dispensation, before the Commander of the Faithful took to wearing London cut trousers and Paris patent leather boots, the present would have been a real flesh and blood houri with ravishing form and dreamy eyes, instead of painted counterfeit on canvas.”

decades: *The Storied Sea*; *The Repose in Egypt: A Medley* (1888); *Along the Bosphorus and Other Sketches* (1898); and *The City of the King: What the Child Jesus Saw and Heard* (1903). In a passage of *Along the Bosphorus* that borrows heavily from Harriet Beecher Stowe, the narrator invokes the “immeasurable distance which may lie between an original and a copy; a portrait and the object reproduced, – the distance between a dead statue and a spiritualized something that suggested or sat for it” (283).

Writing on the same correlative force of duplication nearly four decades later in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (*Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen*, 1936), Walter Benjamin echoes a similar suspicion and identifies a general tendency, “the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics” (67). In other words, divergences between the *bona fide* primary article and its dubious facsimiles regularly accommodate political ends. Extending Benjamin’s thinking in *Simulation and Simulacra* (*Simulacres et Simulation*, 1981), Jean Baudrillard later distinguishes between the *simulation*, a reproduction of a still extant primary object, and *simulacrum*, a reproduction of a primary object that never existed or no longer exists. For Baudrillard, simulation “masks and denatures a profound reality,” and simulacrum “masks the *absence* of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum” (6). The work of Susan Wallace, anticipating Benjamin and Baudrillard, repeatedly captures how cultural productions and reproductions create fissures for the insertion of extrinsic cultural and political meaning.

Nowhere are the slippages and the “immeasurable distance” of simulation more acutely felt than in the harem encounter narrated in Susan Wallace’s *The Storied Sea*. Like the painting of “C.L. Muller,” *The Storied Sea* depicts a harem scene that refuses the initial terms of its sentimentalization. In the episode, an Orientalist trope named “Nourmahal” is superimposed by foreign visitors onto a denizen of the harem. When lived experience diverges from the conventional textual simulations of Orientalist paradigm, a cohort of American Suffragist characters must confront what the potential complicity between Orientalist aesthetics and Western discourse means for questions of gender and franchise at home. Nourmahal’s emerging disparities also set off a thorny exchange between Wallace’s narrator and her Suffragist fellow travelers. First serialized in the staunchly progressive *Independent* in summer 1882, while the Wallaces remained in Istanbul, and later published in book-form by James R. Osgood, *The Storied Sea* and its frank depiction of Suffragist infighting carries with it a great deal of political sensitivity. In the early 1880s, Suffrage still reeled from the political fallout of internal disputes that had divided the movement during the previous decade.

In *The Storied Sea*, contention among Suffragists primarily surrounds the sentimentalization of the harem inmate – or, at least, her simulations. Reservations are directed at the operation of sentiment, not only for the ways in which it informs perception and action but also for its contemporary conceptual integration into emerging schemata of human evolution. The philosophical crisis experienced by the narrator of *The Storied Sea* compels her to probe her personal adherence to the major contemporary proponents of a feminist evolutionary-Utilitarian synthesis then taking place. To this end, the text identifies, by name, the chief proponents of this synthesis, John Stuart Mill and Charles Darwin, as well as its chief detractor, Henry Thomas

Buckle. Mill, in a Fourierian mood, foresees cultural evolution occurring through both the increased presence of women in the public sphere and a causally linked expansion in the human capacity for sympathy and sentiment. What I refer to as “sympathetic evolution,” for lack of any more prominent term, speaks to a then normative model of human evolution that attempts to synthesize the utilitarian moral sense doctrine of the British Empiricists with Darwin’s theory of natural selection.

Coopted by Suffragists prior to becoming eclipsed by Social Darwinism, sympathetic evolutionism understands human cultural, affective, and biological advancement as interconnected and as lacking in distinction. As it implicates the sentimental remediation of “backwards” global cultures and tentatively conscripts progressive women as sentimental agents, Utilitarian sympathetic evolutionism is found deficient in *The Storied Sea* for the unstable sentimental assumptions it forges through the garble of simulation and simulacra. In the wake of these realizations, the narrator is left to concede, in a tone of understatement, “there might possibly be slight flaws in our boasted social science and polished civilization” (132-3).

As simulational inaccuracies loom, emphasis is placed upon the political underpinnings of sentimentalism’s tentative investment in the pathologically anti-sentimental space of the harem. A decade after Anna Leonowens imagined inflows of Western sentiment radically transforming the harem state of Siam, the same sympathetic reformative energy directed at the Other is called profoundly into question in *The Storied Sea*. The way in which the text invites a particular sentimentalized reading, which is eventually annulled and retracted, underscores misgivings felt toward the presumptive global deployment of sentiment and sympathy in the service of feminist internationalism and American expansionism. Simulational divergences undercut the primacy and authority of the colonial and racial sentiments

they are designed to excite. Sympathies directed abroad are also consequently understood to divert concern away from the civil and socio-economic inequalities faced by American women.

Elsewhere in Susan Wallace's work, the ways in which sentimentalization distorts a simulation is hardly something to be unambiguously vilified in certain contexts. To this end, Wallace's narratives turn to the politicized and sentimental manipulations of a particular simulacral artifact lacking any trace of its historical referent: depiction of the Virgin Mary. The endlessly reproduced Madonna *en vogue* in 19th-century Protestant sources, particularly in the work of Stowe, allows room for speculation about how sentimental and political significances can be infused into artistic re-appropriations. Repurposed to more immediate political contexts, Marian simulacra are offered up as the feminist-anticolonial ideological counterforce to masculinist-colonialist simulations of the harem. In order to fully explore connections made between evolutionary sympathy and women's franchise in Susan Wallace's writing, I will also examine Lew and Susan Wallace's biographical ties to Suffrage through the figure of Zerelda Wallace, a major early proponent of American-led Suffragist internationalism and utopianism.

A Circassian Beauty

By way of introduction, the September 14, 1882 edition of *The Indianapolis Sentinel* provides an early return on the Wallaces' adjustment to life in Turkey and Lew Wallace's burgeoning friendship with the sultan. As indicated by its headline, "An Unwelcome Visitor: How Mrs. Gen. Lew Wallace Received the Sultan's Gift of Circassian Beauty," the article, however, focuses primarily on Mrs. Wallace. In doing so, it provides an object lesson on the almost sinister means by which the

“immeasurable distance” of reproduction can be manipulated into a condition of virtual authenticity.

An entourage of royal eunuchs deposit “upon the inside door mat” of the Wallaces’ Istanbul residence “a big eyed, beautiful Circassian girl, whose lustrous orbs and sparkling jewels were but little obscured by the filmy gauze veiling that covered her from head to foot.” Gawking at the manumitted inmate of the harem, Mrs. Wallace (here, “Maria”) recruits a domestic helper to explain what has transpired. Outlining the intentions behind the sultan’s “magnificent present,” the blushing house dragoman, “Mustaby,” claims, “His Highness has smiled upon my master and sent him his choicest slave.” The Circassian beauty “will bring my master’s coffee to him when he awakens in the morning and affectionately superintend his mornings’ ablutions.” A stock vaudevillian scenario of rolling-pin-wielding housewife pitted against would-be home wrecker ensues – only the rolling pin, like the scene, has been Orientalized. During the deliberations, Mrs. Wallace “stealthily fingered a bric-a-brac cimetar and glared at the offending present.” Too sheltered to sense danger, the odalisque is jostled violently by Mrs. Wallace, who “flew at the present, grabbed it by the shoulder, and was hustling it downstairs.”

The *Sentinel* makes it demonstrably clear that any diplomatic misstep on the part of the general has the potential to escalate into intercontinental conflict. In the opinion of General Wallace, playing the blundering, lusty, would-be polygamist (“stroking the Present’s brow in a gentle and fatherly way”), to refuse the sultan’s benefaction would be “enough to declare war on the United States right off and massacre us all.” Rejecting her husband’s attempts at parley, Mrs. Wallace issues a warning: “’Fraid of international complications are you, you salacious old wretch...I’ll show you what kind of a Bulgarian atrocity you’re married to,” here

likening herself to the Ottoman Empire's violent suppression of that country's April Uprising in 1876. Having learned his lesson, Lew Wallace finally resolves at the conclusion of the article that "sooner than go through the like again he would see the whole [North American] continent bathed in blood, and the American eagle bombarded until it hadn't a pin feather to its name." Here, when a threat to a fragile domestic order surfaces amidst the alleged sexual temptations of the East, it readily cross-contaminates international relations and implicates the genocidal.

Charting the article's provenance in print only adds to its significations. *The Sentinel* attributes the piece to the *Omaha Daily Bee*. Appearing in its August 25th, 1881 edition, *The Bee* cites as its source *The San Francisco Wasp* and pauses to marvel at its own redactions: "this is all that the modest telegraph consented to say about the occurrence, though the San Francisco Wasp found ever so much more to be told." The details fit-to-print in bohemian San Francisco have apparently been shed as the text makes its way to the more conservative Midwest. The amended commentary here offers titillation via absence, through its own self-attributed expunction.

The Bee, however, omits in its commentary that, as the source of the material, *The Wasp* is a periodical dedicated to satire and that the journal's acting editor-in-chief, Ambrose Bierce, had ulterior motive for exacting a literary vendetta on Lew Wallace. Like Wallace, Bierce was a veteran of the Battle of Shiloh (Battle of Pittsburgh Landing). Bierce had first published "What I Saw of Shiloh" in *The Wasp* the previous December.⁸ Postwar public opinion held Lew Wallace largely responsible for the debacle at Shiloh, specifically for the delays of his regiment, the

⁸ See Buinicki & Owens, 6.

Indiana 11th Grey Zouaves, in reinforcing a flank of the Union Army. Shiloh was, at the time of the battle, the bloodiest in American history.⁹

Prime suspect as ghostwriter, Bierce was himself no stranger to the distortional and displacing effects of contemporary American print culture, complaining, as early as 1870, of how East Coast and European periodicals freely pirated his work.¹⁰ It is ultimately difficult to assess how skeptically “An Unwelcomed Visitor” would be received in its re-circulations beyond *The Wasp*, either as a lurid bit of actual news or rather plainly, as satirical Biercian character assassination. In either case, long-standing discourses of Eastern degeneracy and of “going native” are authenticated in the piece, not via genuine eyewitness experience but through the vulnerabilities of open-source borrowing and liberal reproduction. As the traveling text makes its way home to roost in Indiana (the Wallaces’ home state), it becomes more virulent through its decontextualization from satire into newsprint. The rumor evidently had legs: one biographer notes that accounts of the sultan’s “Present” would dog the Wallaces for the remainder of the 1880s.¹¹

“An Unwelcomed Visitor” achieves parody, in part, through the utter anti-sentimentality of the counterfeit Mrs. Wallace, whose swift recourse to violence proves that demonstrations of sympathy elsewhere are only affected, situational, and subject to rapid change. Once the standard Orientalist specular arrangement between

⁹ The casualty count during the Battle of Shiloh is said to have surpassed those of the three previous American wars, combined. See Norton, 373. In his posthumous autobiography, Lew Wallace describes the cross-cultural masquerade of his Zouave unit: “there was nothing of the flashy, Algerian colors in the uniform of the Eleventh Indiana; no red fez, a head-gear exclusively Mohammedan, and there to be religiously avoided by Christians, no red breeches or yellow sash with tassels big as early cabbages. Our outfit was of the tamest gray twilled good” (270). For the origins of Zouavism in the United States and an examination of its cross-cultural masquerade, see Marr, 289-96.

¹⁰ Buinicki & Owens, 3.

¹¹ McKee, 216.

pitying cultural observer and pitiable object of observation are disrupted – once the wrong domestic space has been intruded upon – sentimentality and compassionate restraint become an afterthought.

After Shiloh, Lew Wallace commanded Union forces defending Washington, D.C. from Confederate assault in the Battle of Monocacy (Monocacy Junction). He sat on the military tribunals that oversaw the prosecution of Lincoln’s assassins and the commandant of Andersonville Prison; he served as governor of the New Mexico Territory. Still, he would expend no small amount of literary effort in the postbellum defending his tactical decisions at Shiloh. A fellow veteran of Shiloh and avid reader, Garfield appointed Wallace as minister resident to the Ottoman Empire, ostensibly because of the president’s fondness for *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880). The embassy would ideally supply Wallace with time and inspiration to produce a follow-up novel.¹² Unofficially, via diplomatic appointment, Lew Wallace would join a minor postbellum diaspora of stigmatized former generals, publicly impugned either for botched campaigns during the war or for unpopular postwar political leanings. As Bierce defines it in *The Devil’s Dictionary*, first published in *The Wasp* in 1881:

“**Consul**, n. In American politics, a person who having failed to secure an office from the people is given one by the Administration on condition that he leave the country”

(55). Wallace succeeded, as American minister to the Ottoman, James Longstreet, a

¹² See McKee, 189. As a result of his time in the Ottoman, Lew Wallace did, in fact, produce *The Prince of India; or, Why Constantinople Fell* (1893) and, later, an epic poem recounting the founding of the Ottoman dynasty, *The Wooing of Malkatoon* (1898). Initially ignored by critics and the American reading public, *Ben-Hur* would not become a popular success until the second half of the 1880s. The novel would surpass *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in sales in the United States, if only perforce of an ecumenical appeal that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its sectionally divisive subject matter lacked. See Richards, 8-10; Goldhill, 164-9.

former Confederate general, labeled a scalawag during the postwar period. Longstreet had provoked Southern animosity after publically advocating for national reconciliation; pleading for “moderation, forbearance, and submission” among Southern whites; declaring to them, “we are a conquered people”; and commanding a racially mixed militia during the suppression of an urban insurrection in New Orleans (qtd. in Wert 410).¹³ A contributor to Lew Wallace’s posthumously published autobiography, former Union general Charles Pomeroy Stone was imprisoned without trial by the U.S. Government following the 1861 Union defeat at the Battle of Ball’s Bluff (Battle of Harrison’s Island, Battle of Leesburg). After his release, Stone expatriated and joined the Egyptian Army as an aide de camp to Khedive Isma’il Pasha.¹⁴ Serving from 1870 to 1883, Stone would eventually rise to the rank of ferik pasha (فريق باشا), the equivalent of lieutenant general, in command of some 40,000 soldiers.¹⁵ By diplomatic appointment or foreign commission, Union scapegoats and reconstructed Confederates took refuge in the relative security of the Middle East.

Textual Viscosity in *The Storied Sea*

As if it were evocative of the dislocations and the postbellum itinerancy of Susan and Lew Wallace, *The Storied Sea* is permeated by a sense of world-weariness and cynicism. Preamble to the text’s harem encounter and its impending crisis of dissonance, characters initially struggle with the challenge of broaching a topic, so

¹³ See Wert, 413-16.

¹⁴ For description of Emmeline Lott’s employment under Isma’il, see Chapter 1, n44.

¹⁵ See *Lew Wallace, An Autobiography*, 953-4. Regarding Stone, see Hesselstine & Wolf, 78-9, 82-6, 247-60; Morsberger, 337; Meyer, 66; Vivian, 157. Another notable example, the former Confederate general John S. Mosby, “the Grey Ghost,” a postbellum proponent of national reconciliation, was appointed American consul to Hong Kong from 1878-1885. See Siepel, 205-30.

well-trod and overwritten, that the historical accretion of received knowledge, in fact, mystifies the actual subject matter itself.

As the narrator's travelling companion frames this dilemma, "'surely...you are not going to attempt anything about the Mediterranean. Why it has been written over for four thousand years...you would add a story to the Tower of Babel'" (11-12). Observing the architectural/literary pun here made upon "story," the metaphor suggests that accumulation leads to chaos. Where in the biblical parable, the hubristic building-up of a human-made edifice leads only to the punitive creation of myriad, mutually unintelligible human languages, the prospective action of re-inscribing upon an over-inscribed topic, rather than producing clarification, only adds noise to the cacophony.

Writing nearly one century later on the conundrum of grasping the same asymptotic, simulacral object, Jacques Derrida argues, "the 'tower of Babel' does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics" (*PS* 218). With Derridaean intuition, *The Storied Sea* vigorously rejects the work of narrative as a positivist action of retrieving and corroborating static and nominally authentic facts. A generic and conventional aesthetic of fact-finding and fact-substantiating is instead regarded with aversion, as the "cheap pedantry of guide-book wisdom and...loading down with useful information – temptations which easily beset the traveler" (227).

Justifications offered for opting *The Storied Sea* out from the common intellectual register of its parent genre also involves increasing the text's ease of access and quotient of pleasure. In equal measure, it espouses an open hostility to the conventional re-citation or recitation of discourse. "Schools and libraries are

crammed with useful knowledge, and the hackneyed sights of the Elder World may be paved with ponderous volumes of accurate description of the ‘shining Orient,’” writes Susan Wallace (vi). “A guide book is for the student of facts – let me refer you to Baedeker and Murray” (iv). In the hypothetical *paving over* of its object of study, the accumulated archive imaginably eclipses it. To similar effect, Jorge Borges’ vignette “On Exactitude in Science” (“*Del rigor en la ciencia*,” 1946) – Baudrillard’s partial inspiration for *Simulation and Simulacra* – recounts the creation of a map so large that it physically overlays (and thereby obscures) the terrain of the empire it is intended to represent.¹⁶

Elsewhere, the minute temporal sensibility, over-meticulous documentation, and hyper-diaristic narrative voice of travelogue – each ostensibly a strategy for purging authorial and discursive mediation – are characterized as distorting the object of inquiry itself. Parodying Oriental travelogue’s preoccupation with ascertaining fixed points of data, the narrator’s companion entreats, ““for pity’s sake, don’t copy the accurate-figures traveler, who saw the Sphinx at eleven o’clock, August 21, 1875, and climbed up a ladder with 10,000 rounds and measured its nose, and it was exactly five feet and six inches long”” (19).¹ The fallacy supposed in reducing narrative to quantitative parcels of information is lampooned here through the fantastical measurement of an object that no longer exists, the Sphinx’s long-unaccounted-for nose.

The skepticism engendered in *The Storied Sea* typifies a broader cultural departure from what Joan DelPlato, in her study of Orientalist subject painting and harem representation, calls “aesthetic positivism,” in which representations are

¹⁶ “On Exactitude in Science,” itself borrows this conceit from Lewis Carroll’s *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893).

understood to correspond mimetically and with “technical fidelity” to a referent in reality (231). Noting a mounting attitude of suspicion toward the reliability of representation during Wallace’s lifetime, DelPlato characterizes this trend:

Harem representations continued to be made in England and France after the mid-1870s, but they were no longer a subject grounded in cultural conviction. Later harem representations of the 1880s and 1890s may have attempted to retain a formal hold on stylistic mimesis, but the perception of an unproblematic link to a transparent reality lived by real harem women in the East evaporated. (238) ¹⁷

In a period that increasingly questioned the superabundance of mass produced, faux-authentic Orientalist cultural artifacts, *The Storied Sea* understands its subject matter as both fluid and highly subjective. This posture is embodied in the sustained metaphor that interpenetrates the narrative, associating the over-extensive Orientalist textual continuum with the aqueousness of the titular sea. Going against the grain of a conventional taxonomic and investigatory positivist register, set pieces of the text are consequently prefaced as “transient pictures in water” (iv). Receiving pleas from acquaintances for “new letters on stale subjects,” the narrator defends her choice to deviate from the genre (but stick with the subject matter) using the rationale that “no two persons see eye to eye and there is freshness in every first view” (16-17). Breaks in the text that prompt the enumeration of concrete data points frequently result in narrative disruption and deferral. ¹⁸ Photography, a technology thought to surmount

¹⁷ Another prime example of growing documentary suspicions in the 1870s occurs in a Paris dispatch to the *New York Tribune* from Henry James, complaining about how the mass production of Orientalist subject painting has reduced the East to commodity. French Orientalist painters have, “ransacked and rifled the oriental world of the uttermost vestige of its mystery. The trick has been learned, the recipe has been copied, passed through ten thousand hands. For some people the absolutely mechanical cleverness of Gerome has produced, as regards the East, a complete disenchantment” (107-8).

¹⁸ “Who knows? Who cares?” is the mantra of Wallace’s work, articulated at intersections where hard facts might otherwise be interjected (*Bosphorus* 4). When the question arises of how modern “savans” had calculated the length of the journey

and transcend the influences of textual mediation and corruption, is unexceptionally deprived of privilege and lumped together with other representational media.¹⁹

Utilitarianism in the Harem of Nourmahal

I borrow the title of this chapter from the headline of an article authored by Susan Wallace appearing in the *Bismarck Daily Tribune* in 1888. “The word harem means holy or sanctified,” Wallace writes therein, “I was a long while learning that the name applies to the inclosed court about mosques, not a barred prison but consecrated ground, revered as a sanctuary.” The centerpiece of *The Storied Sea*, a visit to the harem, relates a process of intellectual adjustment, in which the narrator both indulges in conventional fantasy and invokes its attendant philosophical implications in order to eventually nullify both. The narrative applies the pseudonym *Nourmahal* to identify its harem inmate and, in doing so, invites the suggestion that cultural tradition and discourse can overlay perception and experience.

The name, *Nourmahal*, is borrowed from Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh* (1816), an Orientalist-Romantic critique of Enlightenment values, including the universality of certain human rights. Also lifting Moore’s translation of the name, Nourmahal, “The Light of the Haram,” *The Storied Sea*, like *Lalla Rookh*, juxtaposes

of the Magi to Bethlehem (an episode which is, incidentally, recreated in the opening scene of *Ben-Hur*) the anti-epistemological rebuttal is “The New Testament record is meagre... Who knows, who cares? It matters not” (*Repose* 197).

¹⁹ See also Oehring, 29-50. The sea change against aesthetic positivism was brought about, in part, by the vastly different documentary productions evident between the increasingly mechanical and mass-produced visual media of photography and that of painting. “The American Girl: An Interlude” in *The Storied Sea* depicts a collection of carte de visite photographs, a novel technology, being mediated and corrupted through the presentation and commentary of their possessor, the American girl of the chapter’s title. One of the cartes de visite is shown being dropped into the Mediterranean and, in becoming waterlogged, merges symbolically with the Storied Sea itself.

competing, countervailing sources of light and enlightenment: that based in the ratiocinations of Western Enlightenment and that based in the epiphanies of Eastern revelation. The name “Nur” (نور) connotes both light in its commonplace sense but also gestures to the Islamic precept of a higher-order, epiphanic, and sanctified manifestation of divine light and enlightenment, as embodied in the Surat an-Nur (سورة النور, “The Light”) of the Koran.²⁰

Nourmahal’s abode, fashioned by the narrator as the “Palace of Delight,” is rendered in a conventional, highly wrought, and ornamental language. Nourmahal is a kept woman, barred from the outside world; her “expression was that of a lovely child, waking from summer slumber in the happiest humor, ready for play” (105). Captivity in the harem has, in keeping with generic assumptions, stunted Nourmahal’s intellectual maturation and left her in a state of permanent adolescence. While the harem of Nourmahal is aesthetically pleasing, it is notably unencumbered by paraphernalia:

Two sides of the room were of glass, the one overlooking the bay latticed with iron, painted white, which banished the prison look it would otherwise have. Velvety rugs of Bochara and Korassan were laid here and there over the floor. Of blue and white mosaic. A broad, low divan of pale blue silk ran round the apartment. *Voilà tout*. No pictures on the marble walls, no books, no *bric-a-brac*, no trumpery “collections,” no ceramics, no aesthetic trash. These are not Oriental luxuries; but, instead, a cool shady emptiness, and plenty of it. (107)

The harem is conventionally bare. Its absence of books (objects of learning) and souvenirs (objects of memory) speaks to the sensorial deprivations thought to be instituted through the despotic regime of the harem. The vacuity of her surroundings has contributed to Nourmahal’s own intellectual inanition.

²⁰ See, for example, Patton, 70.

For the ways it resembled oppressive domesticities of the West, the motif of the harem as sensory deprivation chamber had, by then, long been a fixture of feminist rhetoric. Playing upon abiding Orientalist representations, the vacuum of the harem induces not only abject psychological and somatic torpor in its inmates but also severs any connection they might have to civic and political life. Taking up this convention in *The Storied Sea*, a scene of indolence and human inertia affords the narrator every opportunity to denounce and consequently sentimentalize the suffering underlying Nourmahal's seclusion and invalidism. Instead, she professes envy. Nourmahal's alleged lack of encumbrance, exemption from labor, reprieve from memory, and detachment from material discomforts bear a subversive attraction. The harem represents anything but the drudgery and fatigue of day-to-day domestic toil, so often valorized in postbellum literature.

The narrator even vicariously coopts and indulges in Nourmahal's state of listlessness and mental-acuity-dulled. In a state approximating a disembodied, non-cognizant, sensorial blur, the narrator writes, "under a trance we floated between blue and blue (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell) in the supreme delight of a day unreal in its poetic lights; so like the stuff which dreams are made of, I sometimes wonder which was dream and which reality" (120). By foregoing either denunciation of Nourmahal's oppression or sober ethnographic clarification, *The Storied Sea* leaves the exoticized and heterotopic space of the harem intact. Risking impropriety in the staunchly progressive *Independent*, a reluctance toward censure triggers more profound philosophical departures. The narrator questions in earnest if Nourmahal's oppression is really oppression at all.

Despite beginning the narrative by identifying herself as an "advocate of universal suffrage," the narrator archly concludes her visit by claiming, "my life-long

notions of the subjection of woman (see Stuart Mill) and the wretchedness of prisoners pining in palatial splendors vanished at the first glance; went down at a touch” (11; 109). The “lifelong notions” being cited, via parenthetical aside, and then repudiated, directs the reader to John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (1869), a text regularly linked to the influence of Harriet Taylor Mill and her earlier essay, “The Enfranchisement of Women” (1851).²¹ In the volume, Mill argues that cultural formations effecting the exclusion of women from the public sphere produce broader societal ills and obstruct cultural evolution.

A vestigial holdover from a bygone stage of human cultural development (“the very earliest twilight of human society”), the harem is, for Mill, one expression of a spectrum of social mechanisms and conventions utilized to effect gender segregation and women’s exclusion (8). Mill insists that, because cultural advancements in the West are often successive or contemporaneous to the expansion of civil liberties afforded women, it follows that advancing the cause of gender equality and ensuring legal freedoms for women foments subsequent cultural advancement. “The legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself,” writes Mill, “and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement” (1). Abandoning the *laissez faire* attitude toward governmental intervention he advocates in other texts, Mill endorses institutional reform and state legislation, including the ratification of franchise for women, as a means to an end. *The Subjection of Women* is, by all accounts, a landmark feminist text, which makes its insinuated obsolescence in *The Storied Sea* all the more curious.²²

²¹ For examination of Harriet Taylor Mill’s influence on John Stuart Mill’s explorations of socialism, see Claeys, 38; and Rossi.

²² The importance and originality of *The Subjection of Women* is, according to Alice Rossi, difficult to understate:

The parallels between Mill's argument in *The Subjection of Women* and that generally espoused in the utopian socialism of Charles Fourier, in which women's rights play a pivotal role in human cultural evolution, is unmistakable.²³ Indeed, Mill makes repeated mention of Fourierism over the course of his career, in works such as *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), *Autobiography* (1873), and the posthumously published *Socialism* (1879).²⁴ In his autobiography, Mill recognizes the foresight of the utopian socialists in respect to their support for gender equality: "In proclaiming the perfect equality of men and women, and an entirely new order of things in regard to their relation with one another, the St. Simonians, in common with Owen and Fourier, have entitled themselves to the grateful remembrance of future generations" (167-8). Among these systems of thought, Mill regularly lavishes special, albeit sometimes mixed, praise on that of Fourier as, "the most skillfully combined, and with the greatest foresight of objection, of all the forms of Socialism" (SO 30).²⁵

Often virtually endorsing Fourierism, Mill differs on one key point of distinction: Fourier's failure to incorporate the import and agency of sentiment in human cultural development. Fourierist utopian society is animated instead by accommodating the oscillating and ephemeral "passional attractions" of the individual – a nuance I examine in Chapter 1. Deploying Fourier's own language against him,

It stands almost alone as an intellectual analysis of the position of women and an appeal for political action to secure equality of the sexes. Nothing quite like it had been published before 1869, and nothing like it was to appear again until the publication in 1898 of Charlotte Perkin Gilman's *Women and Economics*. (4)

²³ For elaborated discussion of Fourier's philosophy, its impact on the Brook Farm Phalanx, and its influence in the work of Anna Leonowens, see Chapter 1.

²⁴ For examination of Fourier in *Principles of Political Economy*, see 165-70.

²⁵ "The curious inquirer," Mill writes of Fourier, "will find unmistakable proofs of genius, mixed, however, with the wildest and most unscientific fancies respecting the physical world, and much interesting but rash speculation on the past and future history of humanity" (273).

Mill argues that the “very pivot & turning point” of human advancement in actuality involves “a *moral sense* – a feeling of duty, or conscience, or principle, or whatever name one gives it – a feeling that one *ought to* do, & to wish for, what is for the greatest good of all concerned” (italics Mills’, qtd. in Claeys 87). Mill inherits much from moral sense doctrine, which envisions human populations bound together and sustained through the operation of mutually held sympathies and sentiments.²⁶

The publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of the Species* (1859) would not fundamentally alter Mill’s thinking in this regard. To the contrary, cultural change over time would become understood as an expression and constituent of biological evolution through natural selection. Specifically, Mill envisions further expansions in the capacity of sentiment and sympathy among both individuals and communities, galvanizing an interlinked conception of cultural advancement and human evolution. The virtue of intellect that stimulates an individual’s “superior range of sympathy” is of paramount importance in Mill’s 1863 treatise, *Utilitarianism* (77). Utilitarian morality, Mill posits, is grounded in the “firm foundation...of the social feelings of mankind” and “the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures, which is already a powerful principle in human nature, and happily one of those which tend to become stronger, even without express inculcation, from the influences of advancing civilization” (46).²⁷ “This association,” Mill adds, conjuring the image of a feedback loop, “is riveted more and more, as mankind are further removed from

²⁶ See Chapter 3, for an extended examination of the basis of sympathy among the British Empiricists, chiefly that of Hume and Smith.

²⁷ Mill continues on the feedback loop encapsulated in the expansions of sympathy simultaneously operating within a culture and an individual:

Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his *feelings* more and more... He comes, as though instinctively, to be conscious of himself as a being who *of course* pays regard to others. (47)

the state of savage independence” (46). So too in *The Subjection of Women*, where the formerly withheld and gradually emancipated social and civic energies of women might exert “the influence of women’s sentiments on the moral cultivation of mankind” (158). I would argue that the two catalysts of cultural evolution addressed respectively in *Utilitarianism* and *The Subjection of Women* – namely, broadening the scope of human sympathy in the former and expanding freedoms and social consequence for women in the latter – are, by no means, mutually exclusive.

In the context of Mill’s sentimental-evolutionary Utilitarianism, the harem of Nourmahal becomes a case study in cultural dysfunctionality. Nourmahal’s felicific calculus has no output beyond the walls of the harem, effectively rendering her *laissez-aller* in a way that propagates broader social dysfunction. Dwelling in a surfeit of personal pleasure, Nourmahal is exempted from both an aversion to pain and inclination to seek out pleasure that normally, within a Utilitarian and Empiricist economy, provide inducement to action.²⁸ Because “the basis of sympathy lies in our strong retentiveness of former states of pain or pleasures,” Nourmahal’s circumscription from the world outside in the sensualist void of the harem bars her from experiences that could awaken or activate a moral sense (Darwin *DM* 78). Nourmahal’s otherwise instinctive impulse to work toward the common social good and to public welfare has somehow been hay-wired.

Writing on the topic of possible exceptions in *Utilitarianism*, Mill argues, “since few but those whose mind is a moral blank, could bear to lay out their course of life on the plan of paying no regard to others except so far as their own private interest compels” (51). “The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so

²⁸ Brown, 239-41.

habitual to man,” Mill claims, “that except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body” (46). Her incarceration in a state of permanent leisure, lethargy, and social extraction preempts Nourmahal from formulating a conception of the Other’s suffering, short-circuiting her capacity for sympathy, which would ordinarily be instinctive. The absence of books or souvenirs in the harem – objects that can serve as mnemotechnic prostheses or triggers – reinforces an implication that sympathy and sentiment have been foreclosed therein. Extrapolating Nourmahal’s lack of social consequence in the harem out over evolutionary time – as Mill alludes to in *The Subjection of Women* – offers some explanation behind what he perceives as the long-standing historical dysfunction of Eastern cultures.

In a marriage of convenience between Orientalist tradition and Utilitarian thinking, Nourmahal is initially made out as a victim of the harem’s sentimental dead zone, to be copiously pitied. As inferred by Mill, it follows that her alleged pathological apathy and asentimentality can be alleviated through a curricular program that teaches her to *feel correctly* and eventually adopt Western modes of sentimentality. Nourmahal’s sentimental proselytization is nevertheless hampered by barriers of translation. After decamping from the Palace of Delight, the narrator observes, “our limited supply of words forbade the giving of ‘views,’ so dear to the mind of the universal suffragist” – the placement of “views” in quotation marks foreshadows the ironizations to come. (117). The “Advanced Thinker,” characterized as a “first-rate leader in women’s-rights conventions,” complains, “what a pity we could not plant a few ideas in that childish brain!” (125; 124).

Invoking the suitor-hero of Lalla Rookh, the narrator responds wryly and with an air of evolutionary-Utilitarian irony, “do you think it would help the happiness of the house tonight, when Prince Feramorz comes home, to her bothering over development and evolution?” (124). Rebuffed, the Advanced Thinker streamlines the terms of a prospective education to an axiomatic Utilitarian minimum: “Nourmahal should, at least, know she is a responsible being” (125).

Zerelda Wallace’s Utopianism

Susan Wallace’s intimacy with American Suffrage and early formulations of feminist internationalism would likely have come through the figure of Zerelda Wallace, Susan’s stepmother-in-law, who had raised Lew Wallace from adolescence. As early as the 1870s, Zerelda Wallace had risen to national prominence as an advocate of temperance and franchise. In 1900, *The Boston Herald* names her alongside Cady Stanton, Isabelle Beecher Hooker, and Julia Ward Howe, on a short list of “the pioneer women suffragists” who had survived past the turn of the century with their dream of franchise still unfulfilled. Zerelda Wallace had taken up the cause of suffrage as a result of her frustrations as a non-voter, lobbying on behalf of temperance legislation in the Indiana General Assembly. She would become the inaugural president of the Indiana chapter of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and, in 1883, the national superintendent of the WCTU’s Department of Franchise, holding the position for five years.²⁹

²⁹ For Wallace’s struggles in the Indiana State Legislature, see Blackwell, 482-4. For descriptions of Wallace’s career in the WCTU and the NWSA, see D’Itri, 45; James, James, & Boyer, 535-6; Willard & Lathbury, 476-85; and Buhle, 61.

Accompanied by Susan B. Anthony and other fellow members of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), Wallace testified before the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. Senate in 1880. Portraying the delegation (and Suffragists at large) not as “seditious women,” Wallace presents their activism as a natural consequence of cultural evolution and the advancement of society:

We realize that we owe great obligations to the men of this nation for what they have done. We realize that to their strength we owe the subjugation of all the material forces of the universe which gives us comfort and luxury in our homes. We realize that to their brains we owe the machinery that gives us leisure for intellectual culture and achievement. . . This movement is the legitimate result of this development, of this enlightenment, and of the suffering that woman has undergone in the ages past. We find ourselves hedged in at every effort we make as mothers for the amelioration of society, as philanthropists, as Christians. (qtd. in Scott & Scott 97)

“We may not be able to bring about that Utopian form of government which we all desire,” Wallace continues, “but we can at least make an effort” (qtd. in Scott & Scott 98). Wallace’s argument, as Anne Firor Scott and Andrew M. Scott qualify it, that “the quality of the government would be improved if women were admitted to the electorate,” would be increasingly coopted by Suffragists in coming years (96).

In Zerelda Wallace’s popular stump speech “The Whole of Humanity,” the cultural contributions of men are again acknowledged in order to delimit the domain where their influence falls short. “There are other forces which must be brought into subjection to humanity before we reach the highest development,” Wallace claims, “those are the moral and spiritual forces; and that is largely woman’s share. Not that I exempt man; but woman is pre-eminently the teacher of the race” (qtd. in *History of Woman Suffrage, 1902* 171). Wallace’s vision of an American societal evolution (toward the utopian), augmented by the participation of women and the integration of their moral agencies, mirrors those previously espoused by Leonowens and Mill.

Zerelda Wallace's conceit of woman as sympathetic educator would, by no means, be limited to American shores. Within the WCTU's pioneering efforts to mount a strategy of reform global in scope and ambition, Wallace would become an outspoken proponent of American-led feminist internationalism.³⁰ The penultimate speaker, preceding Cady Stanton, at the inaugural meeting of the NWSA-affiliated International Council of Women (ICW), held in Washington, D.C. in 1888, Wallace envisions Suffragists convening "to plead for freedom for themselves in the name of and for the good of humanity" (qtd. in Cott 20).³¹ Globalizing a well-worn Jeffersonian conceit, she imagines sisterly guidance, leadership, and revolutionary sentiments radiating out from "the freest nation in the world": "where a thought once born goes reverberating around the globe, will never stop in its march till all humanity is free, and until this tree of liberty...watered by the tears of women and the blood of men, shall take deep root, and all the nations of the world shall bask under its branches (428).³² Wallace's well-publicized role as the character inspiration for the mother of Ben-Hur would also her notoriety as an activist and reformer. Susan B. Anthony, in fact, introduces Wallace to the ICW dais as "a Mother in Israel" (428).³³

³⁰ For an examination of the WCTU in the world, see Tyrrell.

³¹ See Chapter 3, for an examination of both of the different Anglo-American-led internationalist organizations and also how speakers other than Wallace at the 1888 ICW conference imagine a global suffrage movement linked by a network of mutually held sympathy and sentiment.

³² See Chapter 3, for an examination of both of the different Anglo-American-led internationalist organizations and also how speakers other than Wallace at the 1888 ICW conference imagine a global suffrage movement linked by a network of mutually held sympathy and sentiment.

³³ For Wallace's character inspiration for the mother of Ben-Hur, see Willard & Lathbury, 485; Blackwell, 482; Firor Scott & Mackay, 96.

Educating Nourmahal

Contrary to a Benthamite Utilitarianism that apprehends moral sense as acquired solely through experience, calculations of self-interest, and education, Millian sympathy is a combination of inherited instinct and the endowments of educational and social influences.³⁴ According to either doctrine, Nourmahal (and, by extension her culture) can be reformed through an education that activates a latent capacity for sentiment. For Mill, a regimented sentimental education is crucial for social cohesion and evolution. In *Socialism*, Mill encapsulates Fourier's shortcomings in a requisite need for just such an education. In order to perpetuate a self-sustaining socialist system, Mill claims:

The one certainty is, that Communism, to be successful, requires a high standard of both moral and intellectual education in all the members of the community – moral, to qualify them for doing their part honestly and energetically in the labor of life under no inducement but their share in the general interest of the association, and their feelings of duty and sympathy towards it. (118-9)

The notion of a curriculum of sentimental education had, in fact, been advanced by Mill's father, James Mill. In his *History of British India* (1813) and subsequently in *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829), Mill père, heavily influenced by the thinking of the Empiricists through the mentorship of Adam Smith's colleague Dugald Stewart, conjectures that the myopic sympathetic parochialisms and deficiencies suffered by peoples of both the lower classes and far-off colonies can only be surmounted by education.³⁵ The prescriptions for class or cultural

³⁴ Brown, 240. Here, I refer the reader back to Millian leanings implied in the quote from *The Storied Sea* that opens this chapter: “Thank you for righting us on the woman question in this latitude, where soft voices and gracious manners are the rule and seem to come by inheritance, instead of teaching” (132).

³⁵ See Peart & Levy, 30. “In so many ways associated with our pains and pleasures,” sympathy, according to James Mill, “operates feebly, and is easily overruled by other motives, in the great majority of men. A very general idea, such as that of *Mankind*,

remediation, endorsed by both James Mill and John Stuart Mill, are readily read out to other cultures.

Habituated to the venal pleasures of the harem, Nourmahal's sentimental education would foreseeably be an education in pain, impelling her to feel that which is other than pleasure, confronting the unpalatable realities of human suffering. The narrator imagines the unsavory work of Nourmahal's sentimental acculturation as a corruption of Genesiacal proportions: "Suppose I *could*, would I have the heart to reduce her to our prosaic and wearing level in the hard, familiar ruts; to give the king's darling a taste of the bitter fruit from the tree of knowledge?" (134). Beyond this, the specific curricular components of Nourmahal's indoctrination in sentimentality are nowhere plainly enumerated, as they are in the work of Anna Leonowens.³⁶

A sentimental curriculum is, however, caricatured through the narrator's vitriolic reaction to the Advanced Thinker's suggestion that ideas be implanted into Nourmahal's "childish brain." "You want her to study those awful problems about the fox and the greyhound, and the cistern with two pipes," the narrator protests, "to read Buckle and Darwin, and have views and give them, too, and make speeches, and, in short, to be wise – and wretched" (124-5). The narrator belittles Nourmahal's tentative sentimental tutelage by dint of her predictable misery and by the clash of high and low registers of an undoubtedly pedantic Western education. Both "the fox and the greyhound" and "the cistern with the two pipes" are the equivalents of "two

is an indistinct idea; and no strong association is formed with it, except by means of Education" (*AP* 277; 278).

³⁶ For more on strategies for educating the harem internee in Victorian literature, see Melman, 141-50.

trains leave the station at the same time.” The narrator here cynically juxtaposes contemporary archetypes of the elementary, clichéd math problem with two prominent theorists of evolutionary-Utilitarian synthesis, each with different postures towards the role of women and sentiment as prime movers of cultural advancement and human evolution.

Henry Thomas Buckle is not nearly as well remembered as Mill or Darwin. As Brian Porter bluntly puts it, “few thinkers enjoyed such prominence in their own day and such oblivion afterwards” (69). Buckle gained reputation through his scholarly attempts to pattern a “‘scientific’ vision of history,” primarily in his unfinished, 1200-page *History of Civilization in England* (1857) (Porter, 69). *The Storied Sea* gladly recommends *History of Civilization* to any disenchanted readers, “the students of hard facts,” as a more positivist alternative to itself. An acolyte of Millian Utilitarianism, Buckle, in a key point of departure from Mill, jettisons the role of sentiment as a necessary ingredient in the propulsion of civilizational advancement.³⁷ Categorizing human moral horizons as more or less static over historical time in his chapter, making “comparison of moral and intellectual laws, and inquiry into the effect produced by each on the progress of society,” Buckle locates human advancement in intellectual achievement alone (121). “The history of every civilized country is the history of its intellectual development,” Buckle asserts, adding, “the progress Europe has made from barbarism to civilization is entirely due to its intellectual activity” (162). Rejecting the notion of a “double movement” or “two-fold progress, Moral and Intellectual,” Buckle forges a distinction:

³⁷ As Sir Leslie Stephen, himself a champion of the evolutionarily-based import of human sympathy and animal rights, claims in *The English Utilitarians* (1900), Buckle’s philosophy leans toward “the most characteristic tenets of the Mill school of speculation” (346). For more on Stephen, the father of Virginia Woolf, see Sumpter.

If we contrast this stationary aspect of moral truths with the progressive aspect of intellectual truths, the difference is indeed startling...if...we turn to the human intellect...we shall find that every great increase in its activity has been a heavy blow to the warlike spirit. (125; 130; 138)³⁸

Intellectual progress for Buckle is, however, not reserved exclusively to the actions of men. In his public lecture “The Influence of Women on the Progress of Knowledge” (1858), Buckle radically positions himself as an unambiguous proponent of rights for women, theorizing, like Mill, that women’s expanded freedoms play an agentive role in cultural evolution, albeit by unusual dimensions (186). Buckle speculates that women’s inclination toward and unique ability for deductive reasoning exists over and above that same faculty in men, who are prone to – and consequently hampered by – inductive reasoning alone. The deductive aptitude of women renders their intellectual contributions a necessary ingredient in the work of scientific (and societal) progress.³⁹

Compelled to respond in the third chapter of *The Descent of Man* (1871), Charles Darwin is heavily inclined towards Mill’s attitude on the role of sentiment in the future trajectories of human evolution. Darwin stresses, “I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that, of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense of conscience is by far the most important” (67). Gradually evolving sympathy and expanding bonds of kinship, for Darwin, are traits perennially selected-for among social species: “those communities which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring” (79). Openly citing the influences of Mill and of Adam

³⁸ In other words, Buckle “made historical progress dependent on ideas” and did so resolutely in his arguments (Porter 70).

³⁹ “Women by encouraging in men deductive habits of thought, have rendered an immense, though unconscious, service to the progress of knowledge, by preventing scientific investigators from being as exclusively inductive as they would otherwise be” (7).

Smith before him, *The Descent of Man* echoes a Millian vision of sympathetic cultural-global evolution, with a strikingly egalitarian imagined endpoint:

As man advances in civilization, and small tribes are united into larger communities, the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races. (96)

Respectfully making note of Mill's argumentative vacillations in *Utilitarianism* on whether sympathy is inborn (and therefore best *not* taught) or acquired (and therefore best taught), Darwin finally insists upon the congenital inheritance of a moral sense.⁴⁰

Yet the unrestricted planetary operation of sympathy looming on humanity's horizon, for Darwin, is hardly the whole picture. Rather, cultures supplement natural sympathy with customs and traditions that attempt to reflect the "wishes and judgment" of a community (95). "A most important secondary guide of conduct, in aid of the social instincts, but sometimes in opposition to them," the formation of such conventional mores have the power, for Darwin, to negatively reinforce individual behavior and operate to the detriment of public welfare (95). He adds:

The judgment of the community will generally be guided by some rude experience of what is best in the long-run for all the members; but this judgment will not rarely err from ignorance and from weak powers of reasoning. Hence the strangest customs and superstitions, in complete opposition to the true welfare and happiness of mankind, have become all-powerful throughout the world. We see this in the horror felt by a Hindoo who breaks his caste, in the shame of a Mahometan woman who exposes her face. (95)

Originally intend as behaviors that were approbation-seeking, such bad cultural habits are now setbacks to more perfect sympathetic communal interface. Nevertheless,

⁴⁰ "It is with hesitation that I venture to differ from so profound a thinker [Mill], but it can hardly be disputed that the social feelings are instinctive or innate in the lower animals; and why should they not be so in man?" (68).

they can be cast off as soon as their practitioners have “acquired sufficient knowledge to reject baneful customs and superstitions” (99). The cultural specificity of Darwin’s examples suggest that insalubrious and irrational cultural habits are practiced more prominently by the non-Western Other. These examples also leave the possibility of outside efforts at remediation conspicuously unconstrained, and, consequently, colonial interventions are conceivably justifiable as a Utilitarian and sympathetic means of enhancing the evolutionary welfare of global humanity.⁴¹

As a result, the Utilitarian curriculum of Nourmahal’s prospective reform through sentimental education is haunted in *The Storied Sea* by the specter of militarized colonial intercession. The palace of Nourmahal is situated, the narrator notes, by “a deep bay, where the navies of the world might ride at anchor” (97). This suggestion resurfaces through a second, analogous conditional: “the heaviest ironclads might lie close to the quay where we landed” (102). Both qualifiers of local geography, indicating the berth and depth of an anchorage, sublimate a vulnerability to armed incursion and the looming likelihood of colonial occupation. That the bay could harbor “navies” hints at the multiplicity of powers prepared to implement gunboat diplomacy in Nourmahal’s unidentified homeland. That the bay might take in “the heaviest ironclads” – again using the plural ambiguously – intimates the plausible presence of what was, in that period, the cutting edge of naval technology.⁴²

⁴¹ Shortly after *The Descent of Man*, Darwin would continue his exploration into the interplay of emotion, sympathy, and sociality among animal species in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).

⁴² Vessels fitted with armored metal casements, ironclads were first deployed by the French navy in 1859, signaling a fundamental and lasting shift in naval warfare. Thoroughly integrated into the arsenals of global superpowers by the 1860s, they would see combat during the American Civil War, most notoriously in the Battle of Ironclads (an engagement between the USS Monitor and CSA Merrimack) in 1862.

The Issue of Infighting

The spirited quality of the exchange in *The Storied Sea* between the narrator and The Advanced Thinker hints that a great deal of traction for the cause of franchise in the United States hypothetically stood to be gained through the enlistment of progressive women as instructors of sentiment, in the harem and elsewhere. A schema of women's alignment with the colonial also remained poised to help mend the lingering internal rift that had emerged within Suffrage in the late 1860s and early 1870s, which continued to hobble the Movement.

By the 1880s, Suffrage remained divided into rival major camps: the Boston-centered American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), led by Howe, Stone, and Blackwell and the above-mentioned NWSA, led by Cady Stanton and Anthony. Factions had parted ways over a handful of contentious topics: the priority given securing black male voting rights and passage of the 15th Amendment; attitudes regarding free love and communism; the sometimes brusque leadership of Stanton and Anthony; and the NWSA's scandalous affiliation with spiritualist and free-love advocate Victoria Woodhull.

The Independent had served in many ways as the literary epicenter of the split. Former presidents of the NWSA and the AWSA, Theodore Tilton and the reverend Henry Ward Beecher, respectively, had worked together closely as co-editors of *The Independent* in the 1870s.⁴³ The open secret of Beecher's extramarital affairs, which include with Tilton's wife, Elizabeth Richards Tilton, had prompted a personal falling out between the two men. As Woodhull publicly divulged specifics about Beecher's

⁴³ See Mott, 371-2.

various indiscretions, a cover-up designed to protect his reputation forced members of the Suffrage leadership to take sides.⁴⁴

Depicting a moment of additional internal conflict among Suffragists in *The Independent*, especially for Susan Wallace's well-known personal connection to the NWSA vanguard, the harem encounter of *The Storied Sea* touches a raw political nerve. Mirroring disputes at home, difference over the prickly issue of Nourmahal's sentimental education is shown not only failing to resolve internal setbacks in the movement, but it also redraws and extends existing lines of internal dissent into the colonial theatre. The depiction of ideological infighting among Suffragists in the harem of *The Storied Sea* inserts doubt into any notion that sorely needed political capital could be reclaimed through an alliance of American Suffrage with American colonial enterprise.

Clarifications

Lest the basis of dispute and its attendant philosophical considerations stand unchallenged, the entourage's Armenian interpreter offers some clarification upon the Suffragists' presuppositions of Nourmahal's lassitude and political neutrality:

You make a mistake...to suppose the Harem is a mere boudoir and bower, the Oriental wife the plaything of idle hours, living in butterfly idleness...In that consecrated place are all the women of the household...Slavery here is not the dreadful bondage you used to have in America. The girls you saw to-day sit with their mistress in the afternoon, and sew and talk with her in a patriarchal way you know nothing of. The Harem, the Forbidden Room, is the golden milestone, the centre of existence to the home-keeping Oriental, and, as such, has a hold controlling every action he meditates...The women enter into every detail of the public life of their husbands, and are recognized as a power in the

⁴⁴ For a history of the Beecher scandal in the 1870s and its impact on Suffrage, see Barbara Goldsmith's *Other Powers*. A private letter from Victoria Woodhull accuses the philandering Beecher of keeping "a regular harem in Brooklyn" and having "more illegitimate children than any other man in town" (qtd. in Goldsmith 223).

most difficult political affairs, as they are not even in fair France. (129-30)

“It is in the women’s tents that the politics are settled,” the interpreter continues, “women of the East have their influence and authority, not maintained in the same way, but held quite equal to the power of the women of the West” (132).⁴⁵ Giving voice to the narrator’s prior apprehensions, the dragoman’s illuminations collapse the terms of the Suffragists’ former debate outright. The divergence between the authentic Nourmahal and her sentimental simulation, according to Orientalist tradition, become apparent. In this episode, sentimentalized preconceptions have distorted the process of perception and observation, so that lived experience complies with received knowledge. To borrow from Baudrillard, perceivers, like simulators, “attempt to make the real, all of the real, coincide with their simulation models” (2). Inconsistencies reveal exactly how limited the imputation of sentiment becomes beyond the confines of one’s own culture.

Unmasked dissimulations also undercut the intermediate modes of Orientalist representation and the colonialist knowledge undergirded by them, offered up for consumption domestically. The narrator repurposes the words of Thackeray to capture how simulations re-institute and reinforce discourse. Excerpting *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero* (1847-1848), the narrator claims: “by a strange association of ideas I recalled a sentence of Thackeray, which has clung to memory through many changes: ‘We are Turks with the affections of our women, and have made them subscribe to our doctrine too’” (133). Emphasis on Thackeray’s maxim, in this

⁴⁵ To these revelations, the Advanced Thinker “amazedly” responds: “Do you mean to say...that in time the tender little parasite we saw to-day may come to know something of grave matters of state, and be capable of advising in them?” (130).

reprocessed context, underscores the extent to which indoctrination envelops and forces into conformity the faculties of perception, interpretation, and belief.

To refer back to the quotation from Walter Benjamin above, Nourmahal's failure to correspond to the precedents of her doctored textual reproductions calls into question the specific political underpinnings behind the artifice. By envisioning the harem as a domestic space that exists as the evolutionary remnant and retrograde of those of the West within which the domestic circumscriptions of Separate Sphere Ideology are enforced *in extremis*, it naturalizes and applies that Separate Sphere Ideology globally. The formalization of separate spheres uniformly across the planet veils the politicality of the harem, toward which the Suffragists are consequently oblivious. Sentimentalizations manufactured in the process of textual simulation additionally mask the culturally unique expression of political power, which, in actuality, flourishes in the harem.

Nourmahal's failure to meet the criteria of sentimental simulation absents the figure of a politically, sentimentally, and evolutionary inferior, upon which a Utilitarian ideology depends. Accordingly, the notion of Western cultural superiority, encoded in the typology of Nourmahal, becomes unhinged.⁴⁶ Without the precession of linear cultural evolution across homogenous evolutionary timelines, the praxis of the sentimental alleviation of other cultures, implicitly gesturing to the colonial, becomes dubious.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Susan Wallace's *Rest in Egypt* includes one harem immigrant/renegeado narrative, which withholds editorializations or lavish condemnations of cultural degeneracy or "going native." In "One Woman: a True Romance" – a story the narration claims to be factual, with names changed to protect the innocent, "Lady Ellen," a woman "born of title...of a line honorable and ancient" repudiates English high society for tent life among the Bedouin (314).

⁴⁷ As it is elsewhere espoused, for instance, in the work of Anna Leonowens. A dysfunctional Utilitarian reading of the harem would become a repeated feature in

This Eurocentric mode of Utilitarian sentimentalization can also be viewed as undercutting Suffragists' attitude toward their own activism. Activism from a position of presumed cultural superiority (and sympathy for all others that lag) yields fewer global-historical precedents upon which demands for local reform can be based. Beyond subliminally encouraging an affective state of complacency, notions of cultural superiority also indirectly promote praxes of cultural remediation elsewhere, as an alternative to local reform. The sentimentalized Orientalist simulation of Nourmahal does not justify and reinforce colonial regimes and racist ideologies abroad as much as it obscures a systemic regime of gender subjection acting upon American women at home. Sentimental manipulations and misdirections in *The Storied Sea* are shown to mask the hidden oppressions of the quotidian and the real.⁴⁸

Women at Home

The Storied Sea implicitly challenges the cultural limits of sympathy and interrogates the ways in which sympathy can be channeled to corroborate and justify colonial enterprise. At the same time, the novel begs the question of how sympathies directed abroad and invested in the subaltern divert concern away from the quotidian. One nuance of the harem's attribution of emptiness and Nourmahal's consequent

Eastern travelogues. See Melman, 105-7. As Mary Lucy Garnett concludes a compendium on "the prevalence of Ottoman poetesses" in *Women of Turkey and their Folk-lore* (1891): "I trust also that the reader who reflects on the facts contained in the preceding pages will realize how false is the assumption of Mr. J.S. Mill and his disciples that Woman has every, and at all times, been in position of slavish subjection to Man" (546).

⁴⁸ Culture even marks itself uniquely upon the body. As the narrator asks her travelling companions: "do you see three lines between my eyebrows? Strangers newly arrived in our country declare they are the distinguishing feature of the American woman" (125-6). The well-defined lines, as the narrator puns, "are well defined, and their definition is free agency, universal suffrage, and aesthetic culture" (126).

sentimental barrenness is that it enables the sentimental reader to fashion Nourmahal into a blank screen, upon which affects and energies can be cathected. Such a transference comes at the cost of shifting a sense of pathos away from more familiar and immediate instances of suffering. Nourmahal's sentimentalization – and the subsequent focal attention placed on the afflicted body of the harem inmate – makes peripheral and subordinate the distressed social dispensations of the individual within the confines of the nation. A colonialist and Suffragist turn to the harem in postbellum literature represents, to a degree, a disengagement from literary sentimentalisms of the antebellum and its politicized interest in the conflated suffering of bodies within the nation and the national body politic.⁴⁹

Confronting this deficiency, *The Storied Sea* revests its focal attention upon the otherwise expunged condition of disenfranchised and overextended American women. In an elaboration of an intended audience, the narrative confronts the “unwritten lives” of its readers, which, “bear a pathos unspeakable, – they have buried the early wishes, hopelessly cherished, now ineffably dead, like the memory of dead children” (15). Individual human tragedies, when taken together, form an imagined community of the dispossessed:

There are thousands of women who are living and will die before long in narrow ruts who long to see the world, but cannot look beyond the limits of their own State, except with others' eyes. Sunburnt, flat-chested, high-shouldered farmers wives, who, from rosy youth to wrinkled age, vibrate between nursery and kitchen; patient women, with hard hands and soft hearts, whose unwritten lives bear a pathos unspeakable... Their biographies are forever unwritten; only the seer, looking below the surface can guess what still, deep currents ebb and flow beneath the moveless calm. No wonder the insane asylums are recruited from the farm-houses. (14-15)

Not localizing a sentimental appeal to individual bodies, *The Storied Sea* sentimentally evokes its readership *en masse*, placing emphasis upon those otherwise

⁴⁹ See Samuels, 3-5.

omitted in representations of the Other. Contrary to the eastern Mediterranean's metaphorical state of literary aqueousness that bespeaks its textual overabundance, the metaphorical aqueousness of an intended readership of *The Storied Sea* invites associations of watery submersion and concealment. The fluidity with which the harem is overwritten comes at the expense and inundation of the overwhelmed American woman, struggling in the demographic and economic shadow of the Civil War. Literarily and civically, she goes unrepresented.⁵⁰

Sentimentalizing Mary

In the wake of the crisis of philosophy brought about by characters' confrontation with the interpolative distortions and simulations of Nourmahal, antidotal moments in Susan Wallace's literary oeuvre resort to the heavily sentimentalized and heavily reproduced simulacra of a figure, formerly ritualized, whose historical referent is out of reach: Mary of Nazareth. Against the backdrop of critical protests against Protestant Marian appropriation in the 19th century, Wallace investigates the political freighting of the Marian reproductions of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In Wallace's interpretation, the adoption and application of iconic Marian symbology to temporal causes and contexts serves as an ideological anti-colonial counterweight to corrupted colonialist deployments of the anti-iconic sentimental figuration of Nourmahal.

In the epistolary chapter entitled "Letter from Dresden" in Wallace's travelogue *Along the Bosphorus* (1898), the narrator observes a copyist attempting to

⁵⁰ The book is also "not for women with health, wealth ease, who in evenings have only to sit in a too easy chair and watch the firelight play on diamonds" (13-4).

repaint Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto. The painter is saddled, however, with the anxieties of a self-conscious, second-guessing amanuensis:

A thin little woman had her canvas set up before it, and using the license allowed in European galleries I dared to look over her shoulder. She was struggling with a task beyond her power. The likenesses were good, but then I realized, as never before, the immeasurable distance which may lie between an original and a copy; a portrait and the object reproduced, the distance between a dead statue and a spiritualized something that suggested or sat for it. I felt very sorry for the pale little woman. It was brave in her to attempt the copy, and she will work over it so long, so long, and then fail, and some day awake to the consciousness that it is a failure. (283)

This tableau is presented in the form of an anonymous letter anonymously addressed, postdated in the header to 1884 (roughly the time of the end of Lew Wallace's embassy and a return trip home). Susan Wallace's "Letter from Dresden" fashions itself in the style of Stowe's critique of the Sistine Madonna, presented in epistolary form, in the second volume of *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (1854) – a European travelogue consisting of local color sketches, presented through anonymously addressed letters and journal entries.⁵¹

In *Sunny Memories*, the "art-pilgrim" narrator approaching the Sistine Madonna steels herself for disappointment, based in the overblown and hyper-reverential treatments of guidebook authors and art critics (340). The narrator writes:

My expectations had been so often disappointed, that my pulse was somewhat calmer. Nevertheless, the glowing eulogiums of these celebrated artists could not but stimulate anticipation... Trembling with eagerness, I looked up. Was that the picture...The source of this disappointment was the thin and added appearance of the coloring, which at first suggested to me the idea of a water-colored sketch. It had evidently suffered barbarously in the process of cleaning... Then as to conception and arrangement, there was much which annoyed me. (340-1)

⁵¹ The profound anxiety of the artist as amanuensis is reminiscent of the life-long procrastination of the painter and his aging model in Henry James' "The Madonna of the Future" (1873).

The narrator's qualms here echo a broader reaction to the insurgent popularity of appreciative Protestant treatments of Marian artwork, especially those of Raphael, booming in the middle of the 19th century. Chief among detractors, John Ruskin bemoans the social and cultural impacts of historically inaccurate reproductions of Mary.⁵² In *Modern Painters*, Ruskin disparages Raphael's depictions of the Madonna, which switch in the mundane and historically accurate for the super-sacralized and the embellished. They are "the clear and tasteless poison" that "infects with sleep of infidelity the hearts of millions of Christians" (55). In his plea for historical realism, Ruskin adds: "the word 'Virgin' or 'Madonna,' instead of calling up the vision of a simple Jewish girl, bearing the calamities of poverty, and the dishonors of inferior station, summoned instantly the idea of a graceful princess, crowned with gems, and surrounded by obsequious ministry of kings and saints" (49).⁵³ For Ruskin, a venerative quality is lost in portrayal of Mary as regal and divine, rather than disenfranchised, impoverished, and suffering. Akin to the corruptive power of Wallace's Nourmahal, casting Mary as powerful and sanctified deprives her of a sentimental power, which, for Ruskin, misinforms doctrine and religious practice. Ruskin would eventually incorporate Stowe's critique of the Sistine Madonna from *Sunny Memories* into later editions of *Modern Painters*.⁵⁴

⁵² Ruskin's indictment in *Modern Painters* (1843-60) would come to serve as a manifesto for the accordingly named Pre-Raphaelites, who, by their appellation, invoke and aspire to the early Renaissance artwork of the period before Raphael's idealizations could exert any influence over Western tradition. See Smith.

⁵³ Conversely, a Pre-Raphaelite practice of switching in the mundane for the sacred would also be the source of controversy. The low treatment of a high biblical typology, William Holman Hunt's *The Scapegoat* (1854-6) and its "implicit privileging of literal over symbolic," as Lyndsey Smith deem it, caused widespread critical condemnation (38).

⁵⁴ See *Modern Painters*, 55.

In a similar reaction, Mark Twain decries this same moment of simulacral dissonance in *Innocents Abroad* (1869). Ever skeptical of the work of transcription and reproduction, Twain reiterates Ruskin's disdain for the Marian parochialisms among the entirety of Renaissance artists:

These ancient painters never succeeded in denationalizing themselves. The Italian artists painted Italian Virgins, the Dutch Painter Dutch Virgins, the Virgins of the French painters were Frenchwomen – none of them ever put into the face of the Madonna that indescribable something which proclaims the Jewess. (194-5)

Beyond its disparity from an ethnic “real,” the lack of resemblance among the aggregated reproductions of Mary, each varying according to national and idiosyncratic personal inclination, seemingly, for Twain, decertifies all. The incoherence he finds among the mass of Marias in European museums foregrounds his subsequent inability to discern physical resemblances between contemporary inhabitants of Palestine and his own Marian ideal.⁵⁵

The Mary(s) of *Sunny Memories* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

After an initial surge of disappointment, the narrator's attitude toward the Sistine Madonna softens in *Sunny Memories*. Contrary to the “countless catalogue of effeminate inane representations,” Raphael's Madonna is different by virtue of its apparent ethnic accuracy as well as the way in which it faithfully and legibly captures

⁵⁵ As Nourmahal's enforced resemblance to her Orientalist representation has the potential to abet gunboat colonialism, Twain's qualms regarding a likely resemblance between an historical Mary and the present-day Nazarene stem, in part, from the ways that faith authenticated can validate violence. Conversely, “Grimes” (Twain's parody of the gun-happy, Holy Land pilgrim William Cowper Prime) easily discerns a virtual Mary among the modern inhabitants of Palestine. Lampooning Prime's zeal to perceive a physical resemblance, Twain editorializes (with more than a hint of racial prejudice): “We can all believe that the Virgin Mary was beautiful; it is not natural to think otherwise; but does it follow that it is our duty to find beauty in these present women of Nazareth?” (532).

a filial sympathy: “the merits of the figure to my mind, are, first its historic accuracy in representing the dark-eyed Jewish maiden; second, the wonderful fulness and depth of expression thrown into the face; and third, the mysterious resemblance and sympathy between the face of the mother and that of the divine child” (342).

Moreover, Raphael, “is a sacred poet, and his poetry has precisely that trait which Milton lacks – tenderness and sympathy. This picture, so unattractive to the fancy in merely physical recommendations, has formed a deeper part of my inner consciousness than any I have yet seen” (343). In a subsequent episode, Stowe’s narrator is again moved by Peter Paul Ruben’s liberal, embellished Marian interpretation, housed in Antwerp:

Instead of the pale, downcast, or upturned faces, which form the general types of Madonna, he gives her to us, in one painting, as a gorgeous Oriental sultana, leaning over a balcony, with full, dark eye and jeweled turban, and rounded outlines, sustaining on her hand a brilliant parquet. Ludicrous as this conception appears in a scriptural point of view, I liked it because there was life in it; because he had painted it from an internal sympathy, not from a chalky, secondhand tradition. (388)⁵⁶

What emerges among the differently arrayed Madonnas – between the alleged ethnic accuracy and historicity of Raphael’s treatment relative to the doctored ahistoricity of Rubens’ Orientalized rendering – is not the estimation of a painting’s quality of realism, to be valued above all else. Instead, the narrator’s Marianism is distinguished by the intangible expression of an “internal sympathy” – a sympathy between the artist, the object he or she has created, and the beholder – a moment of sentimental communion displaced to the figures within the painting itself.

⁵⁶ Stowe recycles this reaction to Rubens’ Madonna in *The Minister’s Wooing* (1859), conflating the novel’s characters with the Marian icon and the Oriental sultana. In one character’s eyes, Rubens’ Madonna exists, “in opposition of the faded, cold ideals of the Middle Ages... *His* Mary is a superb Oriental sultana, with lustrous eyes, redundant form, jeweled turban” (297). In this passage, correspondence is forged between Rubens’ sensual, re-rendering of Mary and the titular object of the minister’s wooing, Mary Scudder.

The Marian, for Stowe, remains a free-floating signifier. As “its own pure simulacrum,” it is, however, open to meaningful appropriations, as long as those appropriations are understood as imbued with a genuine, indwelling sentimental power, emanating not solely from the object, but also from its perceiver (Baudrillard 6). Reproductions that are baseless can, nevertheless, be faithful. Examining Stowe’s personal guidance by art critic and author Anna Jameson during her excursions to Europe in the 1850s, Kimberly V. Adams observes, “as...Jameson demonstrated, the role of the Virgin Mary (like that of Christ) has been historically multivalent” (97). Sympathetic inspiration for Stowe exists also in immediate, quotidian subject matters. “Would that our American artists would remember that God’s pictures are nearer than Italy,” Stowe writes, “are not God’s works the great models, and is not sympathy of spirit the Master necessary to the understanding of the models?” (347).

I take the narrator’s appeal to American artists in *Sunny Memories*, in part, as reflection and commentary on the politicized re-appropriations of the Marian that occur in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Critics have long noted how the novel resituates decontextualized Marian simulacra in an indigenous cultural context, placing Mary unceremoniously within the peculiar institution of chattel slavery in the United States.⁵⁷ Carla Rineer documents this Marian-Raphaelesque presence in Stowe’s personal art collection. In her Nook Farm, Connecticut home, Stowe displayed four replica paintings of Raphael’s Madonnas as well as paintings of characters from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* rendered in a Raphaelesque style.⁵⁸ Unlike Nourmahal, whose sentimentalization in Western sources conceal the actual political power of her

⁵⁷ Analyses of Stowe’s Marianism-via-Raphael understand the author’s recourse to Catholic iconography and paradigm as a reaction to the absence of empowered women in Calvinist tradition. See, for example, Adams.

⁵⁸ Rineer, 195-7. The reproduced figures from the novel in question are Eliza and her child as well as Eva and Topsy.

referent, the reproduction of the Marian in the characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* instill some portion of political power, sanctity, and status in the powerless enslaved figures of the text. As the copyist of *Along the Bosphorus* struggles with the task of reproducing the Sistine Madonna, the scene tacitly confronts the dissimulations and epistemological barriers preventing the same reformist, sentimental energies that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had managed to arouse domestically, from emanating abroad.

101 Madonnas in *The Storied Sea*

Beyond the dilemma of reproducing one Madonna, *The Storied Sea* duplicates another anecdote – pirated from yet another travelogue of recent memory – that addresses the dilemma of an endlessly reproduced and variegated Mary. This time the predicament of simulacral repetition falls on Raphael himself:

He had painted a hundred Madonnas, and one day he spread a canvas and poured magic colors on his palette for the one hundred and first Holy Mary. Just then a judicious friend, who is never far off, entered the famous studio. ‘What!’ he exclaimed, astonished. Another Madonna?’ Said Raphael, with the rapt gaze which makes his face like the face of the archangel whose name he bears, ‘if all the artists of all the world should spend their lives in painting the Blessed Virgin, they could never exhaust her beauty.’ (12)

This sketch, unattributed in *The Storied Sea*, reproduces (with difference) the opening dedication of George William Curtis’ *A Howadji in Syria* (1852). For Curtis, an acquaintance of Anna Leonowens and an anti-Fourierist Brook Farm refugee, the vignette justifies a re-recounting of the already well-trod subject matter of the Orient.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ For Curtis’ friendship with Leonowens, see Chapter 1. “Raphael, finishing the Sistine Madonna,” Curtis later comments, “is not successful, for her beauty has revealed to him a fairer and an unattainable beauty” (80).

In Wallace's repurposing of yet another *objet trouve* Marian anecdote, divergences that occur in the process of repetitive simulation are not necessarily reflections of manipulation or corruption and they do not necessarily invalidate other reproductions. Instead, different expressions of the thing endlessly reproduced and re-appropriated are presented as tapping into an inexhaustible, infinitely permutable resource. The end result is a vision of a polymorphous meta-Mary who destabilizes a positivist and taxonomizing gaze. The dispersed, spliced vision that falls on the multiplicity of Maries has the power to distribute sympathy and sentiments more broadly and in a more utilitarian manifestation than the fixed scopic regime that sentimentalizes Nourmahal. But while the endless precession of Marian reproductions can be adjusted to serve the representational or counterrepresentational political needs of a particular moment, they must be understood as removed far afield from any original, primary context.

Via these borrowed set pieces regarding the duplication and re-duplication of Mary, I mean to draw attention to the similarities and differences between the simulation of Nourmahal and the simulacra of Mary. In both instances, the process of producing facsimiles opens space for sentimental corruptions. In the epistemological crisis of the harem scene in *The Storied Sea*, sentimentalizing the simulation of Nourmahal, cloistered in a harem in another country, wrongly divests her of political power and significance in her cultural context. Conversely, sentimentalizing the characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* through their alignment and conflation with Marian iconography embeds power where it had been previously thought absent.

In both instances, manipulations of the sentimental in textual reproduction are shown channeling power to and away from the figurations of women represented; they do so always to political effect. Distinction lies in the discursive re-

contextualization of the sentimentalist's *reading in* the Marian to speak to national contexts and the sentimentalist's *reading out* of Nourmahal to speak to foreign ones. Flows of sympathy within the domain of the nation and presumptive flows of sympathy out to the colonial theatre, while both centered around the in-dwelling desires of the perceiving subject, are given vastly different values in *The Storied Sea*.

As a personal encounter with Nourmahal in *The Storied Sea* departs from her simulations in Orientalist and Utilitarian developmentalist discourse, the compensatory textual politics of Nourmahal's sentimentalization emerge. The tutelary role to be played by American Suffragists' in deploying sentiment and sentimental education to alleviate the apathy of the harem is a source of anxiety for the narrator. Even as Suffrage remained catatonic because of its internal divisions, the imagined colonial-sentimental turn in *The Storied Sea* is depicted offering little added leverage toward the cause of winning franchise. Rejecting colonial participation and the complicities it gestures toward, *The Storied Sea* nudges Suffrage toward a posture of anti-colonialism.



Figure 3: Lew Wallace, portrait of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. Photo by author.



Figure 4: "C.L. Muller" (attributed name), "The Turkish Princess/The Arabian Princess." Photo by author.

Chapter 3: “Suffragettes of the Harem”: Internationalism, Impressionism, and Strategies of Sympathy in Demetra Vaka Brown’s *Haremlik*/حرمك

“A trip to the Orient will open up to the American mind how in the past all womankind has been degraded and in some nations left without eternal hope; but as he travels toward the setting sun, he will notice that westward rises a new star of woman’s hope, for your own fair America is in the van, and the whole Eastern world of female slavishness will have to look to your freedom’s stronghold for that light which is destined to lead all womanhood to loftier levels. And so I hope the day will soon come when the vast throng of American women who are wickedly indifferent on the subject, or who are continually talking against it, will see the injury they are doing to ‘their own’ in far-off climes and...that they will understand that every time they speak against woman’s political, ecclesiastical, or educational uplift, they only give one more blow to some poor, downtrodden sister...and every word said by women in favor of suffrage is forming sentiment eventually to revolutionize such Oriental degradation.”

— Lebbeus H. Rogers, *The Kite Trust (A Romance of Wealth)* (1900)

A very brief residence in the Orient convinced me that the women of the East not only do not need, nor do they wish, the sympathy of their sisters of the West, but they profoundly pity us. Indeed they go further: they despise us!

— Rose Eytinge, *The Memories of Rose Eytinge* (1905)

At a time when an Anglo-American Suffragist vanguard campaigned under the burgeoning impression that they might represent their sisters in bondage elsewhere in the world, *The First Secretary* (1907), a novel coauthored by wife-and-husband writing team Demetra Vaka and Kenneth Brown, portrays how impressions might be utterly baffled through suggestion and forced perspective. Attending a soiree thrown by Greek Ottoman elites at an Istanbul residence, Stephen Weir, the titular first secretary to the American ambassador, is spirited away to an inner sanctum of the home, which doubles as a painter’s studio. Once there, his attention is directed at a life-sized portrait of an odalisque, which he finds strikingly realistic. Asked about the quality of the painting, Weir exclaims, “‘paint! I had forgotten it was paint’” (48). As the diplomat attempts to approach the picture, however, his host (the

aspiring portraitist) restrains him, explaining, ““this is the best distance to see it from. I am an impressionist, you know”” (48).

The implication, made through the host’s self-identification as an “impressionist,” riffs on a common complaint leveled at French Impressionism. Weir is presumably poised to surpass the focal threshold within which an Impressionist painting devolves from a representational totality into the disordered patchwork of colors that comprise the image as a whole. Through the viewer’s changing physical proximity and perspective, the Impressionist painting is said to transition from syntactical coherence into the unintelligible blur of its disparate geometrical components.

Returning the next day in an attempt to purchase the painting, Weir is instead confronted with an empty, “heavy plush frame leaned against the wall,” which, it is revealed, had been rented for the occasion (68). To his disbelief, he realizes the subterfuge of what had actually been a *tableau vivant*, in which the real article was swapped in to stand for its supposed simulation – a reverse counterfeiting. In this scene, Impressionism’s purported optical nuances – its indefiniteness and lack of finish when viewed up close – are used to disguise a genuine odalisque, on a brief interlude away from the harem. This orchestrated exchange of gazes in *The First Secretary* initiates the allegory of colonial liberation that ensues. Weir ultimately rescues Rhasneh – the subject of the fake portrait and the novel’s harem-bound Turkish heroine – in order to smuggle her out of the Ottoman Empire. And the couple’s eventual marriage comes at the cost of severely deteriorating diplomatic relations between Washington and the Sublime Porte.

This scene crucially inverts an established leitmotif of visual Orientalism. The Orientalist gaze in harem representation is typically male, penetrative, voyeuristic,

and scopically possesses the harem inmate, an embodiment of passivity, as its focal object. In *The First Secretary*, the gaze is conversely attracted and fixed on the figure of the odalisque by means of her own collusion with an Ottoman Greek interlocutor. Conventions of the Orientalist gaze are hereby updated and reconfigured to accommodate a fantasy of voyeuristic consent and erotic reciprocity between the harem and the heterosexed West. This living harem painting reframes the mute Orientalist artifact as a channel of romantic exchange, rather than a means of presumptive, unilateral representation. The portrait scene from *The First Secretary* deploys a version of impressionism in order to complete its illusion of anti-*trompe-l'œil*. That is to say, the main character is manipulated into an anti-pathetic fallacy and is duped into *not* projecting animacy and affect onto the human subject beheld. The withholding and foreclosure of a Westerner's pathos and sympathy from the space of the harem, while very much against the grain of its historical moment, is a telling preamble to the affective conditions placed upon internationalism in the harem narratives of Demetra Vaka Brown.

The use of the term “impressionist” in *The First Secretary* would have represented, at the time of its 1907 publication, something of a novelty to an American readership. Not until the 1913 Armory Show – the International Exhibition of Modern Art, held in New York – would French Impressionism, along with other new subfields of modernist art, merit some critical and popular reception in the United States.¹ Yet the moniker “impressionist,” to which the French Impressionists are indebted, is derived from the Scottish Enlightenment and, specifically, the

¹ For an account of the Armory Show and its cultural impact in the United States, see Lunday.

philosophy of mind and perception put forth by David Hume. Striking upon the mind with force, intensity, and spontaneity, the Humean impression crucially modifies John Locke's metaphorical notion of a human mind born without precontents, the *tabula rasa* – a formulation Locke borrows from antiquity by way of Medieval Islamic philosophy.

Visual impressionisms of the late-19th and early-20th centuries are frequently characterized as “strategies of inwardness,” as Fredric Jameson deems it, centered around and limited to an individual perceiving subject (2). Andreas Huyssen also characterizes such conventional wisdom regarding works of impressionism and modernism writ large as “autonomous and totally separate from the realms of mass culture and everyday life” and as “the expression of a purely individual consciousness rather than of a *Zeitgeist* or a collective state of mind” (53).² For the British Empiricists, however, questions of how impressions might evoke, fail to evoke, or even mislead human sympathies were of paramount importance in determining the process by which human communities take shape and cohere.³ As this genealogy disrupts impressionism's otherwise firm correlation to the virtuosic expression of a primarily masculine and individualist creative genius, it is tempting to read the impressionisms in Demetra Vaka Brown's memoiristic novel *Haremlik/حرم ملك*: *Some Pages from the Life of Turkish Women* (1909) as gesturing intimately to the thinking of Hume and Locke. Social life in Vaka Brown's harems, after all, often become

² This approach additionally entails interpreting the genesis of Impressionist art through a Eurocentric lens that overlooks its influences and borrowings from various Eastern aesthetic traditions, such as the influence expressed through *japonisme* or via visual Orientalism's various points of contact with Middle Eastern and North Africa visual cultures. See, for one example, Shiff, 84-88.

³ See also Parkes, 5-6.

mired in the erroneous misapplication of sentiments and sympathy among both its Eastern and Western characters.⁴

The fictionalization of a return trip to a homeland (that is not quite home), *Haremlik* re-evaluates the uncertain relation between impression and sympathy at a historical moment in which emerging varieties of Suffragist internationalism increasingly sought to speak for and represent feminists globally. By the turn of the century, a core of Anglo-American Suffrage elites had developed a resolutely globalized ideology, which often prompted Suffragists to place themselves in the rhetorical position of claiming to know and voice the suffering of their sisters in bondage around the globe. The need for proxy representation was most acutely felt, it was believed, among those silenced by the imposition of the harem.

As *Haremlik* has it, this vision of feminist internationalism also entails the global dispersal of a discourse and praxis of Western sentimentality and sympathy, circulating to the extent that it both penetrates and supersedes the discourses and praxes of other national feminisms. Modes and methods of *feeling correctly*, the arrogation of what Vaka Brown calls “that sentimentality which is so colossal in European women,” would ideally usher in an essential psychological and cultural modernity among Turkish feminists (128). But to the contrary, *Haremlik* scripts a profound ambivalence toward the impressionistic cathection of Western sentimentality into the space of the Turkish harem.

Among other things, sentimental diffusions abroad prompt the Eastern suffragists of the novel to adopt a sentimentalized approach and a *correct pathos* regarding the terms and conditions of their own oppression. Their doing so, however,

⁴ The text repeatedly makes use of the title’s rendering in Ottoman Turkish script, incorporating it on both the frontispiece and on page headers.

recapitulates many of the representational misimpressions of the harem accumulated over the long tradition of Western Orientalism. Particularly suspect toward local expropriations of foreign ideologies and modes of activism, *Haremlik* depicts the subversion of Western sentimental forms by Eastern suffragists leading to chimerical modes of protest and resistance.⁵ This clash captures the looming problematics of Anglo-American or Western hegemony in the cause of global suffrage and intuits some of the objections raised by proponents of postcolonial feminism later in the 20th century.

My analysis will focus primarily on two consecutive and related episodes in *Haremlik*. The first entails the narrator's encounter with a former consort of the Ottoman sultan, who paints impressions in the space of the harem, toward whom the narrator plays the role of exasperated instructor in sentimental modernity. Second, I examine a scene involving a collective of Turkish "suffragettes," convening in the space of the harem, who have adopted a model of radical activism that results in the determination of a suicide pact.⁶ In this chapter, I argue that Vaka Brown's recursion to the Enlightenment impression places emphasis on the global, cultural, and corporeal limitations of sympathy and sentiment, misapplied in distinct ways by both

⁵ Lewis (2004), 135.

⁶ Since references in Vaka Brown's oeuvre allude primarily to painterly impressionism, I will avoid reconciling her work to examples of what is considered literary impressionism, in order to prevent any confusion that Vaka Brown writes in this style. Framed in an associative and flowing style that, as critic Maurice Chernowitz explains it, frames details "in the order in which we perceive them, rather than first explaining them in terms of their causes," literary impressionism is equally indebted to British Empiricism (qtd. in Berrong, 205). As the term "literary impressionism" is primarily applied to texts that present details via a chain of "aconceptual sensation," I interpret literary impression as a textualization of Empiricist philosophy in roughly the same way that painterly impressionism attempts to visualize it (Chernowitz, qtd. in Berrong, 204). The term impressionism was first applied to literature in 1883. Kronegger, 24.

Eastern and Western internationalists in *Haremlik*. For the ways it parallels the impressionisms of Vaka Brown and for his family ties to American Pragmatism, the literary output of Henry James from this period also helps to contextualize Vaka Brown's Empiricist influences.

Demetra Vaka Brown and Travelling Impressions

Impressions, often by necessity, comprise the currency of the barely familiar. A rhetorical staple of travel writing, impressions are interjected into narrative as a subtle disclaimer and hedge against the inaccuracies of the cultural novice. As an alternative to point-of-fact, local knowledge of place and culture, a narrator occupying one spot too briefly or hastily will readily admit that his or her description is nothing more credible than a *series of impressions gathered*. Accordingly, the impression is the basis of representation that will be extrapolated out and serve as placeholder for vast swathes of whole cultures.⁷

Even for the repatriating expatriate, whose former indigeneity and bygone local expertise would conceivably allow for some dim familiarities, the tenuous-yet-pivotal role of the impression persists. The disoriented repatriating native son who serves as the narrator of Henry James' *The American Scene* (1907) finds himself both beset by and forced to make do with a broad assortment of impressions.⁸ Subjected,

⁷ For example, John Davies' *First Impressions: A Series of Letters from France, Switzerland and Savoy* (1835); Dumas père's *Impressions of Travel, in Egypt and Arabia Petræa* (1839); Monier Monier-Williams' *Modern India and the Indians: Being a Series of Impressions, Notes, and Essays* (1878); Zeyneb Hanoum's *A Turkish Woman's European Impressions* (1913), and so on.

⁸ Notwithstanding his suspicions, the narrator's initial motive for expatriation was occasioned by a search for new impressions: "It was 'Europe' that had, in very ancient days, held out to the yearning young American some likelihood of impressions more numerous and various and of a higher intensity than those he might gather on the native scene" (351).

on faintly recollected native soil, to an “eternal handicap” and a “bad habit of receiving through almost any accident of vision more impressions than you know what to do with,” the narrator likens his received sensations to “india-rubber” for their “elasticity”:

The matter of interest, however, is just this fact that its thinness should so generally – in some cases, to all intents and purposes, so richly – suffice; suffice, that is, for producing unaided, impressions of a sort that make their way to us in “Europe” through superimposed densities, a thousand thicknesses of tradition...the fond observer...is by his very nature committed everywhere to his impression – which means essentially, I think, that he is foredoomed, in one place as in another, to “put in” a certain quantity of emotion and reflection. (309-10)

Rashly collected impressions – generalized out (“imputed and projected”), spread thin, and infused with past preconceptions – are inevitably made to “suffice” and surrogate the whole (309). Writing from Richmond, Virginia, this transactional phenomenon appears to intensify for James’ narrator, according to expectation and confirmed by experience, after crossing the cultural and ideological faultline that is the Mason-Dixon Line.⁹ Beyond the likelihood of their overextension, impressions are unavoidably in danger of the corruptive influence of personal and parochial bias.¹⁰

Much like James’ “fond observer,” the narrator in the memoiristic work of Demetra Vaka Brown frequently writes from the vertiginous position of disoriented repatriate, forced to reconcile her bygone experiences to an estranged culture that is

⁹ “It was in respect to the South, meanwhile, at any rate, that the calculation had really been fondest – on such a stored, such a waiting provision of vivid images, mainly beautiful and sad, might one surely there depend. The sense of these things would represent for the restless analyst, more than that of any other, intensity of impression” (352-3).

¹⁰ Another painterly impressionism in James’ narratives of repatriation that I would be remiss not to mention is the 1883 quasi-Orientalist short story “Impressions of a Cousin” (1883). The story is written from the impressionistic perspective of a painter returning to New York from Europe and chronicles her dealings with the mysterious “Mr. Caliph,” who is repeatedly said to resemble “Haroun-al-Raschid” (90).

itself in the midst of radical transformation. Recognized by the magazine publishing her untitled, posthumous autobiography in 1951 as “America’s eminent writer of Greek descent,” Demetra Vaka was born in 1877, a citizen of the Ottoman Empire, on the island of Prinkipo (*Büyükkada*), located in the Sea of Marmora (*Marmara Denizi*) (AT 12.1 27).¹¹ Immigrating to New York in 1895, she met Kenneth Brown, and the two were married in 1904 in Charlottesville, Virginia – Brown’s hometown. The couple resided in Charlottesville briefly, living in a district known as the Ragged Mountains.¹² Through her marriage, Vaka Brown claims personal ties to the Suffrage Movement in the United States, maintaining, in her autobiography, that she herself had a personal acquaintance with AWSA-affiliated Suffragist Julia Ward Howe, who is identified as, “a close friend of my mother-in-law, when the two were crusading for women’s rights” (31.1 52). I could find no records regarding the Suffrage advocacy of Kenneth Brown’s mother, identified as “Caroline Frothingham (Morrill) Brown” in a 1911 Harvard alumni directory (30). A native of Belfast, Maine, Brown was, according to her death certificate, age 95 when she passed away in March 1932, while residing in Charlottesville.

Beginning in the first decade of the 20th century, Demetra Vaka and Kenneth Brown would enjoy a formidable literary partnership, coauthoring the above-mentioned *The First Secretary; Sirocco* (1906, another novelization of a harem rescue

¹¹ Lewis, (2004), 134-6.

¹² *Athene* 12.4, 14. There are a scant handful of records at the Albermarle County Historical Society indicating either the presence of the Demetra Vaka and Kenneth Brown or the actual geographical location of their residence, referred to by Vaka Brown as “West Cairns” (AT 12.3, 23) See Catalogue of the A.P. Bibb and Company Real Estate and Insurance, 1902, 2; also Interview Charles E. Moran of Mabel A. Talley (1987) 4, 7.

choreographed by an American male); and *The Duke's Price* (1910).¹³ Vaka Brown would eventually step out of her husband's shadow in her first solo effort, *Haremlik*, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1909.¹⁴ An evident success, *Haremlik* had, by 1913, been translated into French, Dutch, and German. The book would continue to sell, by Vaka Brown's estimate, for the next three decades.¹⁵

Unlike Anna Leonowens' staunch assertions of her narrator's Englishness, the cultural identity of Vaka Brown's narrator is more conspicuously left open to transnational ambiguity. A narrative of her childhood in the Ottoman Empire and subsequent immigration to the United States, Vaka Brown's 1914 autobiography, *A Child of the Orient*, for example, captures her overt self-exoticization. Prompted by immigration and marriage – and, in a way, reflecting the uncertainty of her consequent cultural identity – she would publish under a variety of marginally different and increasingly parenthetical pen names over the course of her career. Vaka Brown is credited, for example, on the title page of *Haremlik* as “Demetra Vaka (Mrs. Kenneth Brown),” and the novel's copyright is held by “Demetra Kenneth Brown.” A subsequent Houghton Mifflin volume, *In the Shadow of Islam* (1911) records the author's name as “Demetra Vaka (Mrs. Kenneth-Brown),” and copyright is held by “Demetra Vaka Kenneth-Brown.”¹⁶

¹³ Dedicated “to my Greekling,” *Sirocco* would initially be attributed to Kenneth Brown, and Demetra Vaka is given a byline retrospectively. See, for example, the title page of *The First Secretary*.

¹⁴ Vaka Brown recalls, in the lead-up to the Houghton Mifflin publication of *Haremlik*, personally meeting, Thomas Wentworth Higginson; Julia Ward Howe; and Anna Leonowens' former mentor, “Mrs. James Fields,” i.e. Annie Adams Fields, on an excursion to Boston (*Athene* 31.1, 52).

¹⁵ *Athene* 13.1, 52.

¹⁶ For the sake of clarity and consistency, I will henceforth refer to the author as Demetra Vaka Brown.

Vaka Brown's personal politics, to the extent to which she reveals them over the course of her career, also regularly appear to be of two worlds, alternating political mindsets between cosmopolitanism and a deep-rooted sectionalist loyalty, not only to her Ottoman Greek heritage but, through marriage, to an adopted Lost Cause ideology. For Vaka Brown, her Greekness and her espoused Southernness intermingle per force of their evident parallels. "As the daughter of a race which had suffered recent defeat, I felt sympathy for the Southern side, even though my critical faculty told me that it was best for the South to be defeated," Vaka Brown writes, "to me the carpetbaggers were no better than the Turks" (AT 12.2 23).

Despite Vaka Brown's ties to Houghton Mifflin and her acknowledged personal acquaintance with Annie Adams Fields, she takes a jaundiced attitude toward the transformational social changes effected by Harriet Beecher Stowe.¹⁷ In *A Child of the Orient*, she describes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as one of three sources for information on America, regarding it as "the book which makes European children form a distorted idea of the American people, and sentimentalize over a race hardly worth it" (255). Elsewhere, she identifies herself as an "ardent internationalist" – referring here to internationalism in its general sense – and declares, "since internationalism alone can save our civilization, each nation should learn the better qualities of the others" (AT 12.2 26). Bemoaning the segregated Ottoman Empire of her childhood within an increasingly militant Ottoman Greek minority, Vaka Brown reflects in *A Child of the Orient*, "it is almost unbelievable that for upward of four hundred years we should have lived side by side, ignorant of each other's history and positively refusing to learn of each other's good qualities" (36). Vaka Brown's

¹⁷ AT 31.1 52.

lifelong vacillation between ethnic parochialism and egalitarianism speak, in ways, to rising crosscurrents of internationalism and nationalism at the turn of the century.

Internationalism and Global Sympathies

During roughly the same period which saw Vaka Brown's immigration to the United States, British and American Suffragists, resorting to a rhetoric of modern awakenings, began to exhort their sisters around the planet to shed various national and cultural provincialisms in order to embrace a movement that was to be global in perspective and approach. Such a conceptualization of a feminist worldwide community was devised and promoted even as the concretization of various ethnic nationalisms portended global conflict. Western feminism had always, to some degree, been globally minded in ideology. By as early as the 1870s, however, a "realization of internationalism in the spirit of suffrage" had begun to give rise to a variety of transnationalized practices, including the incorporation of international organizations, the convening of international conferences, increased international travel by suffragists, and the forming of collaborative partnerships among like-minded activists of diverse nationalities (Bolt 15).¹⁸ Prominent internationalist organizations from this era include the NWSA/WCTU-backed International Council of Women (ICW) in 1888; the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in 1904, which would become the International Alliance of Women (IAW); and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in 1915. A notable example of Suffragists' broadened international mobility, Carrie Chapman Catt embarked in 1911 upon a two-year, round-the-world tour, accompanied by Dr. Aletta Jacobs. For Catt, the once and future NAWSA president, the trip would include encounters with

¹⁸ Rupp, 4.

Mohandas Gandhi, then living in South Africa, and, evidently, with Egyptian feminist Hoda Sha'arawi (هدى شعراوي).¹⁹ In a period marked by the mounting presence of violence in the male-controlled sphere of international and colonial politics, feminist internationalists could and did encourage women's presence and increased involvement in global affairs, including expanded advocacy efforts by women on behalf of international peace.²⁰

Internationalization, as it turned out, involved both the intellectual work of inventing a tentative global community of feminists and then shouldering the burden of its leadership. International Suffrage would be helmed, it was understood, by a vanguard of Anglo-American elites, whose activism supplied a progressive model to be assimilated by women of other countries and cultures. As Christine Bolt observes, it was not until the 1960s that Western feminists, who had previously "assumed that they could speak and set the agenda for all women," came to realize that "the sisterhood of women could not be taken for granted, as it largely had been by their feminist predecessors in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries" (1).²¹

Like their feminist forerunners, Western internationalists lavished attention upon detailing the experience of the harem inmate, as they imagined it, for the ways it resembled and indexed their own oppression. As Fiona Paisley observes: "Interest in liberating Oriental women has been a founding feature of Euro-American international feminism" (qtd. in Forestell & Moynagh 5). For internationalists, the lot

¹⁹ For a description of the meeting with Gandhi, see Van Voris 88-9. For Catt's relationship with Sha'arawi, see Aletta Jacobs, 226; Lanfranchi, 92, 132.

²⁰ Efforts at brokering international peace would continue even during – and in spite of – the outset of the First World War. See Bolt, 17.

²¹ And as Meyda Yegenoglu facetiously claims, "allegedly, it is Western feminists who have, with their achievements of freedom, inspired and prepared the ground for the liberation of Oriental women" (*SF* 86). See also Lewis & Mills, 4.

of the woman incarcerated in the harem, like their own, was soon destined to change. As one American, allegedly married into and then liberated from a Turkish harem, boasts in a 1915 newspaper interview: “enlightenment is fast coming to the far east. Why even the principles of suffrage are sifting in between the carefully guarded shutters of the Oriental harems. The women are beginning to wake up to what they have been missing.”²² An article in *The Duluth News Tribune*, entitled “Suffrage Ideas Are Taken up by the Women of Egypt and Japan,” comprehends a growing number of Eastern women as ready “converts to the doctrines of their more progressive and freer sisters.” The vision of incorporating feminists of all nations into a consolidated planetwide front allowed Suffragists to frame their arguments on behalf of franchise in broadened rhetorical terms. A bigger umbrella meant that the varieties of oppression women faced, regardless of their diverse cultural manifestations, could be understood as universally analogous and intersectional. The silences ostensibly enforced upon the inhabitants of the harem provided further inducement for Western Suffragists to characterize, by way of compensation and never apolitically, the suffering of the subaltern obscured by harem walls.

In fairness, Suffragists’ comparative appraisals about the conditions of women in various cultures are hardly monolithic during this era, even occasionally casting Western women in a position of relative disadvantage. Catt’s dispatches from her round-the-world tour bear a distinct attitude of cultural relativism. Reporting on “women’s awakening in the East,” Catt grants that, while the majority of Asian women live in a state of oppression, there are striking exceptions (qtd. in Rupp 76). “We are finding that there are other millions who have always enjoyed more personal

²² “American Wife of Turkish Prince Who Fled From Palace Tells Of Harem Life.”

freedom than was accorded to most European women a century ago,” Catt contends, “and more than is now permitted to thousands of women under our boasted Western civilization” (qtd. in Rupp 76-7).²³

While ecumenicalism among suffragists did enable the open exchange and circulation of ideas, to a degree, the foundation upon which Western internationalists spoke by proxy and rationalized their pretense to leadership was, however, unstable; the basis of representation was more complex and subject to cultural nuance. “Ideally, no boundaries separated women from all continents of the earth,” writes Leila Rupp regarding the ICW, the IWSA, and the WILPF, yet “despite grand pronouncements of universality, obstacles to the equal participation of all groups of women belied the global ambitions of the three organizations, creating a movement of predominantly elite, Christian, older women of European origin” (51).²⁴ Notwithstanding stated egalitarian beliefs and aims, the tentative hierarchical internationalist arrangement, for its resemblances, threatened to emulate and recapitulate colonial, racial, and Orientalist global hegemonies.

Beyond an expectation that non-Western women would unhesitatingly and accurately replicate Western Suffragist ideology and modes of activism, internationalism was to be a network formation animated by a nexus of mutually held sympathies, crisscrossing the planet. A unified global Suffragist establishment was to be founded upon and underwritten by a uniform code of sentiment and sympathetic

²³ See also, Coomaraswamy.

²⁴ As Christine Bolt also remarks of this trend in internationalism, which “reflected rather than challenged the dominance of British and American feminism by white middle-class women” (16). Nascent feminist movements and intellectual awakenings in other countries are often implicitly characterized as being occasioned by a Western suffragist example. Even developmentalist models characterizing feminist awakenings as mutually independent of each other take for granted that the echelon of Suffrage in the West as being the farthest advanced and, therefore, superior.

cross-identification, to be enjoined by and shared among all suffragists. It would be a “golden cable of sympathy,” as Finnish suffragist Maria Alexandra “Alli” Trygg deems it, addressing the inaugural meeting of the ICW, at its conference held in Washington, D.C. in 1888 (427).²⁵

The direction in which the bulk of sympathy would flow seems, nevertheless, to be the source of some subtle dissension. Speaking immediately after Trygg at the same conference, Zerelda Wallace’s speech on this occasion, invoking a global “tree of liberty,” sentimentally “watered by the tears of women and the blood of men,” sown in the United States and “reverberating around the globe,” is detailed in Chapter 2 (428). Concluding the conference, Elizabeth Cady Stanton elaborates on the metaphorical current and flow of sympathies:

It needs but little philosophy to see that in proportion as the circle of woman’s sympathy extends itself beyond the family to her neighborhood, her State, her country, and the world, will she inspire the men of her family with broader views as to the scope of government, as to all national and international questions. (433- 434)

Trygg, Wallace, and Stanton each erect different imagined paradigms. Trygg’s metaphor of sympathy indicates mutual aid and exchange; Cady Stanton’s and Wallace’s are clearly more unilateral and suggest outward emanation from an established center. The disparate ways in which this first generation of internationalists variously envision flows of sympathy and its reciprocities forebode the impending emergence of internal hierarchy and its looming condescensions.

For non-Western feminists at the turn of the century, the issue of whether local efforts at reform would follow precedent set in the West or take their own, unique

²⁵ See also Margaret McFadden’s book bearing the same name, which explores the history of feminist internationalism around the turn of the century.

path, remained ambiguous.²⁶ Consensus among Ottoman women, in particular, surrounding whether to embrace tradition or emulate various iterations of Western modernity, remained well out of reach.²⁷ Yet, the prospect of having their voices surrogated by their Western counterparts hardly went unchallenged by Eastern feminists and their Western allies. In a growing number of English-language publications in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Eastern feminists – progressively more familiar with the West, its customs, and cultural nuances – offer vocal clarifications on a number of Orientalist mainstays, especially with regard to gender and cultural practices surrounding harem/haram. According to Reina Lewis and Nancy Micklewright:

For educated, elite Middle Eastern women, the opportunity to publish accounts of their lives provided a chance to correct the Western stereotypes that not only blighted their individual dealing with Westerners but also, as they and their male counterparts were acutely aware, informed Western foreign and imperial policy. (1-2)

While some realization of the representational dilemmas involved in a globally tiered international apparatus was slow in coming among a Western feminist vanguard, there were, in the first decades of the 20th century, no shortage of cautions against it.

“The Gift-Wife”

A novelization of Vaka Brown’s return trip to the Ottoman in 1901, *Haremlik* profiles a set of harem-bound Turkish women during the waning years of the Sublime Porte. Visiting the homes of childhood friends, the narrator of *Haremlik* has free reign, familiarity, and fluency within the novel’s haremspaces. Her access is nevertheless thoroughly intermingled with a newfound fetishistic curiosity, acquired

²⁶ See Lewis & Micklewright, 10-12.

²⁷ See Lewis (2007), ii.

in the United States. As one contemporary reviewer puts it in 1918, the narrator, “equipped with a new and American point of view...entered Turkish harems as a welcome visitor from whom there need be no secrets” (Overton 286). Vaka Brown’s narrator speaks from a subjective position of cultural informant and intimate outsider, to borrow Mary Roberts’ expression, whose familiarity, in spite of her ethnic otherness and expatriation, permits her to penetrate and then exoticize the cultural formations of her country of origin (which is not quite a homeland).

Despite Vaka Brown’s (and the narrator’s) comparatively brief six-year hiatus, the narrative is preoccupied with an expectation of the time-honored and the traditional, especially as an ongoing program of reform/modernization/Westernization then taking place in the Ottoman signaled future cultural and political upheaval. The recent sea changes of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 and the deposition of Abdul Hamid II in 1909, by the time of the novel’s publication in 1909, ironize the narrator’s anticipation of the nostalgic in *Haremlik*. Revolution in Turkey foreshadowed, among other things, the further fragmentation of what was formerly an intranational ethnic plurality (albeit a hegemonic one) into separate nations, reconfigured along blurry ethnic and geographic dividing lines, which were anything but clear-cut and fully demarcated. It is difficult to make sense of the stark lack of ethnic tensions and unpoliced ethnic boundaries of *Haremlik*, given their ample treatment elsewhere in Vaka Brown’s oeuvre, except as a memorialization of the cultural plurality being gradually abandoned in the Ottoman Empire, to be exchanged for ethnic cleansings and forced removals.

A chapter of *Haremlik*, “The Gift-Wife From the Sultan’s Palace,” recounts the narrator’s visit to the apartments of the third wife of “Selim Pasha,” a general in the cadre of the Ottoman Sultan. Aishe Hanoum (whose name translates formally to

“Lady Life”) is identified and exposited parenthetically as “a former *Seraigli* (one who has been an inmate of the Imperial palace)” (101). The narrative provides an explanation for her unfortunate social dispensation: “when the Sultan of Turkey particularly desired to honor one of his pashas, he presented him with one of the beautiful women who adorned his palace and who had not yet become his wife. I also knew that, according to Mussulman etiquette, the pasha had to free her and make her his wife” (96). Discharged from the sultan’s harem to assume the position of least-favored wife of a pasha, “this poor lady” is both “wife and no wife” (96). An apparent victim of Oriental despotism in its extreme, Aishe’s abject situation verges on familial and social death. Her utter reduction and hybridity-with-thingness implied through her appellation as “gift-wife” literally objectifies Aishe as a commodity of exchange in traditional masculinist Ottoman protocol.

Aishe’s casting off and dire personal circumstances, in fact, echo Abdul Hamid’s own deposition as sultan and the disbanding of his imperial harem in 1909. The virtual dissolution of the Ottoman sultanate had produced, by late in the year, something of a unique refugee crisis, which received special attention in American media.²⁸ Excerpting a large portion of *Haremlik*, a *Lexington Herald* (Kentucky) article, entitled “Sad Days for the Harem,” wryly celebrates the unseating of monarchies in Persia, Morocco, and Turkey by chronicling the whereabouts of their dispersed former harems. Conveying more than a little *schadenfreude* at the comeuppance facing toppled despots, done away with by “progress and the familiar instrument called revolution,” the article reports that Abdul Hamid lives in exile, “with only a poor baker’s dozen of those lawfully wedded ladies to bear him

²⁸ Adbul Hamid’s successor to the sultanate, Mehmet V, is largely regarded as nothing more than a figurehead, firmly under the control of the Young Turks. See Yanikdag, 475; Ford, 7.

company.” Glossing over the political turmoil that has likely ensued in these nations and its human costs, focus is instead heaped upon the emancipated odalisques, “turned loose for the world to stare at.”

Six of Abdul Hamid’s former consorts are reported to have joined “vaudeville,” and are currently “appearing in Vienna music halls.” Others have been integrated into London high society. Noting that “probably no class of women in the world are so little able to care for themselves as are these royal harem women, trained from childhood to a definite routine under harem-keepers,” the article claims that a concerted humanitarian effort has been initiated to resettle the evacuees of the imperial harem. Concerning the women’s related reintegration back into their biological families and society, the article states: “Turkish officials under the new regime made every effort to provide for the discarded ladies of the late Sultan’s harem.”²⁹

“Sad Days for the Harem” applies a fish-out-of-water narrative to Abdul Hamid’s now emancipated odalisques, who are, as the piece has it, the simultaneous beneficiaries and victims of a globally felt current of revolutionary modernity. Like her former fellow inmates, forced, in the aftermath of revolutionary “progress,” to emigrate and take up modern vocations, Aishe has found a novel means of occupying time. The narrator discovers the gift-wife, “kneeling before an easel, deep in work”; “a charming pastel” sits before her (97; 98). When pressed by her guest, Aishe produces “a large portfolio, containing several pastels and water-colors” (99).

²⁹ Their objectification in the East so long chastised by Western sources, these emancipated women are immediately subjected to commodification in the west: “No longer need you risk your life penetrating the alluringly fabled region behind the grilled doors in quest of romance or information. You don’t need to go to the ladies of royal harems – they will come to you... Who wants Lot No. 1...?”

Almost reflexively, Aishe tenders a series of disclaimers about the nature of her artistic practice. In doing so, she indemnifies herself from being found in transgression of the prohibition against figuration and iconism in Islamic aesthetics – along with the earthly vanities it would imply. The terms in which Aishe frames this traditionalist apologia, however, implicate the modern. Aishe’s art, in her own words, is not a serious, high-minded artisanal pursuit but merely an idle past time: “I am not an artist. I only play with the colors”; it is “not painting, just playing” (99; 98). More importantly, Aishe rationalizes her art by identifying it as strictly non-representational or, at least, not fully representing an object holistically or in a manner symptomatic of visual realism: “it is only an *impression*, not a reproduction of one of Allah’s realities” (italics Vaka Brown’s, 98).

The narrator’s reaction to Aishe’s painting approaches shock or, as she puts it, “surprise at meeting with such disregard of Mussulman customs in this orthodox household... Good Mussulmans do not believe in ‘reproducing Allah’s realities’” (98). “Even orthodox Moslems,” the narrator editorializes, “were not above beating the devil round the stump” (98). The bygone American colloquialism, “to beat the devil around the stump,” most closely resembles, “to beat around the bush,” and means, in other words, to equivocate or use evasive language.³⁰ The sense in which this expression is used by the narrator suggests that Aishe is more supplying an euphemistic and expedient justification for her art, rather than exploiting a viable theological loophole. The incongruity encapsulated in the narrator’s application of a heavy American vernacularism to describe Aishe’s breaking of Islamic cultural and

³⁰ For contemporary use of this phrase, see, for example, Ingersol, where it is used as a byword for “evasive and shifting criticism” (209)

religious injunction parallels the cultural incongruity of Aishe's own nominally European painterly production.

In fact, Aishe's implicit justification is in keeping with a formulation of a singular reality and unity of existence frequently put forth in strains of classical Islamic philosophy. Detailing the 'oneness of existence' expounded by the highly influential 12th-century Sufi philosopher Ibn al'Arabi (بن العربي), for example, Maḥdī Ḥā'irī Yazdī comments:

This doctrine is based upon the proposition that the whole reality of existence and that which really exists (al-wujud wa al-mawjud) are absolutely one and the same, and that all the multitude in the world of reality, whether they be sensory or intellectual, are merely "illusory," playing in our minds as the second image of an object plays in the eyes of a squint-eyed person. (22)

In this interpretation, to paint a feeble impression from a particular subjective vantage point is to record something extrinsic to the unity of reality and being that emanates from God alone. By not recreating an "authentic" rendition of reality, as it were, Aishe's dodge provides a means of skirting unwanted attention.³¹ The blurriness and non-definition of Aishe's impressionism, which never attempts an aesthetic gestalt, affords her artistic safe haven against the proscriptions of an Islamic orthodoxy.

The narrator's willful anticipation for the traditional and her astonishment at custom-interrupted smack of a feigned naiveté. The open secret of connoisseurship of Continental fine art among the Ottoman elite would have resembled, by that time, something of an established fact, especially given widely reported accounts of Abdul Hamid's affection for European painting – shared by his predecessor to the Ottoman throne, Sultan Abdulaziz – briefly detailed in Chapter 2. That a former consort of this

³¹ See also Leaman, 3-5.

particular sultan practices a European style of visual art should come as no great surprise to a narrator who styles herself both as cosmopolitan and cultural insider.³²

Much like the scene from *The First Secretary* described above, Aishe's painting inverts a long-crystallized representational paradigm of gender, culture, and agency, in the interlinked visual imaginaries of both Orientalism and modernism (including Impressionist painting). Women's bodies were the paradigmatic text upon which masculine Western modernity was to be written and thereby colonized.³³ Habitually the eroticized, passive focal object of the painterly gaze, Aishe has the means and opportunity to effect some artistic counter-representation of her own. Through painting, she could conceivably militate against the Orientalist motif that inevitably fashions the odalisque as intellectually comatose, a result of a lifetime dwelt in the idleness of the harem's sensorial and psychological deprivations. This inversion of stock representational roles and focal vantages gives the reader (and Brown's narrator, we will find) pause to anticipate the ways in which Aishe's artistic practice might enable or contribute to a strategy of resistance against the terms of her social marginalization, objectification, and subalternity. Her art could potentially entail a form of expression that not only communicates a critique of her own oppression within her own culture, but challenges long-standing Western Orientalist misrepresentations and the politicized discourses such depictions help to substantiate. Means and opportunity, the narrator finds to her dismay, do not necessarily equate with her anticipated course of action.

³² The narrator makes note briefly of other intimations of Aishe's seemingly contradictory cosmopolitanism. Upon greeting, Aishe "offered to shake hands, instead of using the *temena*, the Turkish form of salutation." For the narrator, this "struck me as curious...since I knew her to be extremely punctilious in the customs of her nation" (98).

³³ For an examination of women's role as the focal objects of modernist art, see Katz.

Impressionism(s)

Placing these political considerations aside for the moment, Aishe practices a form of art, in so far as it is revealed by the text, with many of the trappings of French Impressionism. Whether she identifies her artistic method as a transcultural borrowing of European influences, consciously or otherwise, remains unenumerated in *Haremlik*. The lack of finish and improvisation implied in Aishe's work of "playing" and "not painting" is resonant with the blur and lack of definition often alleged of the Impressionists. Resemblance resurfaces in Aishe's choice of media: pastel and watercolor.

Chief among similarities, however, is a shared objective of recording, in painting, nothing more than a singular, ephemeral impression. To put it another way, both the French Impressionists and Aishe's school-of-one in the harem eschew representational realism and the depiction of high historical subject matter in order to purportedly capture an evanescent moment of bare perception surrounding a quotidian subject matter. What is laid on canvas is, in theory, unmediated and unembellished by subsequent cognitive processes.

The concept of the impression – and the Impressionists' subsequent interest in capturing it on canvas – originates with David Hume's modifications to the thinking of John Locke. Discussed primarily in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), Hume envisions the contents of the mind ultimately being composed over time through the reception of impressions (a term he occasionally uses interchangeably with "sentiments"), arising from both

internal and external stimuli.³⁴ The impression, for Hume, is broadly denominated as “all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul” – it is, in other words, a blanket term for all quanta of perception acquired by the sensorium (*TR* 1). Henry James, in his essay “The Art of Fiction” (1884), condenses the Humean mantra most concisely and imparts a sense of the term’s heft: “if experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe” (389). Impressions can be differentiated from “other species” of thought and reason, “by their different degrees of force and vivacity,” as well as the “liveliness with which they strike upon the mind and make their way into our thought or consciousness” (*EN* 18; *TR* 1).

The concept of the striking sense-impression would enter into French thought most directly through Hume’s direct contact and friendship with Jean Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, and Jean D’Alembert.³⁵ D’alembert reproduces Hume in his preliminary discourse to the 1751 *Encyclopedie*, “all our knowledge is ultimately reduced to sensations that are approximately the same in all men” (31). Studying the non-cognitive, biophysical interactions of the senses with what they perceive, French psychophysicists of the mid-19th century were drawn to Hume’s conceit of the impression, to the extent that it represented what Stephen Eisenman describes as the stuff of “unmediated sensory experience” (150). Interest in the impression among psychophysicists is distinguishable from Hume’s, in that their rendition concentrated on the surface mechanics of the biological process, liminal to

³⁴ As in, for example, “every idea is copied from some preceding impression or sentiment” (*Enquiry* 78)

³⁵ The prior influence in France of the Lockean impression is also a factor. The term “impression” is generously incorporated into Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopedie* (1751-72). See Mossner, 477-80; Riskin, 1.

consciousness, by which perceptions are initially imprinted upon sense receptors.³⁶ Psychophysiologist Emile Littré defines the impression in his *Dictionnaire* (1866), as “the more or less pronounced effect which exterior objects make upon the sense organs” (qtd. in Eisenman 150). This understanding of the term became assimilated within the French art world in the 1870s. An Impressionist painting was therefore understood to have the aim of representing an undoctored burst of sense data and the “colored patchwork that it was believed constituted unreflective vision” (Eisenman, 150). Accordingly, the thing represented in a work of Impressionism was not the object itself but a momentary glimmer of the object; as art critic Jules Castagnary explained, “they are *Impressionists* in the sense that they render not the landscape but the sensation produced by the landscape” (qtd in Eisenman, 150).

Initially used as a pejorative, the appellation “impressionist” was gradually appropriated by members of the movement, an alternative that reflected “political discretion” because of the term’s more politically moderate freighting (Eisenman 150). Competing monikers, such as the “Intransigents” or the “Irreconcilables,” linked the painters more or less directly to the radicalisms of the Paris Commune or to various strains of anarchism then extant in Western Europe, which, as evidenced by their names, spoke to a stalwart rejection of ideological compromise or post-Commune political reconciliation.³⁷

The term “Impressionist” (in the sense of the word that refers to a painter or the style of painting so named) was first used in English in an 1876 dispatch published in the *New York Herald Tribune* by Henry James, Jr., panning a recent Paris

³⁶ Schiff, 4.

³⁷ “Intransigents,” for example, linked the painters to the “Anarchist wing of the Spanish Federalist Party of 1872” known by that name (Eisenman 151).

exhibition.³⁸ James' critical dissatisfaction orbits around the issue of Impressionist representation (which is to say, non-representation), evident in their low subject matter and lack of figuration, completion, and clarity.³⁹ Surveying an exhibition of "Irreconcilables otherwise known as 'Impressionists,'" he describes: "the young contributors to the exhibition of which I speak are partisans of unadorned reality and absolute foes to arrangement, embellishment, selection, to the artist's allowing himself, as he has hitherto, since art began, found his best account in doing, to be preoccupied with the idea of the beautiful" (*PA* 130). Likening Impressionist *objets d'art* to those of the English Preraphaelites *en vogue* two decades earlier, James disparages the Impressionists through the comparison, as they "abjure virtue altogether, and declare that a subject which has been crudely chosen shall be loosely treated. They send detail to the dogs and concentrate themselves on general expression" (131).⁴⁰ Impressionism's lack of representational definition and its avoidance of solemn or iconic topical material are nothing more than shortcuts, it appears to James, bespeaking a lack of talent.

³⁸ James (1956), 114. See also Kirschke, 185; King, 369. See also OED, "Impressionist".

³⁹ The representational objective of the Impressionists was, by no means, lost on James who summarizes the Impressionist ethos that "the painter's proper field is simply the actual, and to give a vivid impression of how a thing happens to look, at a particular moment, is the essence of his mission" (130).

⁴⁰ James' attitude would subsequently change. In *The American Scene*, the narrator encounters a private collection of modernist art cached in the Hill-Stead House, in the village of Farmington, Connecticut, and resorts to Humean language of the impression: "an array of modern 'impressionistic' pictures, mainly French, wondrous examples of Manet, of Degas, of Claude Monet, of Whistler, of other rare recent hands, treated us to the momentary effect of a large slippery sweet inserted, without a warning, between the compressed lips of half-conscious inanition" (44). For a description of the Hill-Stead collection and James' interaction with it, see Tinter 57-8.

Recapitulating Aishe's own representational evasions, *Haremlik* does not explicitly reveal the particular subject matter of any painted impression, sitting on Aishe's easel or archived in her portfolio. Nonetheless, one feature common to each piece is divulged. "The curious part was that, whenever she painted any outdoor life, she painted it from her window, and on the canvas first was the window, and through it you saw the landscape as she saw it" (99). The omnipresent window sill is a conventional staple of Orientalist harem representation, and, at first blush, it is an ever-present reminder of Aishe's bondage, her relegation to the harem, and the ways in which her mobility and personal development have been despotically curtailed.⁴¹ Aishe, after all, cannot take recourse in the Impressionist practice of *en plein air* painting or, for that matter, enjoy unfettered observation of the natural world and its phenomena, so prized by the Empiricists and the Impressionists.

The ubiquity of the windowsill pervading her work, at the same time, betokens the intensity of Aishe's Impressionistic purism. The frame cannot be extracted out of any single painting because such a revision would represent a post-sensory cognitive redaction and thereby count as profane authorial artifice. The supremely subjective vantage point from which Aishe paints, capturing her own idiosyncratic and fleeting glimpse of the world, also squares with her stated strategy of circumventing the Islamic prohibition against figuration and representation. Painting an impression, with its qualities of perceptual and environmental distortion, is antithetical to the sacrilegious act of "reproducing Allah's realities" in their fullness. In doing so, it imputes, largely by default, little to no value (artistic, cultural, spiritual, or personal) to the perception represented. If this is, in fact, Aishe's sincere justification, as

⁴¹ For the treatment of liminal spaces in harem representation, such as doors and windows, as "confinement and freedom metaphorically treated," see Delplato 103.

opposed to a rehearsed evasion, it effectively negates the value of the subjective position from which she paints, in much the same way that she dismisses her status as an artist and minimizes the creative value of her artwork (“not painting, just playing”).

The value of the subjective position from which they paint is a key axis of contention upon which Aishe and the French Impressionists diverge. For the latter, the charge of representing the perceptive effect of a singular impression *announces the individual* with an overriding priority, bringing to the forefront the unique subject position of the perceiving subject and his or her individual talent. The “attitude of individualism” shared among Impressionism’s practitioners translated readily to their professional ambitions; Impressionists were no strangers to self-aggrandizement and the strategic cultivation of public celebrity (Eisenman 150). The aura of individualism surrounding the Impressionists had the double benefit of providing an avenue by which they could further distance themselves from the revolutionary forms of collectivism associated with the Paris Commune – a strategy that resonates elsewhere in *Haremlik*.⁴²

Even as Aishe practices an imported genre of painting associated with anti-authoritarianism and anti-traditionalism in Europe, it remains divested of those ideological corollaries in her own work. While it is undoubtedly rendered from a position of supreme subjectivity, her impressionistic opus is not appropriated by Aishe as a vehicle for declaring her own subjecthood and agency. Aishe’s art, according to her proffered equivocations, stops well short of broader political ambitions. An equivalence looms in *Haremlik* between Aishe’s incomplete representational half-measures, which negate an *idée fixe* represented in its fullness,

⁴² Eisenman, 150-3.

and her refusal to represent herself politically through her art.⁴³ Here I mean to draw attention to a conflated sense of the word “representation” in both its semiotic and political sense. Artistic and political acts of representation can be taken readily as being mutually conducive in Western tradition: self-representation in art equates with declaring one’s right to self-representation in the public sphere, and vice versa. Artistic representation that declares a subjecthood often speaks to a justifiable right to citizenship and citizenship’s privilege of electoral representation.

Bemoaning the ““great deal of talent which unfortunately is wasted in a harem,”” the narrator forces a connection between artistic and political representation, putting questions to Aishe about the particular personal aspirations and sentiments she should rightly affix to her art (100). The hypothetical expectations the narrator attaches to Aishe’s painterly skill make the very culturally specific suggestion that one’s actualization as an artist is best lived out through a careerism that involves the cultivation of individual talent and celebrity, personal circulation abroad, and self-publication to the world. When asked about what she would do given freedom of mobility, Aishe rejoins her interrogator with a particular rejectionist mantra:

“If you were free to go, you could see masterpieces, you could study various methods of painting, and if it were in you, you might become great in turn.”
“What for?” was the calm inquiry. (101)

.....

“Because,” I answered lamely, “when a person has talent she generally goes to Paris or to some other great artistic centre”
“What for?” again insisted the question. (101)

....

⁴³ Aishe’s refusal to take a focal object is reminiscent of at least one work of literary impressionism (or a parodic rejection of it). Virginia Woolf’s lampoon of “The Yellow Wall-paper,” “The Mark on the Wall” (1921), in which the narrator’s refusal to assume a focal object parodies literary impressionism’s alleged apolitical register, against the backdrop of the First World War. The titular mark on the wall is eventually revealed to be a snail.

“Well,” I said calmly, though I was irritated, “if you had a great talent, and became very famous, you would not only have all the money you wanted, but glory and admiration”

“What for?” she repeated with inhuman monotony. (102)

....

“Because then I could go all over the world, and see everything that is to be seen, and meet all sorts of interesting people.”

“What for?” (102-3)

And so on. This exchange embodies the narrator’s attempt to prod Aishe into appending a form of sentimentality onto her impressionism. The narrator’s line of inquiry probes for a *proper* sentimental response to Aishe’s incarceration in the harem, even if it manifests in the form of regret, envy, or self-pity (““don’t you wish you were a free European woman?””) (104). It is, in other words, a model sentimental self-pity with which Aishe should imagine herself and her own social dispensation, in accordance with a Western Orientalist standard. It seems that, according to the narrator’s interrogatory third degree, Aishe would be better off if her stoicism were replaced with resentment. When the correct, sentimentally charged answers are not obtained, the litany of follow-up questions amounts to a catechism in the proper feelings of plausible regretability Aishe should attach to her work. The narrator’s inquiry-verging-on-instruction is not unlike the educational curricula in proper sentiments, conducted among the future leaders of Siam, narrated by Anna Leonowens four decades prior.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The narrator’s virtual browbeating does not pass without recrimination from Aishe, which takes the form of counter-objectification: ““You would do all these things and travel about like a mail-bag because you think it would make you happy, don’t you, *yavroum*”” (103). The exchange is also tinged with the specter of violence. The unassuming joy, the ““great pleasure”” Aishe finds in her art is rehashed in the narrator’s stifled urge to act out: “I should have derived great pleasure if I could have smacked her pretty mouth” (104; 102).

Empiricism, the Impression, and *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhān*

The way in which “The Gift-Wife of the Sultan” pairs the narrator’s quasi-intrusive, probing application of sentiment and sympathy with Aishe’s painterly recording of impressions gestures to the impressionism of the British Empiricists, rather than Aishe’s French Impressionist contemporaries. For the Empiricists, the question of how communities could come into existence and self-perpetuate, given the idiosyncrasy and particularity of each individual’s lifetime impressions, proved to be a lingering question.

The source of this tension lies in an Empiricist tenet that knowledge is either predominantly or entirely obtained from observation of the external world and subsequent reflection thereupon. Such a concept is opposed to various philosophical schools of innatism, including Scholasticism, which recognize a human capacity for abstract reasoning and the actualization of self-evident, divinely imparted universal principles as inborn and instinctual.⁴⁵ The sheer antithesis of a human subjectivity hardwired to particular self-evident truths, Locke’s *tabula rasa* imagines the human mind beginning *ab initio* as a blank sheet of paper or unblemished wax tablet, gradually becoming occupied over time through the interpellation of sensation and reflection.⁴⁶

Hume’s version of the “impression” modifies Locke’s “sensation” and supplies an elaborated mechanics through which the *tabula rasa* absorbs the phenomena of the external world. The *tabula rasa* and the impression are conjoined by an extended metaphor of orthography, as Max Müller explained it in the 19th

⁴⁵ Rickless, 23-30.

⁴⁶ Locke also repeatedly uses the term impression around events of perception and sensation. See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 47, 60, 62, 81.

century: “*tabula rasa* was pure metaphor, it was mythology and nothing else. *Tabula rasa* means a tablet, smoothed and made ready to receive the impressions of the pencil” (130).⁴⁷ Breaking entirely with Locke’s concession that the mind was not wholly without some instinctive, preexisting capabilities for reason, Hume envisions the *tabula rasa* as unadulterated, maintaining that received impressions eventually come to constitute the *entire* makeup of the intellect. No preset cognitive infrastructure exists: “all the materials of thinking are derived either from our outward or inward sentiment” (*EN* 19). “Every idea is copied from some preceding impression or sentiment; and where we cannot find any impression,” Hume writes, “we may be certain that there is no idea” (*EN* 78). Impressions eventually generate all ideas, which, for Hume, are merely copies of previous impressions; impression-based ideas, in turn, can generate new impressions through the process of reflection.

Despite the centrality of the impression, it is inevitably regarded as fallible, at best, or unreliable and deceptive, at worst. The abstruse means by which one *tabula rasa* might communicate and share ideas with other *tabulae rasae*, given the evanescent nature of impressions and the contingent makeup of lifetime experiences – so often dictated by accident of birth – left Empiricists at an impasse. One text often closely associated with Locke’s inspiration for adopting the *tabula rasa* neatly, if expediently, addresses this problem via a narrative thought experiment.⁴⁸ A companion of Locke, Edward Pococke the Younger’s *Philosophus Autodidactus*

⁴⁷ The passivity of mind implied by the metaphor has always been a basis of critique for the *tabula rasa*. William Hazlitt, for example, claims that Locke “took for his basis a bad simile, namely, that the mind is like a blank sheet of paper, originally void of all characters, and merely passive to the impressions made upon” (166-7).

⁴⁸ By exploring the influence on *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhān*, I also seek to avoid a Eurocentrism that would regard the *tabula rasa* as an indigenous idea that found its genesis from self-contained European thinking *ab nihilo* or took its inspiration from material inherited directly from the ancient Greeks.

("The Self-Taught Philosopher") (1671) and Simon Ockley's *The Improvement of Human Reason: Exhibited in the Life of Hai Ebn Yokdhan* (1708) are both translations of the first Arabic novel, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* (حي بن يقظان), penned in the 12th century by Hispano-Arab philosopher Ibn Tufayl (*Muhammad ibn Tufayl al-Andalusi*, محمد بن طفيل الأندلسي).⁴⁹ A novelization of the philosophy of Avicenna/Ibn Sina (ابن سينا), the titular name of the novel's hero – is often translated as "Alive, Son of Awake," although "yaqdhan" (يقظان) more closely denotes a state of being wide awake and alert – in other words, fully conscious.⁵⁰ Ibn Tufayl wrote *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* at an historical moment in which schools of philosophy in the Medieval Islamic world wrestled (as the West would later) with the primacy of internal, divinely imparted intuition versus externalized empirical reasoning – and whether the intellect was best actualized in individual solitude or among human community.

A parentless child, Hayy's ironic patronym accentuates the modality of an enlightenment achieved independently, alone and without inheritance.⁵¹ Marooned on a desert island, Hayy is either born through the spontaneous generation of natural elements or, following the Mosaic paradigm, an infant prince cast off in a basket. Adopted and raised by a gazelle – in Ockley's English translation it is a "roe" – this feral child, wholly without human contact and formal education, is the quintessential *tabula rasa* (37). In spite of these barriers, Hayy, through earnest observation of natural phenomenon, is able to postulate a number of universal truths, including the existence of a creator and a soul, through seven-year cycles of revelation that occur over the course of his lifetime.

⁴⁹ For an exploration of personal and professional connections between John Locke and Edward Pococke, see Russell, 224-40.

⁵⁰ Wehr, 1108.

⁵¹ For discussion of the historical and philosophical currents underpinning *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan*, see, Fakry, 274-281; Aravamudan, (2014) 199-204.

In the same way its direct literary descendant, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), performs against a cultural anxiety of how an individual (specifically European) might negatively respond when bereft of social order and the sanative influences of human contact, *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* performs against an anxiety of how diverging systems of knowing the world threaten the legitimacy of any one singular interpretive approach.⁵² Conducting “the forbidden experiment” on its title character, Hayy’s idiolectically obtained worldview is valuable primarily for the way in which it offers an independent verification of and converges with an essentialized version of received knowledge.⁵³ Collapsing the sometimes daunting variety and division of human cultural difference, *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* celebrates the potential for intellectual continuity and uniform cultural results across diverse human communities, which, in turn, implicitly formulates a universally self-evident orthodoxy. Ironically, Hayy lives out his days as an unsympathetic misanthrope, who, after being rescued and integrated into human society, returns to his desert island of origin, turning his back on the work of educating his adopted community. For the formative ways in which

⁵² If an anxiety of influence (bordering on willful amnesia) is any indication of influence, then *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Don Antonio de Trezzanio* (1761) illustrates how staunchly unacceptable Hayy’s Middle Eastern origin and intellectual ferment it subsequently caused in Europe may have appeared. *Don Antonio de Trezzanio* is a retelling of *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* firmly protesting that the tale was “Originally wrote in the Portuguese Language” and demands instead that its origins in Arabic have been manufactured:

This History has certainly been known to some few of our Countrymen, who have made so good an Advantage of it, as to furnish us with two Pieces very nearly akin to this. The first of these was Hai Ebn Yokdan, or the self-taught Philosopher; which, tho’ pretended to be Translated from the Arabic, was certainly little better than a Paraphrase upon this History. The next was the late History of Robinson Crusoe; which plainly show its Author had his first Hints from hence. (ii-iii)

For the impact on *Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan* on the Enlightenment, see also Aravamudan (2012) 15-17, Aravamudan (2014), and Attar.

⁵³ Identifying the project of raising a child without social contact as “the forbidden experiment” arose surrounding the case of “Genie,” a child rescued from an abusive home in Los Angeles during the 1970s. See Cherry.

the *tabula rasa* is undeniably egalitarian – in it lies the kernel of a discourse of human rights that understands all men and women as created equal – in *Hayy Ibn Yaqhdhan*, it propels a narrative implicitly imagining a universal teleology of autodidacticism, enshrining some conclusions of observation as natural while discretionarily proscribing others as deviant.

The Permeations and Limitations of Sympathy

It goes without saying that the proliferation of English-language versions of *Hayy Ibn Yaqhdhan* during the Enlightenment hardly put to rest questions of how communities could take shape and cohere, given difference in lifetime experiences and collected impressions among individuals. In response to this conundrum, Empiricists regularly offer the circulation of sympathy as a tentative solution. As Adam Parkes notes, “British empiricism has typically fended off such epistemological and psychological chaos by rooting its notion of experience in social and moral custom” (8). While remaining itself something of a psychological enigma, sympathy provided a vehicle through which a Theory of Mind, limning the subjective position of the other, could operate in service of the social.

In Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, the transaction underlying the genesis of sympathy is described as an impression of reflection reverse-engineered, so to speak, from a previously imparted idea:

Tis indeed evident, that when we sympathize with the passions and sentiments of others, these movements appear at first in *our* mind as mere ideas, and are conceiv’d to belong to another person, as we conceiv’d any other matter of fact. Tis also evident, that the ideas of the affections of others are converted into the very impressions they represent, and that the passions arise in conformity to the images we form of them. (113)

Consequently, sympathy, vectored in by the impression, wholly animates virtue and morality in a way intuitively fostering social cohesion. “We have no such extensive concern for society but from sympathy,” Hume concludes, adding that it “produces our sentiment of morals in all the artificial virtues... it also gives rise to many of the other virtues; and that qualities acquire our approbation, because of their tendency to the good of mankind” (579; 578).

Nevertheless, crucial limitations are placed upon the operation and reach of the impressions upon which sympathy arises and circulates. Hume is quick to acknowledge that the range of sympathy’s contagion is not infinite and does not flow freely between individuals, unobstructed and without interruption. The conveyance of sympathy, instead, must abide by limitations of space, temporality, identity, and social intimacy. Recognizing sympathy’s heavy operational reliance on proximity, Hume attests, “all sentiments of blame or praise are, variable according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blamed or praised” (TR 341). “We sympathize more with persons contiguous to us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance, than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners” (340). Accordingly, when a sympathetic object is placed at a cultural, geographical, or chronological remove, it is forced past a vanishing point of social utility. In this instance, sympathy becomes less attainable, if not implausible: “those sentiments, whence-ever they are deriv’d must vary according to the distance or contiguity of the objects; nor can I feel the same lively pleasure from the virtues of a person, who liv’d in *Greece* two thousand years ago, that I feel from the virtues of a familiar friend and acquaintance” (340). While a sense of general approbation knows no bounds, Hume rejects any consideration that trans-planetary transfusions of

sympathy might exist without heavy constraints.⁵⁴ Sympathy does not travel well past the boundaries within which it can pay social dividends. Stymied past definite limits of space, time, and cultural difference – and beyond the conceivable limits of its social necessity – sympathy sloughs off its otherwise vital agentive role in cementing positive social relations.

Extending Hume’s cautions, Adam Smith turns to the impression to more closely limit the scope and authenticity of sympathy’s vision of the Other. Because of the instability of the impression, sympathy is not merely limited to the local, for Smith, it is limited to the individual. While still reaffirming the importance of sympathy for purposes of morality and social cohesion, Smith insulates its function entirely within the perceiving subject.⁵⁵ Impressions generated solely by the imagination give only the *illusion* of transporting the mind into the subjective position of the Other, thereby only making manifest an envisaged affective state. As Smith famously expresses this concept in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759):

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is on the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. *It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy.* By the imagination, we place ourselves in his situation. (Italics mine 9)

⁵⁴ Delineating approbation and sympathy, Hume states: “notwithstanding this variation of our sympathy, we give the same approbation to the same moral qualities in *China* and in *England*. They appear equally virtuous, and recommend themselves equally to the esteem of a judicious spectator” (340).

⁵⁵ The importance of sympathy cannot be understated, as Smith writes, “all the effects ascribed to this peculiar faculty of ‘moral sense’ can be explained in terms of sympathy, a power that we obviously do have and that has always been known and noticed” (326).

Elizabeth Barnes paraphrases the Empiricist conclusion that, because of the evanescent impression, sympathy is firmly seated and self-contained within the individual, observing that “while many Enlightenment theorists posit sympathy as the affective tie that holds a society together, they also present sympathy as an epistemological conundrum to which only the individual’s imaginative capabilities can attend” (4).

In keeping with this trajectory pairing the instability of the impression with the fraught basis of sympathy, the term “impressionism” was itself coined, pejoratively – and somewhat tangentially – in reference to Hume’s thinking, in the anti-Catholic screed *Antipopopriestian* (1839, later published as *Anti-popery: Popery Unreasonable, Unscriptural and Novel*) by one John Rogers, “of King’s College, Cambridge.” Taking on all comers in his chapter denouncing the Catholic Doctrine of Transubstantiation, Rogers equates the dogma’s seemingly irrational sensoriality with currents in contemporary philosophy:

Behold us, then, at open war with our five senses, our five natural guides, our five leaders in relation to external things, to the material world without and around!...All hail to the happy day of skepticism, Pyrrhonism, universal doubt! All hail to Berkeley who would have no matter, and to Hume who would have no mind; to the Idealism of the former, and to the *Impressionism* of the latter!* (italics Rogers’, 188)

Rogers, in the footnote set off by the asterisk, offers the clarification that he is himself, “an enemy to the peculiar metaphysical theory of both metaphysicians here named” (188). What, for the neologically inclined Rogers, entails a moment of outright sensorial dissonance and the impressional misattribution of sentiment, theologically represents the ritualized projection and investiture of human pathos into

objects that were previously inanimate, without recourse to metaphor or proxy, through their conversion into body and blood.⁵⁶

By Vaka Brown's lifetime, the pragmatism of William James continues to complicate the tenuous interplay of *tabula rasa*, impression, and sympathy. Heavily indebted to Hume (whom James calls "the hero of atomistic theory") and the 19th-century psychophysicists, James, in *Principles of Psychology* (1890), argues on behalf of the dynamism of impressions, while rejecting their independence from other impressions as well as their integrity over time (44). Impressions are instead altered by the corruptive influence of mnemonic mediation and imaginative feedback.⁵⁷ As Robert Roth records: "Hume attributed continuity to the deception of the imagination and left the impressions and ideas as inherently discrete. James, however, claimed that experience is inherently continuous" (18). Moreover, impressions, once collected, are impacted by their interaction with an accumulation of lifetime impressions, and "the complication goes on increasing till the end of life, no two successive impressions falling on an identical brain, and no two successive thoughts being exactly the same" (James 8). With the same outright diversity which he qualifies impressions, James recognizes each mind as dissimilar and unique, varying by individual and existing contrary to any species-wide uniformity implicated by the *tabula rasa*. James argues for a virtually infinite plurality:

Until very recent years it was supposed by all philosophers that there was a typical human mind which all individual minds were like, and that proposition of universal validity could be laid down about such faculties as 'the Imagination.' Lately, however, a mass of revelation have poured in, which

⁵⁶ See also Watt, 171.

⁵⁷ William James also challenges Hume regarding the integrity of the impression over time. Hume, according to James, mistakenly believed that "not only were ideas copies of original impressions made on the sense organs, but they were, according to him, completely adequate copies, and were all so" (44).

make us see how false a view this is. There are imaginations, not ‘the Imagination,’ and they must be studied in detail. (45)⁵⁸

Accordingly, sympathy for James is less than exceptional to the human condition. Subject to its context, the situational, rapid, and frequent suspension of sympathy permits humans to do the necessary work of hunting and killing as well as the unnecessary work of torture.⁵⁹

The long history of philosophical caveats here laid out, qualifying the fragile and sometimes illusory epistemological interplay of impression, sympathy, and community, all ironize the surety and clarity with which turn-of-the-century Anglo-American feminist internationalists sought to sympathize, communalize, and thereafter represent women allegedly incarcerated in the harem. To this point, the narrator of *Haremlik* also offers something of a concession, sourcing misimpressions cultivated in the West with the particular version of pathos she attempts to both instill in and superimpose upon Aishe. Elsewhere in the novel she recalls, “some lectures I had heard in America in which the women of the harem were spoken of as most miserable beings, and in which our duty was pointed out to us to work toward their deliverance” (78). In the concluding paragraph of “The Gift-Wife of the Sultan,” the narrator relents:

It is true that in Europe and America there are, and have been, women who sacrifice their lives for big causes. But as a rule it is a cause to which glory is

⁵⁸ See also Meyers, 218-9.

⁵⁹ James writes:

Habits, reasoned reflections, and calculations may either check or reinforce one’s sympathy; as may also the instincts of love or hate, if these exist, for the suffering individual. The hunting and pugnacious instincts, when aroused, also inhibit our sympathy absolutely. This accounts for the cruelty of collections of men hounding each other on to bait or torture a victim. The blood mounts to the eyes, and sympathy’s chance is gone. (411)

attached, or else some tremendous thing they half understand, and to which they give themselves blindly because of its appeal to that sentimentality which is so colossal in European women. (127-8)

The narrator's sentimentalized misprojections onto Aishe stem, in part, from content she has assimilated from an Orientalist strain in Western feminist internationalism. Such presumptions have been incubated through the imperfect transactional relation of the impression (or misimpression) that delineates the suffering of the subaltern-Other. An internationalized network of sympathies, in fact, relies on the motif of the suffering subaltern in order to justify its planetwide extension of sympathy, which is the constituent affective force behind a pretense to universal representation.

Haremlik captures the process by which the inmate of the harem has entered into the sentimental-moral universe of Western internationalism, not so subtly set into motion by a particular set of hegemonic cultural assumptions that neglect the spatio-temporal constraints of the impression. Pretenses to the exchange of mutually held sympathies are checked by the shaky operation of the impressions upon which they rely. Sympathies engendered by impressions collected remotely – especially across the turbulent faultlines of ethnic, ideological, national, linguistic, or cultural partisanship – are revealed to be unreliable and turbulent. *Haremlik* understands internationalism's aspiration to universality as precarious as it relies upon the presumed strength of the bonds of sympathy by which it is globally unified and activated. Internationalism's imagined community is infinitely more fragile, and it is characterized in the novel through the sheer disparity of identities, beliefs, and social dispensations among its would-be adherents.

Much of the narrator's frustration with Aishe arises from the opinion that she should *represent* something by painting legibly, figurally, even pictorially. Her art should take on some definite (not blurry) form to surmount impressional evanescence;

it should, in turn, acquire indexical and definite political-representational significances. Equally so, the narrator implicitly anticipates that Aishe's art will lend a familiar voice, in a sentimental tone, to the suffering Western suffragists had previously cathected upon Eastern women. The success of the body politic of internationalism partially depends on it. Contrary to the therapeutic teleological results and independent verifications of human community offered by Hayy Ibn Yaqdhan and Robinson Crusoe, Aishe does not replicate (and thereby confirm) the narrator's projected sentimental assumptions, by fashioning herself as a pathetic object. The blurriness of Aishe's art forecloses its potential to represent and evoke sympathy, to the narrator's exasperation. Aishe, tropologically linked to the *tabula rasa* of the canvas she manipulates, paints impressionistic ephemera by half-measures, producing neither nothing nor a semi-discernable, validating something.

For the sentiments and global solidarity that would, for the narrator, be ideally confirmed, reformative political energies would also be mobilized. Aishe's refusal to represent is both a safeguard against the standards of Islamic aesthetic convention as well as a breakwater against its Western consumption, voiding the reification of internationalist hierarchies and the intrusion of outside colonial agencies, both activated by the sentimental object. To the extent that internationalized sympathies are attributed to and claim to speak from the cultural space and cultural perspective of an Oriental Other – even allegorizing the sympathetic inhabitation of the corpus and psychic interiority of the other – the alterity of the subaltern other is left rigidly in place and remains unobtainable in *Haremlik*.⁶⁰ Aishe's impressions forecloses the

⁶⁰ It is tempting to read Vaka Brown's autobiographical claim of residing briefly in the Ragged Mountains, a minimal range of foothills outside of Charlottesville, in connection with Poe's "Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (1844). The short story invokes a language of blurred impressions and reads against the Smithian dilemma of

narrator's appropriation of her presumptive subjective experience, which remains shrouded, dwelling in impressionistic blurriness.

Clarifications

The wave of desentimentalizing corrections tendered in early-20th-century English-language print sources by Middle Eastern women – mainly of Turkish or Egyptian extraction – is perhaps best exemplified by those levelled against *Haremlik* and Vaka Brown herself. In her memoir, *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edib* (written in England and originally published in English, 1926), Halide Edib Adivar, noted Turkish nationalist, feminist, and revolutionary, accuses Vaka Brown, albeit belatedly, of cultural tone-deafness and of misrepresenting the harem outright. Recalling her own upbringing and arranged marriage at an early age, Edib specifically chastises Vaka Brown: “although this dramatic introduction to polygamy may seem to promise the sugared life of harems pictured in the ‘Haremlik’ of Mrs. Kenneth Brown, it was not so in the least” (144). Edib annotates this sentence, by way of footnote, to remonstrate Vaka Brown for linguistic fabrication:

The word haremlik does not exist in Turkish. It is an invented form, no doubt due to a mistaken idea that “selamlik” (literally, the place for salutations or greetings, i.e., the reception-room, and therefore, among the Moslems, the men’s apartments) could have a corresponding feminine form, which would be “haremlik.” The word is however, a verbal monstrosity. (144)⁶¹

sympathy's bodily impermeability through the vehicle of metempsychosis. In the story, a University of Virginia student, August Bedloe, experiments with morphine (itself an alienated derivative commodity of opium then extracted from colonial India) and unlocks a past-life trauma that occurred amidst an anticolonial insurrection in the city of Benares during the previous century. As Bedloe's soul potentially travels indiscriminately between Indian to Anglo-Saxon bodies, “The Tale of the Ragged Mountains” makes a subtextual challenge to the prevalent racial thinking of the day, even as the shock of the emerging latent memory precipitates Bedloe's death.

⁶¹ Regardless of its authenticity in Ottoman Turkish, the term “haremlik” is by no means a neologism on Vaka Brown's part and is, in fact, present in English-language

Referring to Vaka Brown by the Anglophone penname she assumed through marriage (“Mrs. Kenneth Brown”), Edib hereby insinuates the author’s own Anglicization, cultural alienation, and resultant lack of authority, brought about by her decades-long absence. As Reina Lewis qualifies it, “for Edib, Vaka Brown is dealing with fantasy, not reality” (2004 110). Edib seeks to disqualify Vaka Brown’s claims as a cultural insider – at best, characterizing her as an expatriate, willfully nostalgic for an old order and out-of-touch with the contemporary culture of another ethnic group. At worst, Brown is a fabricator, playing up her American readership’s preexisting, romantic misimpressions.⁶² Even as *Haremlik* attempts to confront the potential for moments of cultural misattribution and misrepresentation between Eastern and Western women, via claims to indigenous authority, it is nevertheless implicated by Edib of being guilty of that very thing. Yet, later in her literary career, Vaka Brown’s hostility to reform/modernization efforts in Turkey and its seeming incongruities had only become more obstreperous by the 1920s; her objections are registered most vocally in *The Unveiled Ladies of Stamboul* (1923), chronicling another repatriation to Istanbul.⁶³

One Rosemund Blomfield, presenting herself, like Vaka Brown, as seasoned cross-cultural intercessor, lobbies for both Western women’s sentimental mediation and restraint in an essay entitled, “Our Moslem Sisters” (1911). Blomfield, who

texts in the 19th century, well before Vaka Brown’s time. See, for example, Basmajian, 168; Cox, 573; and Garnett & Stuart-Glennie, 440.

⁶² This is not to say that Edib is not moved to discredit Vaka Brown by influence of her own political and counter-representational motives.

⁶³ Vaka Brown bemoans in *Unveiled Ladies*, “the past and the present in Turkey meet like two garments that do not belong to the same suit” (146).

claims to have “lived in Egypt for more than a quarter of a century,” strongly cautions her Western colleagues against any inference that Suffragist awakenings and activism in the East would and should simply duplicate those of the West.

Paraphrasing a letter written in Turkish and then translated into French by an acquaintance, a “Turkish Princess,” Blomfield addresses the question of provenance and indigeneity:

The fact that the pleas for the removal of the restrictions that now lie heavy upon them [“Moslem women”] are not based on any example that may have come to them across the seas from England or America, but are founded on the very principles and laws of their own religion, proves that the movement is sincere and that it is one sprung from the hearts of those who dwell within the harems, and is not an extraneous growth of artificially grafted Western sentiment. On the contrary, the Princess throughout lays stress on the necessity of avoiding any servile copying of Occidental customs. (783)

Blomfield, channeling the Princess, characterizes the harem itself as a foreign import.

The harem is not the product of Islamic injunction and custom but is instead the vestige of an external, comparatively Western influence, which lowered the previous station of Muslim women, by copying the ““nefarious customs of other nations””

(785). “An erroneous impression still prevails among Western nations that the seclusion of the harem was part of Mahomet’s rule of life for women. No statement could be more misleading,” Blomfield claims, adding:

The conquest of Constantinople gave the finishing stroke to the liberties of Moslem women, and from that day the sensuous, indulgent life of the harem, with its soft divans and silken cushions, its jewels and voluptuous pleasures, has gradually sapped the intellectual and moral strength of its denizens. (785-6)

Blomfield’s (and the Princess’) message contends that rights are best ascertained through self-determined and indigenous appeal, which draws from the precedence of Islamic history, theology, and jurisprudence. If the historical lessons of Byzantine decadence and degeneracy provide an analogy – and Blomfield and the Princess

imply that it does – the appropriation of a modernity cast from a foreign mold might also bear negative consequences for Eastern Suffrage.

In addition to the representational restraint Blomfield preaches, she also pleads for a discernment among her readership for the seemingly understated or opaque sentimental being of their Eastern counterparts:

It is the duty of Englishwomen to recognize the moral and intellectual needs of their Eastern sisters. Perhaps their seeming lack of sympathy may be due to ignorance of the actual state of affairs. They may not realize that there are cultivated ladies who, though brought up in strict seclusion, cherish sentiments which are pure and high, and who, under the greatest possible difficulties, are trying to effect a change in their midst which may raise them and their co-religionists from their sadly fallen position and set them once more, as they were many centuries ago, by the side of their husbands and male relatives as companions and helpmeets in private and social life. (782)

Blomfield leaves her audience to “judge whether the cause be worthy of their friendly aid, and whether they are willing to stretch forth a hand in loving sympathy and friendly interest to their veiled sisters in the East” (794). What course of action this sympathetic aid implies remains unclear, other than developing the insight to support non-intervention – that is, the strength to support doing nothing and to feel less. “Our Moslem Sisters” challenges Western Suffragists to disabuse themselves of a particular misimpression, namely the imputation that the harem exists in a state of sentimental deficiency or as a feelingless vacuum, best remediated through the promulgation and infusion of a colonial curricula of sentimentality.

The Suffragettes of the Harem

Examining early-20th-century indigenous feminist movements in the Middle East, primarily in Egypt and Turkey, Leila Ahmed typifies a predominant assumption among indigenous elites. “Those proposing an improvement in the status of women from early on couched their advocacy in terms of the need to abandon the (implicitly)

‘innately’ and ‘irreparably’ misogynist practices of the native culture in favor of the custom and beliefs of another culture – the European” (129). Counter to this prevailing thinking, *Haremlik* includes the narrator’s own plea for the indigeneity of a Turkish feminist movement and some form of internationalist sympathetic détente. The chapter of *Haremlik* following “The Gift-Wife of the Sultan,” designated “Suffragettes of the Harem” – which supplies the title of this monograph – serves as a perfect companion piece to Blomfield’s and the unnamed Turkish princess’ argument for a self-contained, self-evolved, self-feeling, locally sourced feminist movement. “Suffragettes of the Harem” portrays a convocation of suffragists gathering in the space of the harem, who have adopted a transcultural mode of resistance heavily inflected by French anarchism and its concomitant sentimentalities.

“Attracted” to what the narrator of *Haremlik* thinks of as, “only the worst features of our Western civilization,” the “suffragettes” comprehensively adopt a foreign mode of activism that produces a chimerical form, neither authentically French, nor British, nor Turkish (128). According to Lewis and Micklewright, “Brown...did not want to encourage Ottoman feminists to copy the West especially if they were motivated by inaccurate and sensationalist renditions of Western society” (135). Among other things, the chapter intimates that the Suffragettes of the Harem have misimpressionistically assimilated that “sentimentality which is so colossal,” in a way that drives their political involvement to dangerous extremes.

Before describing this scene, it is crucial to distinguish the different connotations the terms “suffragette” and “suffragist” carried in the context of the novel’s historical moment. In the United Kingdom, “suffragette” at that time bore the specific undertone of activist violence and militancy. First used pejoratively (like “impressionism” or “impressionist”) “suffragette” was, in 1906, appropriated by a

radical segment of English Suffrage, namely members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). As early as 1908, the WSPU had begun to adopt a more aggressive approach toward campaigning and protest, as opposed to English "suffragists," an old guard preaching gradual reform and tactical restraint. By the publication of *Haremlik* in 1909, Suffragette methods amounted to nothing more than incitement of crowds, stone-throwing, window-smashing, and fomenting disorder at governmental functions. In November of that year, for example, Suffragette Theresa Garnett famously accosted cabinet member Winston Churchill at a Bristol railway station and boxed him about the head with a riding crop.⁶⁴ Still, the WSPU's intensified tactics appeared radically violent, unBritish, and "unfeminine" by the standards of the day, and they evidently forebode a slippery slope. While they would remain bloodless and never target human beings, Suffragette methods would escalate in the coming years, including coincidentally, in 1914, the slashing of John Singer Sargent's portrait of Henry James, on display at the London Royal Academy.⁶⁵ In identifying its Turkish subjects as "Suffragettes," *Haremlik* invokes the menace of mounting pro-suffrage violence, as a means to an end, among the Suffragettes of the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

In "Suffragettes of the Harem," the narrator is secretly invited to attend a nominally clandestine meeting of "forty-odd women aged from seventeen to forty," who are "drawn from the flower of the Turkish aristocracy" (167). Above all else, the novel drives home the affected Francocentrism of the assemblage, which, unlike

⁶⁴ Rosen, 126.

⁶⁵ This would manifest itself through bloodless acts of arson and bombing. For a description of the intensification of Suffragette actions in 1913-14, see Bearman. For a description of the attack on Henry James' picture, see El-Rayess, Bonett. According to El-Rayess, James' portrait was, by all indications, not purposely targeted.

Aishe's art, is styled consciously and intently after a French paradigm. Cell members are "all fed on French novels" and "the majority of them were corseted and in Paris frocks" (170; 167). All "behaving like imitation French Anarchists," the suffragists have labeled their group "Les Louises Michel," after the famed communard (175; 151). Beyond the cell's conscious self-patterning after a radical form of 19th-century Continental anarchism, what also becomes apparent in this self-attribution and activism-via-mimicry is that it opts for and flaunts its adoption of a French model of internationalism, as an alternative to Anglo-Americanism.

Yet what makes the meeting striking is the radical course of action proposed to advance the cause of women's franchise in the Ottoman. To "dig a little farther into the thick wall which the tyranny of man has built about us," the cell leader makes a startling recommendation to the assemblage:

In a deep voice befitting a ruler and a lawmaker, the president read from her gilt-edged paper, and ended up with the proposition that six members of the club should be chosen by lot to kill themselves, as a protest against the existing order of things. The proposition, which was made in all seriousness, provided, however, – with a *naïveté* that might have imperilled the gravity of a meeting of American women – that the president of the club should be exempt from participation in the lot-drawing. (164; 165)

The proclamation is "received with a murmur from the veiled listeners, rather more of approval than of disapproval"; the narrator suspects it would have been carried out by the unfortunate six had it been approved (166). In spite of the narrator's strenuous objections – as well professions of reluctance among the would-be adherents – the president remains unmoved and "vehemently in favor of her plan for having six of the members kill themselves" (176). Declaring with a discouraging and garbled, yet unmistakably internationalist, *élan*, she insists, "it is our duty – in the name of humanity. We owe this to the Progress of the World" (176; 174)

The malignant version of activism circulated here among the Suffragettes of the Harem bears the hallmarks of an expropriation of foreign sentimentality, albeit one heightened and amplified in the course of its transmission, through the glass darkly and beyond boundaries of cultural intimacy. As the narrator's acquaintance alleges, "I am afraid that it is more romanticism that guides them than thought for our beloved country. I call them to myself, Les Romanesques des Harem" (151). Their romanticism and Romanesque-ness, suggesting a melodramatic mode of sentiment tied to a particular Continental culture, implicate the expropriation of a foreign and melodramatic code of feeling.

Even their eponymous selection of name subtextually alludes to grandiose and borrowed sentimental activism. Unlike the French Impressionists, Les Louise Michel have no qualms about associating themselves with the Paris Commune. Louise Michel, the Commune's "Red Virgin," is now and during the turn of the century, historicized as "the most celebrated and mythologized communard" (Eichner 147). One contemporary, Paul Fontoulieu, would describe her as "the most carried-away, the most violent of all" (qtd. in Eichner 147).

Yet, contrary to her frequent treatment as a provocateur of mob violence, somewhat in the vein of a Madame DeFarge, Louise Michel was in her day the subject of heavily sentimentalized literary treatments, which amply regard her as suffering from an almost pathological sympathy for the other – to the extent that sympathy drives her violent excesses. In, for example, a character sketch by a W.T. Snead, entitled "Louise Michel: Priestess of Pity and Vengeance," the profile frames Michel's emotional persona as "the supreme type of the passion of Compassion, which is so masterful a sentiment of this generation" (155). In another account, Michel is motivated by an "outrageous tender-heartedness" (Heilig 604). Michel's

“heart, torn by innumerable miseries, ceases to feel for itself. It only quivers in sympathy for others” (Snead 167).⁶⁶

Because of these foreign influences, the narrator laments that, “Turkey would be better off without any influx of European thought” (186). At the unveiled, open luncheon immediately following the underground meeting of Suffragettes, the narrator bemoans what she interprets as the group’s inauthenticity and its appropriations of the worst elements of another culture, based upon misimpressions. She begs that the Suffragettes take up an indigenously based campaign for reform that relies on local tradition: ““you ought to have our meetings in the open. Since you all wear your veils, you can invite the men who are sympathetic to your movement, to take an interest in it”” (175).⁶⁷ It is a matter, for the narrator, of incongruous activism for incongruous cultural relativities: ““Really, your troubles are not so serious as those of European women, because under the laws of the Koran women have many privileges unheard of in other countries”” (175).

The suicide-for-suffrage proto-conspiracy of *Haremlik* is not a response and form of resistance to an intrusive Westernizing/modernizing regime, but rather a misinterpreted expression of it. The Suffragettes of the Harem have been radicalized, in part, through the false pretense of pathological absence imputed to the harem,

⁶⁶ Her celebrated devotion to animals was such that Michel “grew up with a tender sympathy for the dumb and the helpless,” Snead writes, “a sympathy which fretted her almost into frenzy when she saw the dull brutality of torture to which the voiceless ones were subjected by the peasants who lived in the neighborhood” (155). See also Gullickson.

⁶⁷ Siding with the narrator, one cell member protests the president’s decree: ““I believe in what the foreign Hanoum”” – meaning the narrator – “has just said. We ought to go about this in a rational manner”” (176). I take rational, here, in opposition to sentimental.

which tacitly assumes that the contents of their own culture can be negated, evacuated, and then substituted for a foreign mode of behavior. This act of implantation and outright substitution suggests the Suffragettes' own recapitulation of the Orientalist trope ascribing apathetic vacancy, voicelessness, and a lack of precontent to the harem. In another way of thinking, the Suffragettes of the Harem understand their own culture as a *tabula rasa*. Into this empty container and in a state of outright abandon, manufactured sympathies should be thrust, compensatory voices should be lent by others, awakenings are best when borrowed from the Western world, and modernity should be derived from one's impressions of another culture. The activism of the Suffragettes of the Harem is, as the narrator cautions, not authentically an appropriation of the French, British, American, Turkish, and/or Islamic modes of resistance, to which it might claim an affiliation. The final product is instead a malignant chimera of cultures and is particularly indicative of none.

As the novel parodies dissonant transcultural approaches to sentimental activism, Aishe's painterly nihilism and the sentimental borrowings of the Suffragettes of the Harem are meant to be understood comparatively. It is, however, difficult to read the suicide pact proposed in "Suffragettes of the Harem," unmoored from intervening history, to the comic effect it might once have contained as social satire gesturing to the absurd. The hyper-sentimentalized Western codes of activism, arrogated by Eastern suffragists to an unthinkable extreme, foreshadows *both* the 20th-century incorporation of suicide tactics into various colonial resistance movements globally as well as the ongoing cultural impositions of colonial and neocolonial regimes, well into the 21st century, as they erase the traditional inheritances of oppressed/exploited cultures.

In this chapter I have argued that an extended genealogy of the term impressionism, its roots in British Empiricism, and its relation to the *tabula rasa* inform the ways in which impressions traverse international borders (and are radically transformed in doing so) in the literary work of Demetra Vaka Brown. While impressions serve as a vector or bearer of sympathy and sentiment, they only create the *illusion* of another subjecthood, separated by distance, culture, and life experience. Consequently, the impressions collected to embody and represent the Other are only, at best, maddeningly blurry in their construction.

The unsteady basis of transnational impressions and the global extension of sentiment informs both Vaka Brown's memoiristic account as a disoriented repatriate native daughter of the Ottoman in *Haremlik* and includes Occidental misimpressions recorded among the women occupying the space of the harem in the book. Vaka Brown levies criticism at pretenses toward the establishment of a uniform global code of mutually held, outwardly projected sympathies and sentiment, which served as an Anglo-American Suffrage internationalist elite's strategy for uniting and then leading the disparate body politic of global feminism. In its own time, the "Suffragettes of the Harem" suggests that the consolidation of a global community of Suffrage, via sympathy, might be more complicated and possibly violent than was first imagined. The activisms informed by misimpressionistic crosscurrents of globalized and intercontinentally exchanged sympathies are depicted as being particularly virulent. In *Haremlik*, Vaka Brown's narrator straddles both sides of this cultural and perspectival divide, playing the role of hectoring and pedantic Western sentimentalist as well as stalwart Eastern traditionalist, rebuking the selectively appropriated forms of modernity/Westernization practiced in the space of the harem. In doing so, however, *Haremlik* anticipates postcolonial feminist objections articulated in the

second half of the 20th century to Western feminist hegemony and its looming representational dilemmas. *Haremlik* cautions against a universalized, non-differentiated rhetoric of universally held sympathy for all, with an embedded, special pity mistakenly reserved for the inmates of the harem. Unilateral Anglo-American representation of the world (and the harem within it) amounts to the ventriloquism of the subaltern by proxy.

Chapter 4: “Kindling a Streak of Fire”: Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Sentimental Utopias, Sympathetic Evolution, and the Death of Suffragist Sentimentality

One would like to know how many women truly want the suffrage, and how, when it was won, the earnest anti-tariff wife would construe the marriage service in the face of the husband’s belief in high tariff. The indirect influence of women in politics is worth a thought. We felt it sorely in 1861, and thence on to the war’s end, and to-day it is the woman who is making the general prohibition laws probable. For ill or good she is still a power in the state.

— Silas Weir Mitchell, *Doctor and Patient* (1887)

There is an immense amount of sentimental nonsense talked about the isolated home.

— Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Diary*, December 3, 1899.

Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman (N.Y.) in discussing *Woman’s World* said in part: “Ex-President Cleveland, after warning women against the clubs which are leading them straight to the abyss of suffrage, told us that ‘the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.’ . . . Is it true? The Indian woman rocks the cradle; does she rule the world? The Chinese woman—the woman of the harem—do they rule it? . . . Women have been taught that the home was their sphere and men have claimed everything else for themselves. The fact that women in the home have shut themselves away from the thought and life of the world has done much to retard progress. We fill the world with the children of 20th century A.D. fathers and 20th century B.C. mothers.”

— *The History of Women’s Suffrage*, Volume V (1922)

In 1904, ardent Suffragist and internationalist Charlotte Perkins Gilman would describe what she saw as an only recently inaugurated, planet-wide zeitgeist, brought about by humanity’s broadened capacity for sympathy. In an article recapping her address before the congress of the International Council of Women (ICW), held that year in Berlin, her tone is hardly prophetic, nor does it gaze off into the remote future.¹ It is matter-of-fact and addresses what is regarded as a fully substantiated, contemporary reality. Gilman insists, almost chidingly, that “we ought to be able to

¹ “The Growing Power of Woman: Impressions of the Congress in Berlin.” Gilman identifies this convention as “celebrating the third quinquennial” (or third, five-year anniversary) of the NWSA-affiliated 1888 meeting of the ICW in Washington, D.C., examined in Chapter 2 (385).

recognize the swiftest revolution in all history while it is going on” (385). “We see at last the kindling of international consciousness,” she intimates, “with its rich promise of universal peace” (387). The “international assemblage of women” in attendance was itself definitive proof of this ongoing transformation (390). “Here are papers, addresses, and discussion from representative women of widely varying races, views, and places of progress,” Gilman writes, “giving to all the knowledge of what is done by each, and strengthening each in the conscious sympathy of all” (385). The diversity of conference participants does not only reflect the recent evolutionary trend but further catalyzes it as well. And women’s current trajectory only portended more momentous changes to come. By virtue of her rhetoric, Gilman would prove to be the Suffrage Movement’s most vocal proponent of sympathy at the turn of the 20th century and long thereafter. Such a bold optimism is, however, attended elsewhere by profound doubt, if only for the enduring legacy of the object that still threatened to undermine sympathetic solidarity.

Throughout her oeuvre, Gilman attempts to theorize and corroborate “the great lesson of our age,” which was partly manifest in the feminist mobilizations of recent decades (*GP* 390). Gilman understands “the wide, deep sympathy of women for another” as the animating, cohesive force upon which “the woman’s movement rests” (*WE* 139).² Building upon earlier Suffragist formulations, Gilman additionally envisions sympathy as a force of social change that would surmount the confines of the home and even the boundaries of the nation. The widening geopolitical grasp of

² In her autobiography, Gilman claims that suffragists abroad solicited her attendance at international conferences because of the popularity of *Women and Economics*. Her subsequent participation allowed her to network with potential translators, including Aletta Jacobs, who translated the text into Dutch, and Rosika Schwimmer, who translated it into Hungarian from German. See *LI*, 301.

sentimentality promised to usher “a new power into world politics” (*GP* 390). The activist praxis of *feeling* and *feeling together* was a panacea that could alleviate the socio-cultural dispensations of women throughout the world, remedy global conflict, and even advance human biological evolution. In making these claims, Gilman elevates the practice of reading sentimentally (and reading one novel in particular) to a form of activism on behalf of evolution.

Gilman additionally foresees this newly minted world commonwealth of fellow-feeling militating against the mechanism of domestic oppression that had hitherto stymied it. Steeping her socio-evolutionary theory in an Orientalist vocabulary, she repeatedly uses “harem” as a blanket term to identify repressive cultural formations, well beyond the geographical and cultural dimensions implied through the word’s Arabic provenance. She interprets the harem as a carceral technology that has historically barred women’s access to the public sphere and stifled outflows of sympathy – so much so, the harem serves as the centerpiece of her dysgenic theory of human evolution. Reconfiguring elements from the work of Charles Darwin, Lester Frank Ward, and Suffrage leader Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Gilman regards the harem as a species-wide phenomenon, operating globally and throughout cultures – albeit not over the entire span of human existence. A mechanism of artificial (rather than natural) selection, the Gilmanian harem has wreaked biological havoc in one-half of human species. Because of this harem-centered evolutionary scenario, Gilman’s allegations of the androcentric construction of cultures and cultural formations – their *man-madeness* – should be taken very literally. Accordingly, the harem and women’s sympathies are locked in epic evolutionary struggle, moral poison and global antidote, respectively. In Gilman’s evolutionary endgame metanarrative, the abolition of the harem and its analogues

would allow for the unhindered circulation of sympathy, which, in turn, would help to realize a utopian “period of such further attainment as will make any ‘heaven’ hitherto described seem like a paper doll’s house” (*FH* 203).

Contrary to Gilman’s enthusiastic predictions regarding sympathy’s role in fomenting harem abolition and world-wide utopia, formidable renunciations of its efficacy surface from prominent voices within the Suffrage Movement. While it has never been addressed critically as such, Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s masterpiece, “Solitude of Self,” first delivered in January 1892, mounts a systematic rejection of moral sense doctrine, in stark contrast with Stanton’s outspoken endorsement of sentimentalized activism elsewhere. Using narratives of oppressive isolation (in the mode of the harem), Stanton questions the real-time pragmatic effectiveness of sentimental appeal. Incorporating the example of Prince Pyotr Kropotkin, “Solitude of Self” also indirectly challenges prevalent models of sympathetic evolutionism.

A second isolation narrative that contests sympathy’s viability as a force for global change is Gilman’s own “The Yellow Wall-paper,” also first published in January 1892. In spite of Gilman’s stated opposition to the Rest Cure of Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, “The Yellow Wall-paper” implicitly validates, rather than refutes, the pathological model of sympathy forwarded by Mitchell. In a supreme irony, the two signature texts produced by members of the Suffrage Movement during the struggle for franchise – each with its own unique and enduring legacy – both contain coded expressions of disenchantment and cynicism for the force long thought to cohere and propel women’s activism. My approach in this chapter involves a bifurcation, separating Charlotte Perkins Gilman, social activist and evolutionary theorist, from Charlotte Perkins Gilman, fiction writer, and then situating their parallel careers into cross-interpretive conversation.

The conflicted discourses on sympathy that permeate Gilman's literary output ultimately come to loggerheads in her 1911 "baby Utopia," *Moving the Mountain* (6). Heralded as an ideal society predicated upon women's collective awakening, the future United States of the novel more accurately resembles a dystopia through the gradual articulation of its component parts. The imperative of sympathetic solidarity in *Moving the Mountain* has legitimated a wholesale and unquestioning commitment to colonizing and then vigorously disciplining the sentimental and social capacities of the Other. Rather than a eugenics of racial fitness, the eugenicist regime of *Moving the Mountain* encompasses the state-sponsored euthanization of the sentimentally unfit, who represent isolated pockets of resistance that threaten to corrupt the whole. The overall effect of Gilman's utopia-dystopia gestures toward a fundamental modification of sympathy that brings about its nullification and abandonment – moves that parallel broader political and cultural departures.

This chapter attempts to address a number of absences in current Gilman scholarship. Gilman's egalitarianism and intellectual ties to American sentimental tradition have gone wholly unexamined, overshadowed by her concept of "race suicide" – a perceived pending demographic and national crisis caused by dwindling birth rates among Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent.³ Current criticism has additionally been too quick to adjudge Gilman's *sui generis* Reform Darwinism as an iteration of pseudo-scientific Lamarckianism, where physical characteristics acquired

³ See, for example, Hamlin, 23, 97; Roediger, 72; Frezza, 48; Amidon, 308. See Davis, 2010.2, for recent work on Gilman's sentimental inheritance, which focuses on the conflict of a public activism that originates in the private sphere.

by an organism during its lifetime are passed directly onto offspring.⁴ Such approaches fail to capture the nuance of Gilman's evolutionary theory, which has never been comprehensively outlined. Hardly a dyed-in-the-wool Lamarckian, Gilman offers an interpretation of how the volitional choices of individuals influence social and cultural reproduction, which, over time, can effect human biology.⁵

Sympathy and Evolution

Gilman's theorization of novel outgrowths of sympathy place her within a Utilitarian lineage of sympathetic evolutionism, discussed in Chapter 2. First posited by John Stuart Mill in *Utilitarianism* (1861) and endorsed at-length by Darwin in *The Descent of Man* (1871), this concept holds that an increasing inclination toward social behavior, invigorated by sympathy, would act as a *selected-for* trait among members of social species. Squaring this to humanity, both authors construe sympathy as a potential driver of human evolution and social progress.

Gilman was hardly the first American Suffragist to seize upon what she deems "the sun-burst of evolutionary knowledge" for the ways it might challenge patrician assumptions of women's inferiority and the ostensible naturality of women's contemporary social dispensations (*FH* 203). In *The Sexes Throughout Nature* (1875), Suffrage pioneer and leader Antoinette Brown Blackwell analyzes sex relations across species to political effect. The first woman ordained as a Protestant minister in the United States, Blackwell was sibling-in-law to lifelong friend Lucy Stone, to Henry

⁴ A caricature of the fallacy of acquired characteristics claims that docking the tale of a dog would cause that dog to bear puppies with docked tails. As examples of Gilman's reflexive association with Lamarckian acquired characteristics, see Pittenger, 73, 86; Allen 2009, 16-7; Davis 2010.1, 189; Berg, 57.

⁵ I must count as an outstanding exception Judith Allen's 2003 "Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Progressivism, and Feminism, 1890-1935."

Brown Blackwell, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, and Dr. Emily Blackwell.⁶ *The Sexes Throughout Nature* esteems sympathy as the special domain of women: “woman is not constitutionally self-centered in thought or feeling. Her sympathies have been functionally carried forward into an objective. Her instincts impel her to self-forgetfulness” (133). The vitality of women’s capacity for sympathy and its role in fostering beneficial exchange among women is all but invisible to men, who are accordingly driven to Hobbesian and Malthusian distraction in their articulations of an evolutionary theory. “The sympathy of the average woman for all of her own sex is absolutely unappreciated,” Blackwell writes, “the sympathetic aid which women render each other is not even suspected by the psychological on-lookers of a sex which has not been stimulated to develop a corresponding sentiment” (201). Men are, in fact, at a comparative disadvantage because they can “never can develop the highest sympathies of sex, these broadest and most impersonal of special social instincts” (204). Blackwell deduces that a public-political sphere occupied and controlled solely by sentimentally deficient men will forever leave humanity at an evolutionary impasse. In formulating an evolutionary argument on behalf of women’s right to franchise and social mobility, Blackwell pictures women’s unique contribution of sympathy as paying socio-cultural, even utopian dividends.⁷

In her autobiography *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935), Gilman hails Blackwell as “*our first woman minister*” and counts the Blackwell family among her “most honored friends (217). Embracing Blackwell’s attitude toward women’s sympathy and extrapolating its effects to a planetary economy of scale, Gilman

⁶ Rosenberg, 16; McMillen 2008, 52.

⁷ Carrie Chapman Catt also echoed Blackwell’s points in her speech “Evolution and Woman’s Suffrage,” delivered at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. See Hamlin, 43.

repeatedly discerns sympathy's active, reformative influence in a number of recent world events. *Women and Economics* (1896), the volume that would thrust Gilman, still in her thirties, into the spotlight as "the leading intellectual in the women's movement," canvasses a world already rocked by the initial stirrings of a dramatically expanded sentimentality (Degler xiii).⁸ Published the same year that Gilman would begin her career as a professional lecturer on behalf of Suffrage, it attests, "never before have people cared so much about other people" (160-1). Furthermore, "social sympathy and thought are growing more intense and active every day" (160-1; 163). While this change has global ramifications, it is observable in the mundane, manifested through the social commitment of a select, self-sacrificing few: "in the more familiar field of personal life, who has not seen how unceasingly many of us are occupied in the interests of the community, even to the injury of our own?" (163). This burgeoning sensitivity originates from an embryonic sympathetic instinct that was initially confined to one's most proximate relations. But it has begun to radiate out: "human progress lies in the perfecting of the social organization. Whereas in more primitive societies, injuries were only felt by the individual as they affected his own body or direct personal interests and later his own nation or church, today there is a growing sensitiveness to social injuries, even to other nations" (162). Gilman is equally adamant on the outward-bound trajectory of sentiment in *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903). Of late, "we have learned to love our neighbours – if not as ourselves, at least, better than strangers. We have learned to love our fellow-citizens, fellow-craftsmen, fellow-countrymen. To-day the first thrills of international goodwill are stealing across the world – and we are extending our sympathy even to the

⁸ LI 187.

animals” (166).⁹ While the epicenter of sympathy was focused around the nexus of the familiar (namely, the home and the immediate family), it has progressively, “more and more definitely spread to humanity” (*FH* 202). Now sprawling and penetrative, sympathy has recently infiltrated the non-familial people and animals that inhabit one’s everyday surroundings.¹⁰

Sympathy begins at home, but localized, grassroots awakenings have created, in aggregate, a global groundswell. Gilman traces macrocosmic manifestations to microcosmic ripples. “From its first expression in greater kindness and helpfulness toward individual human beings to its last expression in the vague, blind grouping movements toward international justice and law, the heart of the world is alive and stirring to-day. The whole social body is affected with sudden shudders of feeling over some world calamity or world rejoicing” (*WE* 161). As a recent example of this tendency, *Women and Economics* tenders international condemnation of the Hamidian Massacres, the Ottoman Empire’s slaughter of Armenians allegedly at the behest of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, between 1894 and 1896.¹¹ “The civilized world has suffered in Armenia’s agony, even though the machinery of social expression is yet unable fully to carry out the social feeling or the social will” (*WE* 162). The ability of people all over the world to pathetize a distant tragedy and feel for its victims is, for Gilman, an evolutionary novelty. This unencumbered, far-reaching mutuality of

⁹ Gilman here echoes Darwin in *The Descent of Man*. Darwin recognizes a growing “humanity to animals” as potential proof of the widening faculty of sympathy in humans (98).

¹⁰ In her etiology, Gilman locates human sympathy as manifesting first in maternal feelings, centered around the family and home. But such myopic sentiments have already superseded the home’s physical confines. An instinct for the maternal originally “forced us [women] into a widening of the sympathies, a deepening sensitiveness to others needs” (*HO* 165). From that starting point, sympathy has managed to continuously expand outward: “the power of loving grew, and, as soon as it overstepped the limits of the home, it grew more rapidly” (*HO* 166).

¹¹ Frey, 77.

affect was not possible in previous ages – for reasons intellectual, material, and social. “Nothing could have so spread and so awakened a response in the Periclean, the Augustan, or the Elizabethan age; for humanity was not then so far socialized and so far individualized as to be capable of such a general feeling” (WE 161). Despite the reality that no apparatus of international policing yet exists to prevent future atrocities, Gilman predicts one will take shape. Employing a vocabulary of Spencerian functionalism, she claims, “function comes before organ always; and the human heart and mind, which are the social heart and mind, must feel and think long before the social body can act in full expression” (WE 162).¹² A counterweight to the race nationalisms that had already begun to typify the era, the ongoing accumulation of individual sympathies will grow the collective will, in Gilman’s appraisal, and eventually make manifest an apparatus of global governance.

In making this argument, Gilman emphasizes how this newborn sentimental world spirit has surpassed the geographical and temporal restraints that had long served as impediments to sympathy’s universal operation. Recall the provinciality that David Hume attributes to sympathy in *Treatise of Human Nature*, explored in Chapter 3. While Hume acknowledges that he is eager to *approve* of the virtuous behavior of historical figures of ancient Greece (removed by time) or those of contemporary China (removed by space), he nevertheless finds it difficult to *feel* for them.¹³ Notwithstanding sympathy’s extraordinary dynamism and its near-universal fluency among individuals in proximity, an inclination to sympathize tapers off and then falters as it reaches certain spatio-temporal maxima. Beyond this vanishing

¹² See, for example, Spencer’s deliberations on this topic in *Principles of Biology*, 197-205.

¹³ See, for example, Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, 581-3.

point, sympathy's use-value is, not coincidentally, greatly diminished. As the tie that binds and then perpetuates human communities, sympathy had no need to cultivate mutuality among individuals who will never come into direct contact. Where there is no social utility in sympathy, there appears to be no natural endowment to sympathize. Revising the Utilitarian restrictions of the past, Gilman merely imagines sympathy transcending the parochial (and androcentric) constraints assigned to it by Hume.

Gilman evaluates a number of contributing factors to explain how this more durable, wide-ranging variety of sympathy came to prevail over its former provincial furrows. First, new technologies of long-distance travel and communication have increased the rate and range of human contact in a manner that fosters sympathetic exchange. "Invention and the discoveries of science are steadily unifying the world to-day," Gilman writes (*WE* 161). "Trade and its travel, the specialization of labor and the distribution of its products, with their ensuing development, have produced a wider, freer and more frequent movement and interchange among the innumerable individuals whose interaction makes society" (*WE* 295). The unprecedented extent of contact and social circulation was simply not technologically possible in past ages, which were marked by greater social insularity.¹⁴ Now that individuals from the opposite ends of the earth could conceivably come into contact, they could form formerly unimaginable sentimental bonds.

A subset of this phenomenon, the local, international, and intercontinental mobilization of women has intensified the outgrowth of global sympathies. It

¹⁴ For contrast, Gilman points to the harsher social interactions of previous ages and "what the world was when men were stationary and isolated. Nothing of human life was then possible beyond that of undifferentiated savagery" (*GP* 386).

represents “the free movement and association of that half of humanity which has been stationary and isolated since history dawned” (*GP* 386). “Only recently, and as yet but partially, have women as individuals come to their share of this fluent social intercourse which is the essential condition of civilization” (*WE* 295). Gilman dubs this sea change, “the world-movement of women” – a term making use of the double meaning of the word “movement” (*GP* 385). The *glasnost* embodied in woman’s newfound mobility, occurring roughly over the past century, stands as an unparalleled development in human history: “Never before has so large a class made as much progress in so small a time. From the harem to the forum is a long step, but she has taken it” (*HO* 324).

The now globalized activist praxes and transnational organizing undertaken by women are, among other things, a direct means of proliferating sentimental bonds beyond their former provincialities. The activity is manifold and unremitting: “clubs are uniting and federating by towns, states, nations,” Gilman writes, “there are even world organizations. The sense of human unity is growing daily among women” (*WE* 166).¹⁵ The relationship between women’s broader freedom of movement is understood as a direct causal factor precipitating the accretion of a planetary sentimentality. As explicitly stated in *Women and Economics*, “the growth and kindling intensity of the social consciousness among us all is as conspicuous a feature of modern life as is the change in woman’s position, and *closely allied therewith*” (italics mine, *WE* 160). At the very least, women’s wider presence in the global public sphere could increase the sheer volume of sympathetic agents operating in the

¹⁵ Citing as evidence the International Red Cross and the Court of Justice in the Hague, Gilman reserves special praise for the globally minded Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), for the way that organization, like others, “has shown anew how ready is the heart of woman to answer the demands of other than personal relations” (*WE* 166).

world. Essentializing sentimentality as women's unique province, however, Gilman sees women's increased sympathetic impact abroad as forging a more perfect sentimental union. Such a new world order would help to end war, bring about world peace, and shepherd humanity to the brink of utopia.¹⁶

Increasing the number of shareholders partaking in this new sociality expanded its breadth and depth. For this reason, Gilman paints a portrait of vital diversity at the Berlin ICW conference, attended by feminists from myriad corners of the globe and walks of life:

These women of the congress – of all ages, from the earnest eyed young girl to the grand white head of our beloved Mrs. Anthony; of all bloods and of all stations, from the colored school-teacher to the Turkish princess—gathered in solid thousands for most serious *work, are not to be considered merely as a sex*....Alone and apart they were powerless to improve their own lot or to help the world. (388)

Gilman here refers to Mary Church Terrell, an African-American Suffragist, who wowed the conference by delivering her speech, “The Progress of Colored Women,” in English, German, and French.¹⁷ Susan B. Anthony, now 84 and infirm, made the difficult journey to Europe at the solemn request of Carrie Chapman Catt. As for the unidentified, likely misattributed “tall, handsome Turkish princess” in attendance, Gilman again recalls this woman in her autobiography (*LI* 299).¹⁸ Gilman's depiction of the variety among intergenerational, interracial, and international participants at the conference speaks directly to the reach and poignancy of the newly awakened collective feeling at the center of her theorization of sympathy.

¹⁶ “The development of women...changes temperament,” Gilman suggests, adding “War is a result of conditions acting on temperament” (*GP* 390).

¹⁷ Fradin & Fradin, 95.

¹⁸ Gilman nevertheless marks this observation with racist and Orientalist caricature. The princess is attended “by what in the *Arabian Nights* was called ‘a great black’ (*LI* 299).

Gilman also cites one particular historical event as a seminal moment and evolutionary watershed upon which the subsequent expansions of sympathy heavily depended. Published the same year as Stowe's death, *Women and Economics* names the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as uniting hitherto unknown territories of collective feeling among that novel's international reading public. "When the message of Uncle Tom's Cabin ran from heart to heart around the world, kindling a streak of fire, the fire of human love and sympathy which is latent in us all and longing always for some avenue of common expression, it proved that in every civilized land of our time the people are of one mind on some subjects" (161). By reading together and then feeling together, the global reading public of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* succeeded in unlocking untapped, dormant swaths of a would-be global sympathetic commonwealth.

Despite her frequent antipathy for the myopic, parochial sentiments attached to the home and family, Gilman is somewhat guilty, in this instance, of a family boast. Harriet Beecher Stowe was, to Gilman, "Aunt Harriet Stowe in Hartford," the sister of Gilman's grandmother, Mary Foote Beecher (*LI* 16).¹⁹ Gilman's assessment reaffirms (and magnifies) intimations made by Stowe and her contemporaries, including Anna Leonowens, as they attempted to document and publicize the reformative energies unleashed by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* within and well beyond the margins of the Anglosphere. Gilman's re-mythologization enshrines the popular international reception of Stowe's novel as something verging on a transformational evolutionary event, building upon an implication made by Leonowens three decades prior.

¹⁹ See also Crunden, 4. Gilman's second husband and first cousin, George Houghton, was also the grandchild of Mary Foote Beecher.

While *Women and Economics* does not specify what praxis the individual can undertake to enliven and cultivate the sympathetic faculty, Gilman's theorization of Stowe's profound impact on her readership suggests that reading sentimentally does just that. In making these assertions, Gilman recapitulates the community-building aspirations so frequently attributed to sentimental narrative. As it has been interpreted in previous chapters, sentimental literature attempts to confront real-world institutional violence by mustering a nascent sympathetic community where one did not previously exist. The affective appeal proffered – primarily through barely audible, yet highly legible anguish of the sentimental hero – challenges the reader to sympathize and, in doing so, connect to a provisional collective mobilized against a social ill. Gilman's historicization of the imagined community that coalesced around *Uncle Tom's Cabin* recapitulates sentimentalism's arc of community formation. Gilman makes the sole revision of attributing a much broader, more ambitious teleology. Cohering previously disparate patches of the global populace, this version of sympathy was already exercising influence in global affairs and was rapidly marshalling the human species toward utopia. In this context, reading and feeling sentimentally is exalted as a mode of millenarian and evolutionary activism that hastens a global metamorphosis.

The Harem and its Influences

In spite of recent positive indicators, Gilman regularly reminds her readership that much remains to be done in order to actualize a global sympathetic revolution. Above all else, women have to accept and confront what Gilman views as their fundamental biological inferiority to men. "The main struggle now is with the distorted nature of the creature herself" (*WE* 168). Driving this point home in *The*

Man-made World: Or, Our Androcentric Culture (1911), Gilman maintains, “as a matter of humanity the male of our species is at present far ahead of the female. By this superior humanness, his knowledge, his skill, his experience, his organization and specialization, he makes and manages the world” (150). Woman remained at the disadvantage of being “far, far behind in social development” and even suffered from the intellectual handicap of a “starved and stunted brain” (*GP* 387). Alone among American Suffragists of the era, Gilman concedes the patrician allegation that assumptions of female inferiority were based in biological fact.²⁰ Woman, Gilman insists, “must recognize she is handicapped. She must understand her difficulty, and meet it bravely and firmly” (*WE* 168). Admitting the problem was a crucial first step.

A central tenet of Gilman’s social and evolutionary theory, however, declares that these biological disparities were anything but natural or essential to women. Instead, the suspicion persists that women had, in fact, been manipulated and even subverted in some fundamental way – that the biological disadvantages that inclined women toward subordination were the result of tampering and had been *bred in*. Gilman sources the sex gap to man-made manipulations of spatiality, contrived through the invention of architectonic technologies of sequestration. The apparatus that enabled men to confine women, the harem, has “grievously interfered with the laws of nature” and sent women down an acute evolutionary detour (*MM* 50). Even as the Gilmanian harem has exercised a degenerative influence on women globally, it had not done so over the entirety of human existence.

²⁰ Aileen Kraditor observes that Stanton and Gilman were the only prominent Suffragists to believe in women’s inferiority. Stanton sourced women’s inferiority in deficiencies of culture, education, and religious tradition; Gilman locates it in hereditary factors. See Kraditor, 97-103.

By her open admission, Gilman draws much of her inspiration from Reform Darwinist Lester Frank Ward, whose Gynaecocentric Theory attempts to establish an etiology underlying human sexual dimorphism.²¹ Ward exceptionalizes divergences between the human sexes, relative to other animal species, and supplies potential explanations that might account for the “Genesis of sexuo-social inequalities” (449). Consequently, he envisions primordial ur-scenarios in which women’s biology footing was wrested away from them by the selective agency and physical force of men.²²

Repurposing several elements of Ward’s theories, Gilman locates the smoking gun for sex dimorphism specifically in the operation of the harem. Keeping with conventional feminist-Orientalist complaint, Gilman argues that the sequestration and indolence of the harem has stifled women’s intellectual, physical, and social development to a stultifying degree:

By keeping women to a small range of duties and in most cases housebound, we have interfered with natural selection and its resultant health and beauty. It can easily be seen what the effect on the race would have been if all men had been veiled and swathed, hidden in harems, kept to the tent or house, and confined to the activities of the house-servant. (*MM* 51)²³

²¹ Gilman praises Ward and acknowledges his influence in, for example, *WE*, 171-2; and *MM*, 3, 5, 49, 166, including the dedication.

²² Gilman’s approach to ornament is an elaboration of a concept introduced tangentially by Ward in *Dynamic Sociology* (1883). Ward claims “the conditions which surrounded woman, while they have made clothing a means of loading her with ornaments, have left her in the same or in many respects in a worse condition, as regards her adaptation to active usefulness” (643). Ward also reproduces Darwin’s attitudes on the evolution of sympathy from *Descent of Man*. “The circle of human sympathy has gradually widened as knowledge and experience have increased, until it has come to embrace, in a few instances, all mankind and even the inferior brute creation” (505).

²³ Reiterating this point elsewhere, Gilman contends, “whosoever, man or woman, lives always in a small dark place, is always guarded, protected, directed, and restrained, will become inevitably narrowed and weakened by it” (*HO* 277).

Over the course of millennia, cultures have persisted in “treating the woman as a slave, keeping her a prisoner and subject to the will of her master” (*MM* 50). At first blush, Gilman’s interpretation smacks of a Lamarckian progression, where harem-bound mothers, subjected to its deprivations, acquired intellectual and physical disabilities that were then passed directly down to harem-bound daughters. Rather than being acquired over generations, Gilman emphasizes that women’s woeful biological condition was, in actuality, *selected for* by a subset of male elites. Through men’s monopolization of reproduction through the artifice of the harem, women were deprived of choice in their selection of reproductive mates. In Gilman’s hypothesis, inhibiting the operation of sexual selection, through the interference of the harem, means suspending the developmental, sanative function of natural selection. This decidedly unnatural arrangement “has operated continuously against the true course of social evolution, to pervert the natural trend toward a higher and more advantageous sex-relation, and to maintain lower forms, and erratic phases, of a most disadvantageous character” (*WE* 27-8). For better or worse, Gilman’s focus on a selective agency implemented by men mirrors that modeled by Darwin in *The Origin of Species* (1859), where myriad examples of artificial selection and human domestication of animal species are investigated at-length.

Left to his own devices, “man, as the feeder of woman, becomes the strongest modifying force in her economic condition,” Gilman claims, and he has thereby made unpalatable reproductive choices (*WE* 38). Rather than selecting for qualities such as intelligence, health, or strength, male-controlled sexual selection has disproportionately valued and selected for the non-functional, ornamental signifiers of sexual attractiveness. This constituted a reversal of what is otherwise a biological generality among species, where normally “the males compete in ornament, and the

females select,” so that the “the male carries ornament and the female is dark and plain” (*WE* 54). Contrary to this, Gilman finds that, among contemporary humans, “the females compete in ornament, and the males select,” and additionally observes that “there is no such glaring difference between male and female in other advanced species” (*WE* 54). The excessive ornamentation and adornment of women – that is, their aesthetic hypersexualization – is therefore “a proof of the peculiar reversal of our position in the matter of sex-selection” (*WE* 54). And the burden of adornment on women manifests itself in a variety of cultural expressions: “from the odalisque with the most bracelets to the debutante with the most bouquet, the relation still holds good, – woman’s economic profit comes through the power of sex-attraction” (*WE* 63). Compounded over generations, the volte-face selective trend toward the sexualized embellishment of women’s bodies has permitted other salubrious qualities to fall to the wayside. Signifiers of sexuality have consequently evolved into women’s only legitimate means of economic agency and self-support.

While men have altered the essential being of women through the evolutionary mechanism of the harem, Gilman narrows the span over which this degenerative transformation has taken place to an almost criminally brief period of time.²⁴ The fifth volume of *The History of Women’s Suffrage*, for example, excerpts parts of a speech given by Gilman at the February 1904 meeting of the National American Convention, where she labels her evolutionary model as “a scientific theory as to the origin and relation of the eternal duo” (qtd. 92). She makes this identification in order to ironize the very much non-eternal, even ephemeral, basis for sex divergences

²⁴ For description of Ward’s gynocentrism, see Hofstadter, 67-84.

between men and women – a relation that is nevertheless codified and rendered everlasting through the Adamic “rib story” of the Book of Genesis (qtd. 92).

The harem counts as something of a recent invention, and Gilman traces its introduction to an unspecified date that is roughly equivalent to the innovation of recorded history. She gives the approximate date in the epigraph opening this chapter: “20th century B.C.” (qtd. 92). Women have only remained “stationary and isolated since history dawned,” and not before (*GP* 386). The expression “our androcentric culture” does not reflect a natural or absolute state of sex relations, but betokens the current epoch that marks a divergence from a previous stadial paradigm of sex parity – or even women’s superiority – obscured from view because it predates historical record.²⁵

Gilman’s evolutionary history of the harem constitutes, in her thinking, a real-world, concrete actuality, rather than cultural allegory. Still, Gilman’s usage of “harem” groups together a variety of the architectural technologies of sequestration that had brought about women’s atrophy and degeneration. She does, in fact, slightly differentiate harem and home, regarding the latter as a minor spatial adjustment and negligible evolutionary innovation upon the original. “The smallness of the home-bound woman is not so injurious as the still smaller nature of the harem-bound by as much as the home is larger and freer than the harem; but just as harem women limit man’s growth, so do home women in slighter degree” (*HO* 277). Equally vestigial and obsolete, harem and home are cross-cultural analogues, and their oppressive domesticities operate to identical outcomes, albeit with different degrees of

²⁵ While I could find no description of Gilman’s vision of life before the introduction of the harem, she does appropriate contemporary speculation on a prehistorical Matriarchate. For Gilman’s and Stanton’s deployments of the Matriarchate in arguments of behalf of franchise, see Eller, 124-132.

intensity.²⁶ For this reason, Gilman's assertions are in lockstep with the feminist-Orientalist equivalencies forged between home and harem during the 19th-century, only now imbued with an evolutionary slant. Gilman often characterizes the home as being distinctly haremlike in quality – as a man's "little harem of one" or his "own private harem" (*MM* 82; *HO* 22). Orientalizing the home, of course, is done to political effect, as it lays siege to the home's aura of sanctity enshrined by Separate Sphere Ideology. Neither natural nor sanctified, the oppressive domesticities and sex relations of the home were manufactured through manipulations of space that had, over time, foundationally interfered with human biology. Harem and home were best evolved away from, locally and internationally, through women's freedom of mobility, the endowment of franchise, and the excrescences of curative sympathy.

The negative influence of the harem was not limited to domestic space. As the harem distorted women's biological makeup ("sex-development"), such corruptions additionally emanated out to cultures at-large (*WE* 35). As women were excluded from "those activities which alone develop and maintain the race type," the anti-Utilitarian net effect of the harem becomes categorically detrimental to all, adversely impacting what Gilman refers to as "race-development" – the health of a species as a whole (*MM* 50; *WE* 37). "It will therefore be clear," Gilman observes, "that the claim of excessive sex-distinction in humanity, and especially in woman, does not carry with it any specific 'moral' reproach, though it does in the larger sense prove a decided evil in its effect on human progress" (*WE* 41-2). Nullifying the evolutionary development of women and liquidating the social impact of their sympathies, the

²⁶ Gilman's description in *Home* regarding the byproducts of women's incarceration includes an early pre-sentiment of the mid-20th-century phenomenon of Momism: "the home-bound mother limits the child and boy; the home-bound girl limits the youth; and the home-bound wife keeps up the pressure for life" (277).

harem preempts socio-cultural and biological evolution more generally. Gilman distills her attitude on the broader outputs of oppressive domesticity to an axiom: “the woman is narrowed by the home and the man is narrowed by the woman” (*HO* 277).

Nowhere are the ripple effects of man-made female inferiority more pronounced, according to Gilman, than in nations of the contemporary Orient. In the East, still-flourishing, unalloyed conventions of sexual subjection, centered around harem practices, bore distinct responsibility for greater cultural dysfunction:

Disproportionate weakness is an excess sex distinction. Its injurious effect may be broadly shown in the Oriental nations, where the female in curtained harems is confined most exclusively to sex-functions and denied most fully the exercise of race-functions. In such peoples the weakness, the tendency to smaller bones and adipose tissue of the over-sexed female, is transmitted to the male, with a retarding effect on the development of the race. (*WE* 45)

Similar attitudes surface among characters in Gilman’s fiction. In *With Her in Ourland* (1916), Ellador, a newlywed expatriate from the feminist utopia Herland, is shocked by the living conditions of women in the outside world. Embarking on a honeymoon world tour, she is still particularly mortified by the situation of women in the East. Their cultural dispensation, she reports, ““means extinction – the end of that variety of woman. You seem to have quite successfully checked mutation in women; and they had neither education, opportunity, or encouragement in other variation”” (91). Ellador’s American husband, thinking more provincially, deflects ““don't say ‘you’...these are the women of the Orient you are talking about, not of all the world. Everybody knows that their position is pitiful and a great check to progress. Wait till you see my country!”” (91). As stalwart and explicit as Gilman’s persisting claims about the harem and the East may be, they are speculative and based upon second-hand information. I could find no record of Gilman traveling outside of North America or Europe.

In outlining strategies for remediating the mayhem brought about by the harem, Gilman indicates that restoring women's freedom of movement and their free choice of sexual-conjugal partnership are indispensable. "It was through a free motherhood and the female's constant selection of the best mate that she brought into the world power and brain enough to enable man to do what he has done. That free motherhood, reinstated, choosing always the best and refusing anything less, will bring us a higher humanity than we have yet known" (*HWS* 93).²⁷ Facilitating utopia also meant reforming space in order to increase the frequency of social interactions and expedite the flows of sympathy. As a result, Gilman would become involved in the architectural reform tradition of Charles Fourier, Anna Leonowens, and Melusina Faye Peirce, examined in Chapter 1. After being introduced to the work of Peirce in the 1890s, Gilman joined the National Household Economics Association. Motivated by her animus for domestic seclusion, Gilman also crafted plans for the reorganization of urban architecture roughly following the model of the phalanstery, a layout which allowed for the collectivization of domestic labor.²⁸ In *Home*, Gilman praises French industrialist and Fourierist Jean-Baptiste Andre Godin, who designed and launched a more family friendly version of the phalanstery, the *Familistère*, which he opened to his employees.²⁹

²⁷ Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) also invokes the harem in order to hint at the simultaneously pleasurable, socially beneficial, and utopian prospects of freedom of sexual choice, against which the harem (and its analogues) were seen as antithesis. In the novel, time-traveler Julian West describes a dream interlude in which he "sat on the throne of the Abencerrages in the banqueting hall of the Alhambra... Looking up to the latticed galleries, one caught a gleam now and then from the eye of some beauty of the royal harem, looking down upon the assembled flower of Moorish chivalry" (191-2). The exchange and allure of the gaze from the harem resonates with the utopian freedom of romantic choice won in the Boston of the year 2000.

²⁸ See Hayden, 185-95.

²⁹ *HO*, 339-40.

Yet actualizing utopia required something more than merely eradicating the architectural, legal, and customary barriers that obstructed women's freedom of mobility and civic participation. It also meant reversing the lasting, hereditary imprint of the harem that lingered. "The soul of woman must speak through the long accumulations of her intensified sex-nature, through the uncertain impulses of a starved and thwarted class" (*WE* 168). The residual influence of the harem, still expressed through what Gilman sees as women's physiological inferiority and cultural subordination amounts to an ever-present handicap that had been impressed upon women's biological makeup. In order to recuperate true womanhood from the dysgenic drift of the harem, Gilman expects women to reject, of their own volition, the constricted mentalities that the harem had engendered. First and foremost, this meant abandoning the provincial sentiments that had crystallized myopically around the space of harem and home. "So long as the mothers of the world give to their children only the intensely personal sentiments of the primitive home, no social advance of the father can wholly counteract their heavy influence" (*GP* 390). Petty, harem-bound sentiments concentrated exclusively around familial intimacies would only continue to stall civilizational progress and inspire nationalistic jingoism. Partial antidote to the apathetic hangover of the harem, women's internationalist networking and contact stood to engender far-reaching, unfettered sympathies that could ameliorate the lot of women and reform cultures more generally.

Much to this point, Gilman's utopia *Herland* (1915), the prequel to *With Her in Ourland*, explicitly scripts the radical cultural and biological possibilities of harem emancipation. In the novel, three American explorers stumble upon an isolated culture that consists exclusively of women, thriving on a remote Amazonian plateau. A lost tribe of Amazons in the Amazon, *Herland* riffs on both the explorer genre –

most closely Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) – and the contemporary theosophist divinations of Madame Blavatsky, who predicted that utopian epiphanies would be unveiled in the impending discovery of long-lost Atlantean civilizations.³⁰ A member of the expedition reconstructs Herlandian history, revealing in his ethnography that the “harem-bred” founding mothers of Herland arrived following an exodus from harems of “the old world,” escaping with no culture except for “traditions of the harem” (54; 94). Despite being “left alone in that terrific orphanhood,” Herland has flourished for roughly 2000 years, as its citizens developed “unknown powers in the stress of new necessity” (56). Namely, Herlandians have acquired the ability, alone among mammals, to reproduce parthenogenetically. Herland also functions in a sociality of perfect sympathetic harmony, having discarded the domestic formations of their patrician past – along with the insular, parsimonious sentiments it produced. “They had no exact analogue for our word *home*, any more than they had for our Roman-based *family*,” observes the narrator, “they loved one another with a practically universal affection, rising to exquisite and unbroken friendships, and broadening to a devotion to their country and people for which our word *patriotism* is no definition at all” (94).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the End of Sentimentality

Gilman's strident, turn-of-the-century advocacy of international sentimentalism as activist praxis and evolutionary boon is set against the backdrop of two solemn repudiations of it, made during the early 1890s. The first, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's oration “Solitude of Self” is frequently singled out as the signature document of the American Suffrage Movement – and rightfully so. Stanton delivered

³⁰ See, for example, Blavatsky, 591.

“Solitude of Self” three times over the course of three days in mid-January 1892, speaking before the national conference of the newly formed National American Women’s Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the House Committee on the Judiciary, and the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage.³¹ The speech’s somber tone reflects a string of personal losses for Stanton, now age 77, and is made in spite of recent buoying developments for the movement.³² Beyond the significant educational, professional, and political inroads made by women in recent years, women had also lately won full franchise in Wyoming and limited franchise in a handful of states.³³ Moreover, the long-feuding leadership of the AWSA and NWSA had lately been reconciled. In 1890, the two groups were re-consolidated into the NAWSA with Stanton serving as the coalition’s inaugural president. Notwithstanding its prominence, “Solitude of Self” has been largely overlooked as a scathing, methodical indictment of sentimentality. It fundamentally questions, to the point of refuting outright, sympathy’s actual, tangible value as a component of women’s activism.³⁴

Only four years prior, Stanton’s closing remarks at the 1888 ICW congress conjured the image of a new world order, conjoined via an outwardly radiating, ever-expanding “circle of woman’s sympathy” – a model that closely resembles the iteration subsequently proposed by Gilman (434). Stanton pictures woman’s sympathy extending “itself beyond the family to her neighborhood, her State, her country, and the world” (434). In opening remarks at the same conference, Stanton

³¹ Vacca, 92. Stanton would eventually describe “Solitude of Self” as “the best thing I have written” (281).

³² Stanton’s husband Henry Brewster Stanton had died in 1887 while she was away in Europe. Coleman, 181; Ginzburg 168. The Stantons’ adult son Daniel Cady Stanton and Stanton’s sister Tryphena passed away, respectively, in January and May of 1891. Sigerman, 117.

³³ O’Neill, 71.

³⁴ For a few recent accolades for “Solitude of Self,” see Kent, 96; Sigerman, 118; Engbers, 323; McMillen 2008 231.

still hedges her own grandiose optimism with the strict caveat that sympathy is valueless without corresponding legal assurances. “Experience has fully proved, that sympathy as a civil agent is vague and powerless until caught and chained in logical propositions and coined into law. When every prayer and tear represents a ballot, the mothers of the race will no longer weep in vain over the miseries of their children” (34). While sentimentalism had long been revered as a therapeutic and reformatory force among Suffragists, its failure to achieve lasting results in the four-and-a-half decades since Seneca Fall evidently gave a now elderly Stanton pause to consider its stand-alone reliability.

Inklings of doubt swell into frank renunciation in “Solitude of Self.” As implied by the speech’s title, the basis of Stanton’s argument rests in an assertion of the essential singularity and uniqueness of every individual subject. Stanton stresses “the individuality of each human soul” and “the infinite diversity in human character” (1; 2). The capacity of nature to create life-forms in endless variety renders every individual wholly distinct from all Others. Regardless of circumstance, the subject is, therefore, irreducibly isolated:

We come into the world alone, unlike all who have gone before us; we leave it alone under circumstances peculiar to ourselves. No mortal ever has been, no mortal ever will be like the soul just launched on the sea of life. There can never again be just such environments as make up the infancy, youth and manhood of this one. Nature never repeats herself and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another. (2)

...

In youth our most bitter disappointments, our brightest hopes and ambitions are known only to ourselves; even our friendship and love we never fully share with another; there is something of every passion in every situation we conceal. Even so in our triumphs and our defeats... The solitude of the king on his throne and the prisoner in his cell differs in character and degree, but it is solitude nevertheless. We ask no sympathy from others in the anxiety and agony of a broken friendship or shattered love. When death sunders our nearest ties, alone we sit in the shadows of our affliction. Alike mid the greatest triumphs and darkest tragedies of life we walk alone... alone in the prison cell we lament our crimes and misfortunes; alone expiate them on the

gallows. In hours like these realize the awful solitude of individual life, its pains, its penalties, its responsibilities; hours in which the youngest and most helpless are thrown on their own resources for guidance and consolation. (3)

Through the claim of fundamental difference among all humans, Stanton consequently rejects the authenticity of an inferential sensation of cognitive or emotive interconnection with the Other. Extending Adam Smith's caveats on the illusory authenticity and scope of sympathy to an extreme, Stanton proclaims that the interior state of all individuals is fundamentally impenetrable. Because intimations of the Other's unique interiority remain asymptotically unintelligible and uncanny, the Suffragist socialities and activisms informed by a pretension to sympathy are consequently valueless.

Continuing on from this line of thought, Stanton stabs at the ideological bedrock of sentimentalism: sentimental narrative. Stanton reproduces an archetypal scenario of the American sentimental narrative in order to undermine perceptions of its real-time efficacy:

What a touching instance of a child's solitude; of that hunger of heart for love and recognition, in the case of the little girl who helped to dress a Christmas tree for the children of the family in which she served. On finding there was no present for herself she slipped away in the darkness and spent the night in an open field sitting on a stone, and when found in the morning was weeping as if her heart would break. No mortal will ever know the thoughts that passed through the mind of that friendless child in the long hours of that cold night, with only the silent stars to keep her company. The mention of her case in the daily papers moved many generous hearts to send her presents, but in the hours of her keenest sufferings she was thrown wholly on herself for consolation. (3)

Stanton invokes this situation in order to stress how its model of activism is anachronistic. The sympathetic community and public charity that eventually mobilized to address the child's suffering – in this instance, obviating against the forms of structural violence befalling a victim of poverty and neglect – only does so retroactively, well removed from the occasion of the suffering. This case represents

the rule more than the exception. Sympathy is always limited, imperfect, and belated because of the corruption stemming from the cognitive disjuncture separating all subjects. Besides, public response relies wholly upon both the textualization of the servant girl's story and its subsequent circulation. As sentimentality crucially relies on the transmission and perception of sympathy-inducing sense-data, all that which goes unreported forecloses the sentimentality's remedial operation. The lacunae produced in cases of individual isolation – especially in carceral domesticities of home and harem – exacerbate the solitude of self and the insignificance of a sympathy that cannot possibly be engaged in the absence of a plaintive voice or a sad sight. To accentuate this disconnection, "Solitude of Self" is replete with instances of the voicelessness and lack of feeling that arise in contexts of individual isolation, incarceration, and social marginalization – especially among women.

Laying siege to another well-worn sentimental typology, Stanton scrutinizes sentimental narrative's celebrated virtue of faithful submission and patient expectancy. Anticipating and relying too heavily on the pending beneficence and succor provided by the Other is, instead, treated as a recipe for disaster: "the girl of sixteen, thrown on the world to support herself, to make her own place in society, to resist the temptations that surround her and maintain a spotless integrity, must do all this by native force or superior education. She does not acquire this power by being trained to trust others and distrust herself" (4). The solitude of self, for Stanton, places a double burden on uneducated women, who are forced to survive in the intellectual vacuum of an oppressive domesticity and contrive their own survival strategies for psychological subsistence. When "robbed of her natural rights, handicapped by law and custom at every turn," woman is still "compelled to fight her own battles, and in the emergencies of life fall back on herself for protection" (4).

Stanton imagines the solitary woman as forced to dwell within “a world of her own, the arbiter of her own destiny, an imaginary Robinson Crusoe with her woman Friday on a solitary island” (1). The analogy suggests a psychological bifurcation, where a lone woman must work double duty as both a female Crusoe and her woman Friday, which is to say, she must cannily supply her own company, her own sociality, and her own support through whatever means she may improvise. “Her rights under such circumstances are to use all her faculties for her own safety and happiness” (1). As women are denied the real-time effect of the emotional support provided by an Other, Stanton demands that women be given access to the tools of self-reliance through education. Less a privilege, every woman has the right to “the full development of thought and action; for giving her the most enlarged freedom of thought and action” (1).

Anticipating Gilman’s subsequent evolutionization of sentimentality, “Solitude of Self” also makes allusion to major figures of both Social Darwinism and sympathetic evolutionism in order to criticize ideological elements of each school. More conspicuously, Stanton assails the “the usual discussion” forwarded by functionalists, arguing that women should dutifully and contently assume their naturally prescribed roles within “woman’s sphere” and subsume individual desires in abeyance to the proficient operation of society and the greater good. “Such men as Herbert Spencer, Frederic Harrison, and Grant Allen uniformly subordinate her rights and duties as an individual, as a citizen, as a woman, to the necessities of these incidental relations” (1). More covertly, Stanton couches criticism of sympathetic evolution in a sketch of prison life, which had been recounted to her personally by Russian aristocrat, geologist, and biologist Prince Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin:

I once asked Prince Krapotkin, the Russian nihilist, how he endured his long years in prison, deprived of books, pen, ink, and paper. “Ah,” he said, “I thought out many questions in which I had a deep interest. In the pursuit of an idea I took no note of time. When tired of solving knotty problems I recited all the beautiful passages in prose or verse I have ever learned. I became acquainted with myself and my own resources. I had a world of my own, a vast empire, that no Russian jailor or Czar could invade.” Such is the value of liberal thought and broad culture when shut off from all human companionship, bringing comfort and sunshine within even the four walls of a prison cell. (5)

This anecdote by the prince was likely related during an 1888 meeting between the two in England, reported by Stanton in her autobiography *Eighty Years and More* (1898).³⁵ At the time, Kropotkin was living in exile in the United Kingdom after fleeing tsarist Russia in 1876. He was imprisoned in St. Petersburg’s Peter-and-Paul Fortress in 1874 for his support of socialism and anarchism (he was also a committed devotee of Fourier).³⁶ Kropotkin’s descriptions of the sophistication and severity of sensory deprivation techniques in the tsar’s prisons evidently made a lasting impression on Stanton.³⁷ Returning directly from Great Britain to attend the 1888 ICW congress in Washington, Stanton presents a letter submitted for the occasion by Kropotkin. Following suit, the prince pledges the “profound sympathy” with which “your labors have been followed by my compatriots, the women of Russia” (439).³⁸

³⁵ 409.

³⁶ Woodcock, 2; Borrello, 30. For Kropotkin’s citation of Charles Fourier, see *The Conquest of Bread* 6, 10, 35, 109; *Fugitive Writings* 101, 125, 147.

³⁷ Stanton paraphrases Krapotkin at-length in her autobiography:

One of the refinements of cruelty they practice on prisoners is never to allow them to hear the human voice. A soldier always accompanies the warder who distributes the food, to see that no word is spoken...in vain the poor prisoner asks questions, no answer is ever made, no tidings from the outside world ever given. One may well ask what devil in human form has prescribed such prison life and discipline. (409)

³⁸ More than his mastery of English idiom, Kropotkin’s enthusiasm for the cause of suffrage in the United States is self-evident: “After having been with Mrs. Beecher Stowe, with your venerable President, Mrs. Cady Stanton, in the vanguard of the good cause, will you ever admit the possibility of finding yourselves with the modern enslavers, hunting to death the revolted slaves of modern time? Away with the idea!”

At face value, Stanton's mention of Kropotkin invites comparison between the well-heeled prince and the intellectually impoverished, uneducated woman. Kropotkin's primary coping strategy for combatting the extremity of his isolation entails using his "own resources" of "liberal thought and broad culture" (5; 6). Not wholly his "own" invention, the prince devises a means of psychological self-preservation by resorting to the contents of his past education. An imparted awareness of the wide world provides a toolkit – an ability for imaginary world-making and empire-building – that allows him to escape the brutal realities of his confinement. The rudiments indispensable to Kropotkin's survival in prison are identical to those historically denied women.³⁹ Conversely, Stanton sees woman wholly consigned to an idiosyncratic "world of her own," which more closely resembles Crusoe's empty, deserted island – a world the female Crusoe must endure wholly unaided (1).

Stanton's incorporation of Kropotkin's prison narrative in "Solitude of Self" contains an added valence, chiefly because of the work for which Kropotkin is best remembered. In January 1892, Kropotkin published the fourth installment of eight essays in the periodical *The Nineteenth Century*, eventually published together as *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902).⁴⁰ By Kropotkin's report, the volume was inspired by his extended travels in Siberia in the 1860s and 70s. Rather than

(440). For Kropotkin's attitudes on Stowe, see Hecht, 5. Gilman also testifies to hearing Kropotkin speak in London, at a rally also attended by Louise Michel. See *LI*, 202.

³⁹ The implication that Kropotkin pursued his research without material effects is itself an exaggeration. Because of his aristocratic pedigree and the lobbying efforts of friends-in-high-places, he was supplied with reading and writing implements and allowed to continue his scientific work in prison, where he completed "Research on the Ice Age," published in 1876. See Todes, 125; Borrello, 30.

⁴⁰ Olson, 260. The first in the series, "Mutual Aid Among Animals" was published in September 1890. See Kropotkin *MA*, xviii.

witnessing brutish Hobbesian struggle among all organisms, Kropotkin was struck by examples of cooperation and support.⁴¹ Because of his experiences, Kropotkin admonishes Social Darwinists, such as Spencer and Huxley, who question the naturalness of human morality.⁴² He chastises these theorists as “Darwin’s vulgarizers,” who mistakenly view Darwin’s theories through a “narrow Malthusian conception of struggle” (110; 3).⁴³ Revisiting the findings of *The Descent of Man*, Kropotkin asserts that “Darwin was quite right when he saw in man’s social qualities the chief factor for his further evolution” (110). A counterweight to competition among living things, “sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle,” Kropotkin writes (5).

Kropotkin differentiates his arguments from Darwin’s by claiming that the faculties of love and sympathy are less the drivers of kinship and cooperation, than perceivable, subordinate trappings of a much more pervasive, instinctual drive. Readily observable throughout the animal kingdom and in human cultures, the impetus to perform acts of mutual preservation is “a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy” (xvii). It is “an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life” (xvii). A *selected-for* instinct toward collectivity serves as the bedrock that then generates the range of human affective experiences.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid. 9.

⁴² See also Vucinich, 348.

⁴³ See also Hofstadter, 74.

⁴⁴ “Upon this broad necessary foundation the still higher moral feelings are developed” (xiv).

Without making direct reference to the already published essays that would eventually comprise *Mutual Aid*, “Solitude of Self” carries an insinuation through its inclusion of Kropotkin. During a period of crisis, the champion of both mutual aid and the collective’s evolutionary advantage was himself left totally alone and forced to fall back upon his own intellectual resources, finding little to no comfort in human sociality. Very nearly turning some of Kropotkin’s own language against him, Stanton declares that “the great lesson that nature seems to teach us at all ages is self-dependence, self-protection, self-support” (2). The boon of mutual aid is hardly to be expected as a universal given, but contrarily represents a luxury and contingency dependent on situation and chance.

In a telling example, Stanton concedes that natural inclination impels human beings to remarkable acts of sacrifice in the name of preserving Others. Describing the aftermath of an earthquake and tsunami that ravaged the coastline of the Bay of Biscay, Stanton relates how escapees from a demolished women’s prison saved lives “promptly by clasping hands” and forming “a chain of themselves...pushed out into the sea” to recover the drowning. The inmates, emancipated by *force majeure*, thereafter did “all in their power for their [the victims’] comfort and protection” (7). To Stanton, nature remains “the greatest of all teachers in the hour of danger and death” (7). In this example, however, nature is given unfettered influence and returned to its full sanative operation only once an interferential technology of incarceration has been eradicated and razed to the ground.

The brunt of Stanton’s critique in “Solitude of Self” relies on cases of isolation, incarceration, and social marginalization – examples conceivably informed by Suffragist dispatches from the harem over recent decades. Elsewhere a key ideologue and architect of sympathy as political panacea, Stanton now exhibits

considerable misgivings toward the ability of sympathy to reveal the Other and thereby help to alleviate suffering, especially in instances where cultural interpositions produce silence and sentimental caesurae. “Solitude of Self” questions sympathy’s real-world, real-time ability to comport with and consequently alleviate the dire reality of women trapped in carceral domesticities. Through the figure of Pyotr Kropotkin, the evolutionary and utopian teleology that sentimental activism gestures toward are also called into question. Stressing how spaces of exception annul a sympathetic totality, “Solitude of Self” *unimagines* the sentimental commonwealth founded upon precepts of the universal permeability of sympathy and the total inclusion of *all* disenfranchised women.

Perilous Sympathy in “The Yellow Wall-paper”

Gilman’s “The Yellow Wall-paper,” originally published in *The New England Magazine* in January 1892, also airs grave concerns about the real potentialities of an endlessly propagating sympathy – although it does so more surreptitiously than “Solitude of Self.” The short story likewise utilizes a narrative of isolation to make this point, charting the failures of sympathy in a scenario of confinement. Gilman’s paradoxical counterattack on sentimentality in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is partly encapsulated in her stated inspiration for composing the piece. In the short essay “Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper” (1913), Gilman maintains that the story was intended to criticize the “Rest Cure,” a therapy devised by poet, novelist, and doctor Silas Weir Mitchell, who personally treated Gilman in the late 1880s. Reviewing morbidity among ailing women, Mitchell, in fact, identifies sympathy as a pathogen warranting quarantine. Rather than forcefully discrediting Mitchell’s epidemiological

approach to sentimentality, “The Yellow Wall-paper” only suggests an alternate, yet equally virulent, pathway to sickness-via-sympathy.

Later described by Gilman as a tale of “incipient insanity,” the narrative consists of the diaristic dispatches of a narrator strictly confined to the upper-level room of a New England country house (*WI* 271). The structure is identified by the narrator, variously, as “ancestral halls,” a “colonial mansion,” and “a hereditary estate” – each attribution very nearly echoing the evolutionary burden of that which has inherited and that which has been colonized among women (*YW* 647). The narrator’s husband, John, supervises her treatment for an unspecified psychological ailment by seeing to it that his wife remains isolated for as prolonged a period as is possible. A doctor by trade, John confers with his physician-brother for second opinions and exercises totalizing, despotic surveillance and control over the narrator. Gilman, the evolutionary theorist, would be keen to categorize the extremity of the narrator’s seclusion and abjection as a model example of a “little harem of one.” The pattern of the titular yellow wallpaper adorning the room, which the narrator identifies as non-figural, “florid arabesque,” further Orientalizes John’s designs and the narrator’s situation (653).

Complaining that “I am alone a good deal just now,” the narrator’s lack of human contact is more the direct objective of her treatment than its unfortunate byproduct (650). In his double capacity as legal guardian and caregiver, John has barred his wife from visits with immediate family members. Such encounters, it appears, would be too conducive toward dangerous over-excitation. “It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work,” the narrator complains, “when I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow case as

to let me have those stimulating people about now” (649). This regimen also curtails her access to her newborn baby, for its emotional hazards: “such a dear baby! And yet I *cannot* be with him, it makes me so nervous” (649).

As it turns out, John’s handling of his wife’s condition is hardly an idiosyncratic form of care. To the contrary, isolation therapy had been fully sanctioned by the medical establishment. And it would find one of its most trenchant advocates in Silas Weir Mitchell. A treatment for women’s “nervous conditions” such as hysteria and neurasthenia (a term he coined), Mitchell’s Rest Cure prescribed a patient’s protracted bedrest and severely reduced mobility. Remaining in a state of virtual invalidism for extended periods of time, patients were fed a heavy diet, conducive to weight gain. In “The Yellow Wall-paper,” John threatens the narrator with being put under Mitchell’s direct care if she fails to show signs of improvement.⁴⁵

The Rest Cure method also mandates, as a core outcome, segregating the patient in order to curb and minimize the illness-inducing feelings she might otherwise exchange with healthy female acquaintances, through “hurtful sympathy” and its “moral poison” (*FB* 69; *DP* 126). In *Doctor and Patient* (1887) and the unfortunately titled *Fat and Blood: and How to Make Them* (1877), Mitchell treats the communicability of affect and its side effects as pathogen. In his scenario, a previously unaffected female caregiver instinctively gravitates into sympathetically replicating her female charge’s psychological ailments. Once this exchange has occurred, the nurse “is in the grip of an octopus” and, in time, succumbs to the very same affliction (*DP* 126). Mitchell writes: “A hysterical girl is, as Wendell Holmes

⁴⁵ “John says if I don’t pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall” (650).

has said in his decisive phrase, a vampire who sucks the blood of the healthy people about her; and I may add that pretty surely where there is one hysterical girl there will be soon or late two sick women” (*FB* 49). Depriving the patient of would-be carriers, who might assimilate her emotions, reduces sympathy’s initial malignancy and limits the spread of this sympathetically communicable disease. The ailment is, instead, best confronted individually and in utter isolation. “Tears are for the nervous woman, the seed of trouble,” writes Mitchell, “the presence of others is apt to insure failure of self-control, must ultimately be self-reliant. A word of pity, the touch of affection, the face of sympathy, double her danger. When at her worst, let her seek to be alone and in silence and solitude to fight her battle” (*DP* 130). And Mitchell fully expects the patient to want to break the sentimental firewall created around her, motivated by a need for affective consolation: “given a nervous, hysterical, feeble woman, shut out from the world, and if she does not in time become irritable, exacting, hungry for sympathy and petty power, she is one of nature’s noblest” (*DP* 126).

The Rest Cure is, admittedly, a comparative improvement and *traitement moral* over more invasive approaches to women’s psychiatric treatment then actively practiced.⁴⁶ Yet it brings about what Gilman, the theorist, would abhor as a *re-haremization* or re-cordoning of women’s newly won presence in the public and civic spheres. And this effect is borne out in her own account of being placed under Mitchell’s care. Gilman reports that she sought help directly from Mitchell in 1887, after suffering from a nervous breakdown. Mitchell administered the Rest Cure, Gilman remembers, and “sent me home with solemn advice to ‘live as domestic a life as far as possible,’” limiting her intellectual pursuits and forbidding creative activities

⁴⁶ A short list, as supplied by Mitchell, names “nerve-doctors, gynaecologists, plaster jackets, braces, water-treatment, and all the fantastic variety of other cures” (*FB* 37).

(WI 271).⁴⁷ Not quite the harbingers of global utopia, Mitchell's typologies of the hyper-sentimental sick woman and her probing, disease-bearing sympathies are instead best withdrawn – even from their full influence in spheres of the domestic and the familial. Still, the Rest Cure would garner praise from revealing quarters of the psychiatric profession. Sigmund Freud, for one, endorsed Mitchell's methodologies and employed the Rest Cure among his patients for a time. In one positive review, Freud lauds what is, for Mitchell, a pillar of recovery, namely “the avoidance of all emotional excitement which might contribute to a hysterical outbreak” (HY 55).⁴⁸

Purposively deprived of human contact, the narrator exhibits a great deal of emotional strain in “The Yellow Wall-paper,” and she does so in a way that maligns the Rest Cure for its negative side effects. Nevertheless, the narrative shares Mitchell's hostility toward sentimentality, re-pathologizing it by offering a competing scenario in which sympathy still contributes to the narrator's mental decline. Facing the intellectual torpor and psychological stress of being denied stimulation and contact – another Orientalist mainstay of the harem – the narrator resorts to an idiosyncratic coping mechanism to combat the terms of her confinement. This consists primarily of inventing interaction by anthropomorphizing the everyday, inanimate objects occupying the space around her. A tendency toward personification is a childhood borrowing: “I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a

⁴⁷ Gilman reports that Mitchell advised that she vow ““never to touch pen, brush or pencil again as long as I lived”” (271).

⁴⁸ In a short positive 1887 review of *Fat and Blood*, Freud also praises Mitchell's “valuable advice” on regulating the patient through “a combination of rest in bed, isolation, feeding up, massage and electricity in a strictly regulated manner” (36). How Mitchell's emphasis on emotional, professional disengagement influenced Freud is open to speculation. For description of Freud's psychoanalytic work on identification, contra-sympathy, see Hendler, 5-6.

toy-store,” she admits, “I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend” (650). Contriving imaginary friends (and an imaginary community) in lieu of the actual, the narrator falls back upon the pathetic fallacy, a survival strategy that exploits the inferential dimension of sympathy to vivify the inert. The artifacts inside the room subsequently acquire human features and the capacity for expressivity: “I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before and we all know how much expression they have” (650). The narrator’s improvised, imaginary sociality closely resembles Kropotkin’s strategy of world making. Following Stanton’s protests, the narrator imagines a social world without the beneficial reference points and aid of education. Instead, she recuperates a creative practice from her youth.

In the course of this process, the narrator turns her probing sympathetic gaze to the yellow wallpaper, which develops human features in the form of “absurd, unblinking eyes” that “are everywhere” (650). Through the eyes that have materialized, the wallpaper parrots a form of human contact, specifically via the prosthetic gaze being returned. What begins as an exchange of gazes becomes a community of exchanges, as the narrator discerns a woman or “a great many women” who are situated, seemingly incarcerated, underneath the pattern’s constricting overlay (654).⁴⁹ Discerning the Other(s) underneath the wallpaper requires the perceptual inference of depth, transforming a flat, two-dimensional field into three-dimensional space. Unlike the other experiences of the harem examined in this study, the narrator deploys a penetrative gaze that is very different from the constrained

⁴⁹ “She is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern – it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads” (654).

visualities and circumspect ekphrases examined in each of the previous chapters.⁵⁰ I have argued that this mode of vision rebuffed, deflected, or baffled at a liminal or surface level bespeaks Smithean doubts about the genuine ability of sympathy to assay and then infer feeling upon the Other with epistemological certainty. Conversely, the narrator of “The Yellow Wall-paper” sees past this vanishing point of inscrutability, behind which the Other dwells, in order to behold and attribute pathos falsely to that Other.

The art object made permeable in “The Yellow Wall-paper” – the tessellated, sprawling “pointless pattern” of a “florid arabesque” – is additionally described by the narrator as resembling “a debased Romanesque” as well as a series of “interminable grotesques” (653; 650; 651). Each classification names one subgenre of the contemporary aesthetic-scientific supergenre of ornament. Gilman is likely to have studied the science and design of ornament at length while a student at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISDE).⁵¹ In the second half of the 19th century, “ornament” lumped together any number of genres of non-figural art with repeating, recursive patterns. Practiced by nearly all world cultures over all historical periods (excluding modern Europe), ornament was speculated to express the purest manifestation of an uncultivated, innate human endowment for art form.

As discussed above, ornament represented, for Gilman, one of the invariably negative techniques through which women’s bodies were marked and thereby altered

⁵⁰ These artifacts include Anna Leonowens’ unannotated and affectively flat treatment of Western statuary expropriated into the iconic array of a Siamese temple; the fractured and displaced gaze of Susan Elston Wallace’s 101 Raphaelesque Madonnas and her narrator’s skeptical attitude toward reproducibility; and the narrator’s senses of bafflement and frustration toward an impressionist painting in Demetra Vaka Brown’s *Haremlik*.

⁵¹ Gilman was a member of the college’s inaugural class in 1878, remaining for only one academic year. See Davis 2010.1, 43 and Hill, 50-1.

in the controlled environment of the harem. Concomitant with this negative nuance, ornamental artwork was also hypothesized to correspond with and reproduce the underlying, recurring patterns in the deep structures of nature. The contours of ornamental art, according to conjecture, gestured to a shared, universal code among biological and geological forms.⁵²

Capitalizing upon the breadth of ornamental art and ornamental discourse in the 19th century, the ornamental field of the yellow wallpaper is something of a floating signifier. It can connote both the biological drift perpetrated upon women through the ornamentality of the harem or, conversely, the potentialities of mastering a universal biological code that could undo that drift and reinstate an essential womanhood in modernity.⁵³ In either reading, the woman underneath the wallpaper – and the narrator’s fixation upon sympathetically perceiving this Other – motions toward an evolutionary imperative to see past the degenerated womanhood of recorded history and recover a more natural, originary expression of womanhood.

Ultimately, the woman behind the wallpaper gains motility, leaves the confines of the rooms, multiplies, and appears (to the narrator) roaming the grounds of the hereditary estate. She even colonizes the narrator. In the closing lines of the

⁵² The structural affinities between ornamental high art and deep structures in nature is captured in Owen Jones’ *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856) – a key founding text of the discipline of ornament. For Jones, the Moresque arabesques contained in the Alhambra are the purest expression of ornamental art *because* they most closely replicate the infinitely recursive, deep structures in nature – namely the veins of a leaf. 69.

⁵³ The first artifact introduced in *The Grammar of Ornament* confirms Gilman’s juxtaposition of ornament and androcentric violence. The heavily tattooed, decapitated head of a Maori woman on display at the “Museum at Chester” [Figure 5] is, for Jones, a prime example of ornamental proficiency among an implicitly inferior, closer-to-nature culture – “in this very barbarous practice [tattooing] the principles of the highest ornamental art are manifest”(13). The severed head and art object forces a connection between the adornment of tattooing and the act of decapitation. Both mark the body of the unidentified woman as subjected to extreme forms of violence.

short story, the woman from the wallpaper has displaced the narrator's subjectivity: "I've got out at last...in spite of you and Jane? And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back" (656). This fragmentation or decentering of self reverberates with the bifurcation implied by Stanton, of an isolated woman divided into both Robinson Crusoe and her woman Friday. The climatic displacement of the "Yellow Wall-paper" parodies the degree to which sympathy decenters the self by illusorily inhabiting the imagined subjecthood and self-interest of the Other. Without a backstop, delusional sympathy becomes a pathology in "The Yellow Wall-paper." An impulse to indulge in human contact – by knowing, beholding, and engaging an Other where no one else exists – stimulates the invention of a sympathetic Other, who takes on a life of her own and dislocates the self. For the way a compulsion to sympathize spirals into madness amidst inhospitable circumstances, "The Yellow Wall-paper" matches "Solitude of Self" for its antipathy toward the real-time, practical, and authentic reformative power of sentimentality.

In *Conflicting Stories* (1991), Elizabeth Ammons argues that long fiction by female authors writing between 1890s and the 1920s represents "a diverse yet unified body of work" that could be taken as a self-contained canon (vii). Incorporating Gilman but not Stanton into her genealogy, Ammons repeatedly pinpoints the start date of this proto-tradition to the year 1892, via a number of inaugural texts. Building upon Ammons' genealogy, I understand Stanton and Gilman's landmark texts from the first month of 1892, both evincing an evolving attitude toward sentimentality, as decisively contributing to this sea change. Consciously or unconsciously, both authors symbolically abandon a commitment to the tentative imagined communities that mutual feeling would concretize and rally together. Writing on "The Yellow

Wall-paper,” Ammons observes that “the idea that women will band together in mutual support and accomplish as a group what cannot be won by any one individual remains just that, an idea” (39). Consequently, a number of subsequent works provisionally included in this four-decade-long tradition are decidedly bleak narratives recounting crestfallen female protagonists, who must face the vicissitudes of social marginalization and isolation while receiving no redress from the community that shuns them. An improvised community of likeminded fellow-sufferers also noticeably fails to materialize.⁵⁴ Rather, the alternatives of self-sustenance or demise rule the day.

Reforming Sympathy

Despite grave intimations to the contrary, Gilman, evolutionary theorist and political activist, only became more steadfast. As the 20th century progressed, she would continue to forward her model of a peaceable world revolution driven by women’s supranationalized sentimentalities. In the August 1913 issue of *The Forerunner*, the journal Gilman wrote and edited, she reports on her observations attending the seventh biennial meeting of the International Equal Suffrage Association (IESA), convened in Budapest, Austria-Hungary. Resolute, Gilman continues to eke presentiments of utopia out of recent world events. “It is the dominant fact that women, for the first time in history, are moving in large bodies and for purposes of social benefit” and “are now free to cross land and ocean, to travel thousands of miles for large common ends” (204). The woman’s movement has

⁵⁴ In the texts surveyed by Ammons, this pattern encompasses Chopin’s *The Awakening* (1899), Faucet’s *Plum Bun* (1928), Harper’s *Iola Leroy* (1892), Larsen’s *Quicksand* (1928), Stein’s *Three Lives* (1909), and Wharton’s *House of Mirth* (1905), to name a few.

spread and come to represent “so wide an interest that now there are but five civilized states in which there is no suffrage movement” (204). Such developments counted as a form of substantiating evidence: “take it the world over, the volume, the universality of this great social revolution is more surprising every year” (207). In the same *Forerunner* issue, Gilman’s essay “Faith in Humanity” further clarifies many key points of contention presented during the previous 15 years. She imagines a “widening and deepening of our social consciousness as shall make life an ever-growing wonder and delight” (203). And human receptivity to these changes was still intensifying: “to-day we are more fit to understand this message than we were two thousand years ago; we are all stirring and alive with the interest in social conditions, with the wish to serve, to help make things better” (202). Gilman is unwavering in her predictions of utopia, even from the vantage point of Budapest, the capital of an empire that would not survive the half-decade, its dissolution an outcome of the world war that would erupt in the Balkans in less than twelve months.

After the turn of the century, Gilman’s writing elsewhere shows an increasing impatience and enmity toward those parties and spaces of exception potentially responsible for obstructing sentimental commonwealth. Harem-like enclaves of stagnation or resistance (like that of “The Yellow Wall-paper”) become increasingly galling and are depicted as meriting intervention. In *The Home*, for example, Gilman reiterates her often-used mantra on the matter-of-factness and self-evidence of the evolution of sympathy currently taking place: “The love of human beings for each other is not a dream of religion, it is a law of nature. It is bred of human contact, of human relation, of human service” (346). Such a trend, however, depends heavily upon a condition of totality. It “rests on identical interest and the demands of a social development which *must include all, if it permanently lift any*” (italics mine, 346).

This suggests a conviction that, in order for the entirety of the human species to be inducted into sentimental community, the great majority, if not the whole, must feel together and in concert. Gilman, in turn, rails against spaces of exception, like harem and home, for the localized sentiments they prop up and preserve. Bucking “against this perfectly natural development” of broader human sociality, there “stands this opposing shell; this earlier form of life, essential in its place, most mischievous out of it; this early cradle of humanity in which lie smothered the full-grown people of to-day” (346).

Preserved by apathetic outliers or *refuseniks* hesitant to take part in a broader social consciousness and sympathetic interconnection, these cells of apathetic resistance threaten to impede advancement elsewhere. Gilman’s emphasis on a model of total sympathetic reform, which must necessarily include all, is best contextualized through eugenicist discourse from this era, which posited that degenerates were endowed with nation-building counter-agencies of their own. In 1877, for example, Richard Dugdale, a member of the New York Prison Association, published the findings of a case study begun in 1874, *“The Jukes”*: *A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity*. Tracing the genealogy of the Jukes Family (a pseudonym), Dugdale endeavored to assay the net social impact of a single family of degenerates, including their cost to the state, over multiple generations. Annotating Dugdale’s findings and those of similar cases, Dr. William S. Sadler, a former student of Freud’s, later comments on how the Jukes’ burden on society allegedly multiplied as its members propagated. “Out of 1,200 descendants from the founder of the ‘Jukes’ through 75 years,” Sadler complains, “310 were professional paupers, who spent in all 2,300 years in poorhouses, 50 were prostitutes, 7 murders, 60 habitual thieves, and 130 common criminals” (334). The Jukes had, by Sadler’s tally, “cost the state of

New York more than \$1,700,000 in 75 years” (334).⁵⁵ From the single founding patriarch of this clan of “racial ismaelites” sprang “whole colonies of defectives,” amounting “to the present-day horde of wandering criminal and defective descendants,” who were responsible for widespread acts of “social degeneration and gross parasitism,” (334; 335).⁵⁶ Operating alone and in a fashion not unlike the sentimental founding mothers of *Herland*, degenerate enclaves evidently had the power to seed and grow into anti-sentimental nations unto themselves, primed to offset evolutionary gains elsewhere.

Gilman is repeatedly of the opinion that a few bad apples can spoil the whole bunch. The society of Gilman’s *Moving the Mountain* (1911) takes the view that safeguarding the growth of social sympathies from retrogradation necessitates state intervention. The novel is often taken as the first installment of Gilman’s *Herland Trilogy*, even as it seems to encompass a fictional universe of its own. Set in the United States of the not-too-remote year 1940, a preface describes *Moving the Mountain* as a “short distance Utopia, a baby Utopia” (6). Opposite the arduous, Herculean labor ironically implied in the biblical and Orientalist allusions of the title, this utopia is said to reside in an actionable, achievable future, brought to fruition within the interval of a few decades.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ This from Sadler’s *Race Decadence: An Examination of the Causes of Racial Degeneracy* (1922). Briefly a student of Freud and Adler, Sadler was a Chicago-based surgeon and psychiatrist, instrumental in founding the Urantia Movement, a UFO cultus. See Gardner, 70. A biography of Sadler on the Urantia Movement’s website describes his boyhood friendship with Lew Wallace, at the time the author was composing *Ben-Hur*, in Wabash, Indiana. See Sprunger.

⁵⁶ Deutsch, 34-5; 125-33.

⁵⁷ An allusion to Matthew 17:20 and Jesus’ exorcism of a demonically possessed child: “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.” In Orientalist polemic, the expression first recorded in English in Francis Bacon’s *Essays* (1597), involving an

Following an accident, explorer John Robertson wanders the Tibetan Plateau in an amnesiac haze for thirty years. John is rescued by his sister, Nellie, and returned to a United States that has been utterly transformed and is unrecognizable. Constituted some time around 1920, this utopia has eradicated all human conflict and blight, with no “poverty – no labor problem – no color problem – no sex problem – almost no disease – very little accidents – practically no fires...no one needs to work over two hours day...we have no graft – no adulteration of goods – no malpractice – no crime” (48). The bulk of *Moving the Mountain* captures a series of dialogues between Robertson and old acquaintances, who try to impart some sense of the origin and arc of the reforms that have taken place. Changes are all so patently obvious in hindsight, they are difficult for characters to quantify.

Corresponding with Gilman’s activism as a Suffragist, this future is wholly predicated upon a single causative phenomenon: “the women woke up,” by securing the rights to vote, to decide romantic partners, to pursue any profession, and to steer society (75). Origin and catalyst, women’s expanding social consciousness and public presence has hastened an even wider array of epiphanies. Describing a bygone age of ignorance, one cultural interpreter delineates the apathetic errors of the past: “all our mistakes lay in our belated Individualism” and “looking at life as a personal affair” (250; 252). Adding, “it was as if we had all along had inside us an enormous reservoir of love, human love, that had somehow been held in and soured” (249).

Transformation has been achieved through the development of “a higher moral sense” and the remediation of “an atrophied social consciousness” that “was

anecdote alleging the Prophet Mohammad’s imposture, “*If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill*” (21).

electrified with the new thoughts and feelings” (117; 265). In this brave new world, energy has been channeled directly into cultivating and harmonizing social relations and sympathetic exchange. “Human life is social, John, collectively, common, or it isn’t human life at all,” a friend explains, “the patent facts of social relation, how all our daily life, our accumulated wealth and beauty and continuing power, rests on common action, on what people do together” (252; 261). Reflecting conjectures made on behalf of mutual aid and sympathy made during the previous four decades by Darwin, Kropotkin, and Gilman, utopia in *Moving the Mountain* is driven by the strengthening interconnection of the collective, because “a growing race grew *that way*” (249). “We have nature on our side. It is natural for a social animal to develop social instincts” (262). Social awareness has exerted a therapeutic effect on social ills, operating toward the overall physical, intellectual, and moral improvement of the species.

Revealed only in the final chapter, the specific measures by which citizens of this future United States have ushered in sympathetic utopia thrusts *Moving the Mountain* firmly into the realm of the dystopian. The climactic task of disclosure falls to an old college buddy of Robertson’s, Dr. Frank Borderson, who is now a professor of ethics. By Borderson’s own admission, he lived a life of degeneracy prior to the social transformation: “I was an invalid tramp...a drunkard, a cocaine fiend, a criminal, sick, desperate, as bad as they make them” (257). Means justifying the ends, Borderson and others like him were compulsorily institutionalized in “moral sanitariums” and placed under the care of “moral hygienists” (271; 250). While patient care in the sanitarium is comprised of a number of conventional therapeutic techniques, Borderson additionally describes a regimen of treatment resembling intensive sympathetic interface and communion. Borderson has been cured of his

vices through a form of group indoctrination that somehow induces a stronger sense of social responsibility in the individual: “sane, strong, intelligent minds put themselves in connection with mine...and shared their strength with me. I was made to feel that my individual failure was no great matter, but that my social duty was” (249).⁵⁸

While Frank Borderson’s anti-social affliction merely *borders on the* incurable, members of an unlucky segment of the population who proved resistant to treatment and moral reform have been systematically murdered. A champion of the moral transformation, Borderson acknowledges – and even takes ownership – of the historical reality that, “we killed many hopeless degenerates, insane, idiots, and real perverts, after trying our best powers of cure” (259). Individuals like Borderson, with checkered pasts and hereditary predispositions toward addiction, mental illness, or criminality are additionally prohibited by law from bearing children. Contrary to the Social Darwinist eugenics enacted in the 20th century, based in policing racial fitness, the eugenics of *Moving the Mountain* is paradoxically geared toward policing an individual’s sympathetic faculty. The novel also recapitulates Darwin’s antipathy toward misguided, anti-sentimental cultural habits (the “bad tendencies”), examined in Chapter 2 (*DM* 123). Remedial intervention undertaken in the name of facilitating sympathy, gestured to by Darwin, is recast in boldface and made an imperative in Gilman’s novel.⁵⁹ The utopia-dystopia of *Moving the Mountain* attempts to liquidate

⁵⁸ The more mundane treatments for degenerates are thoroughly reminiscent of the Rest Cure and include, “elaborate baths, massage, electric stimulus, perfect food, clean comfortable beds, beautiful clothes, books, music, congenial company, and wonderful instruction” (259)

⁵⁹ Kropotkin would take an opposing view, claiming that those responsible for human progress were the same individuals often adjudged to be less-fit. Noting Darwin’s vacillation on the topic of social responsibility for the less-fortunate and the handicapped, Kropotkin scoffs:

isolated pockets of sympathetic resistance or stagnation, which the text understands as a formidable corruptive deterrent to the natural moral advancement of the whole. To be self-sustaining, Gilman's millennial sympathetic commonwealth must be total. Rather than being entered into through popular consensus and individual accord, this utopia is proscriptive and has been imposed violently through state power.

A lesson learned from the pockets of harem isolation allegedly stagnating the development of women and of civilization elsewhere in the world, *Moving the Mountain* enacts a fundamental alteration of sympathy beyond its definitional premises in the Utilitarian and sentimentalist discourse of the previous three centuries. A lack of participation in full social consciousness warrants the regulation, institutionalization, and policing of that Other so that the Other may sympathize *correctly* in return. The sympathetic evolutionary imperative of the novel presumes to know the Other fully and then seeks to eliminate the Other's incomprehensibility and difference, by any means necessary. The aggressive induction of a population into a state of unfettered sympathy, for the sake of actualizing utopia, destabilizes and makes tenuous the same agentive force upon which such a community would be foundationally animated. Embracing rather than questioning the contradictions of a social consciousness enacted by state mandate, ends justify the means in Gilman's utopia. At the same time, means invalidate the authenticity of a utopian teleology.

As if thousands of weak-bodied and infirm poets, scientists, inventors, and reformers, together with other thousands of so-called "fools" and "weak-minded enthusiasts" were not the most precious weapons used by humanity in its struggle for existence by intellectual and moral arms, which Darwin himself emphasized in...chapters of *Descent of Man*. (3)

The skepticism of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Solitude of Self" marks an ideological departure from the deployment of sentimentality as a moral compass for Suffrage's activism, organizing, and global aspirations. Subtextual doubts about the reliability of unaided sympathy to regulate community and then regulate the world submerge a stated optimism, engendering a contradictory discourse. Stanton finds sympathy valueless, even defunct, without corresponding and concrete legal assurances and educational assistance for women. More metaphysically, sympathy is valueless and always incomplete because the infinite permutability of nature epistemologically isolates all the individuals ever born. While Charlotte Perkins Gilman would, like Stanton, champion sentimentality for much of her career as a theorist, Suffragist, and internationalist, a contradictory attitude and a utopian impatience pathologize its operation in her fiction. Gilman, like Stanton, issues a death notice for sympathy. Informed by affective experiences of isolation and outlierness in the harem, recourse to sympathy without legal assurance becomes addictive, self-defeating, and diminishing in "The Yellow Wall-paper."

The heavily state-surveilled social instincts of *Moving the Mountain* also signal a departure. In contrast to the rendering of individuals as infinitely apart in the "Solitude of Self," the urgency of sympathetic evolution in *Moving the Mountain* collapses the distance between subjects, making the Other and the Other's sympathetic faculty discernable, tangible, and worth policing. As consensual community-building becomes compulsory reform and then euthanasia, *Moving the Mountain* also contorts and modifies the operation of sympathy into the negation of sympathetic qualities of mercy and restraint. In doing so, Gilman's novel breaks with preceding Suffragist harem writing that leaves the Other intact and inscrutable in ways that delegitimized and foreclosed the legitimate, possibly violent reform of the

Other. During the coming decade, Suffrage would adopt a more tactically aggressive realpolitik, abandoning sentimental activism. Gilman and Stanton script the symbolic desertion of a once ironclad conviction that sympathy could independently reconfigure American cultures and world cultures. The government of the United States would, however, become less conflicted on the matter of sympathy.



Female Head from New Zealand, in the Museum, Chester.

Figure 5: “Female Head from New Zealand, in the Museum, Chester,” Owen Jones’
The Grammar of Ornament.

Coda: Edith Wharton in Morocco, Woodrow Wilson at Versailles, and the Suffragettes at Occoquan

In the autumn of 1917, Edith Wharton would take a short sabbatical from her relief work in war-ravaged France and travel west to French-controlled Morocco. Once in North Africa, the author was received as a guest of Resident General Hubert Lyautey and taken on “a three weeks’ motor tour of the colony” (Wharton *BG* 357). Wharton would publish her account of the excursion three years later, only after the hostilities of the Great War had subsided. Dedicated to Lyautey, *In Morocco* (1920) is not the narrative of a single harem encounter, but a veritable catalogue of Wharton’s experiences in the harems of Moroccan elites in Fez, Rabat, and Marrakech. “Harems and Ceremonies” – the topic merits its own sizeable section of the text – leads off, in fact, with an audience in the imperial harem of the reigning sultan, “Mouley Youssef” (Sultan Yussuf ibn Hassan, السلطان يوسف بن الحسن), who had been installed by the French in 1912 (*IM* 181).¹

Unlike the Suffrage-leaning authors who had preceded her to the harem, Wharton was a confirmed Anti-Suffragist. She had long counted as friends other Antis like Henry James and the Anglo-Australian novelist and Anti campaigner Mrs. Humphry Ward (Mary Augusta Ward).² In 1924 – somewhat after the fact – Wharton would also retrospectively declare herself “entirely out of of sympathy with woman-suffrage” (qtd. in Peel 253). Not coincidentally, Wharton was also a militant anti-sentimentalist, often voicing an open disdain for the genre and even skewering it in texts like *The House of Mirth* (1905). Such an animus could only have been

¹ Ardiç, 196.

² Lee, 242.

intensified by the allegations of contemporaries that Wharton's early literary successes had subsequently given way to sentimentalism in her later work.³

Countering the indeterminacies, mystifications, and deferrals that characterized Suffrage's sympathetic and largely anti-colonial assays of the harem during the previous half-century, *In Morocco* reports from the harem with a dead certainty of fact and affect. The narrator is singular and unflinching in her attitude regarding what the reader should *feel* and *think* about the harem as cultural institution. Accordingly, Wharton's anti-sentimentalist approach carries its own political overtones, all of which overwhelmingly reinforce the legitimacy and moral imperative of the French colonial presence in Morocco. To this point, *In Morocco* is quick to dispel any sentimental comprehensions that might misconstrue familial scenes in the harem as resembling the cozy domesticities of the Western home. Moments of homey intimacy (such as a son playing in the lap of his father or a second wife doting over another wife's child) are merely impressional and illusory:

The sentimentalist moved by this display of family feeling would do well to consider the lives of these much-petted children. Ignorance, unhealthiness and a precocious sexual initiation prevail in all classes. Education consists in learning by heart endless passages of the Koran, and amusement in assisting at spectacles that would be unintelligible to western children, but that the pleasantries of the harem make perfectly comprehensible to Moroccan infancy. At eight or nine the little girls are married, at twelve the son of the house is 'given his first negress'; and thereafter, in the rich and leisured classes, both sexes live till old age in an atmosphere of sensuality without seduction. (*IM* 194-6)

Contrary to sentimental literature's traditional capacity to expose structural violence, fleeting sentimental misapprehensions actually conceal "the shadowy evils of the social system that hangs like a millstone about the neck of Islam" in Wharton's portrait (201).

³ See Hoeller 10, 22.

Rejecting cross-cultural likenesses that might mitigate stereotypes, the narrative trots out more than a few well-worn Orientalist mainstays. The harem-bound women of *In Morocco* exhibit the effects of prolonged psychological deprivation and intellectual torpor, of “colorless eventless lives” that “depend on the favour of one fat tyrannical man” (193). The harem is also a “painted sepulcher” and a “vacuum,” imprisoning “pale women in their mouldering prison” (187; 177; 189). Because of such features, the narrative is keen to recuperate the implacable and irreducible difference separating citizens of Eastern and Western cultures – and it does so in spite of the ghastly scenes of civilizational suicide then occurring in the European theatre of war. Because of the developmental ravages of the harem, Wharton finds, “there are few points of contact between the open-air occidental mind and beings imprisoned in a conception of sexual and domestic life based on slave-service and incessant espionage” (193).

Rather than originating in some biological or racial trait, this gulf dividing cultures is also acquired and wholly contingent upon the socializing influence of the harem. Harem inmates might be mistaken for Americans, “but for the vacuity of their faces” (184). The narrative reserves a particular horror for the Algerian-born child of a French mother, who retains “the European features and complexion, but her soul was the soul of Islam. The harem had placed its powerful imprint upon her, and she looked at me with the same remote and passive eyes as the daughters of the house” (187). Feeling this same influence, in time, the narrator even notices her “own lips stiffening into the resigned smile of the harem” (187). That the harem’s impact on individuals is impressible, even fluid, suggests that it is capable of being reformed, and the reader is obliquely supplied with a very short list of candidates who might serve as the rightful agents of that reform.

Echoing the pro-Suffrage, sentimentally inclined authors examined in this study, Wharton specifically characterizes the harem as a heterotopic space in which the access to and expression of pathos has been wholly voided among its inmates. In a Fez harem, “what chiefly struck me was the apathy of the younger women,” and this observation appears to hold true for the text’s harems in aggregate (192-3). The almost pathological absence of feeling is most pronounced in the Marrakech harem of a French partisan, a “great nobleman and dignitary,” where apathy contributes to an implied instance of life-threatening neglect (197). To the narrator, the grandee otherwise serves as a positive example of a growing predilection, among Morocco elites, to appropriate select elements of sanative Western culture.⁴ Nevertheless, “the Caid is a lover of old Arab architecture” – a euphemism implying that he remains hard-pressed to abandon his harem, despite his otherwise discriminating cultural tastes (198). Enlightened in other respects, the Caid’s dogged retention of his harem, for the narrator, operationalizes inextricable cultural difference, re-reifying “the abyss that slavery and the seraglio put between the most Europeanized Mahometan and the western conception of life” (200-1).

A guest – the narrator’s Pied-Noir traveling companion – asks after “the Caid’s little boy, the son of his wife who had died” (204). The figure subsequently produced is “a large-eyed ghost of a child,” who appears to be the only juvenile residing in the home (204). Here, *In Morocco* introduces an Eastern counterpart to American sentimental literature’s archetypal figure, the orphan. And this motherless child is hardly thriving within this environment, a foil to the provisional communities

⁴ Or as the narrator expresses it: “he seems, unlike many Orientals, to have selected the best in assimilating European influences” (200).

of sentimental literature. As he is foisted into the lap of an adoptive mother, the narrator “watched the weak little body hung with amulets and the heavy head covered with thin curls pressed against a brocaded bosom” and is “reminded of one of the coral-hung child-Christis of Crivelli, standing livid and waxen on the knee of a splendidly dressed Madonna” (204). Here, reference to 15th-century Renaissance portraitist Carlo Crivelli invites the image of that painter’s often plague-stricken, quasi-grotesque depictions of Madonna and Child. In both his *Jones Madonna* and *Lenti Madonna*, Crivelli even incorporates houseflies, which occupy the paintings’ foreground, tropes of evil and decay.⁵ Through Crivelli, Wharton supplies a pre-Raphaelesque, anti-idealized Marian image of the harem, a sobering counterweight to the sentimentalized Raphaelesque Madonnas described in the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Susan Elston Wallace.⁶

The antithesis of sentimental domesticity, the tableau in the Marrakech harem of *In Morocco* resembles a crime scene. The safety of the Caid’s son (and heir apparent) rests upon a collective of surrogate caregivers, who feign concern on a situational basis and who are themselves motivated to produce rival heirs. Musing on the child’s bleak future, the narrator wryly asks the reader, “would all his pretty mothers...succeed in bringing him to maturity in spite of the parched summers of the south and the stifling existence of the harem?” (204-5). The tear-inducing sight of a child in faltering health here *fails* to stimulate a community of women to action. As sympathy and mutual concern is *not* awakened among this collective, Wharton challenges a conception regarding the latent, yet universal potency of human (and even feminine) sentimentality. These inmates of the harem are animated by a venal

⁵ See Lightbown, 130, 266.

⁶ Examined in Chapter 2.

antipathy contra sentiment – a feeling that threatens, rather than protects, a child endangered by institutional violence. Despite the child’s precarious position, he is additionally festooned with ornament. “His frail neck and wrists were hung with innumerable charms: Koranic verses, Soudanese incantations, and images of forgotten idols in amber and coral and horn and ambergris” (205). The excess of adornment, in this case, belies his actual condition and, in so doing, evokes criticism of the sentimental as masking actuality through excess and affectation.

Wharton’s hardline opposition to the harem, however, does not translate into a blanket distaste for all things Moroccan and non-Western. To the contrary, Wharton praises measures taken by Marshal Lyautey to preserve the country’s architectural heritage. To remake Morocco in France’s image – to replace the trappings of old Morocco for those of a nominally modern European nation – is understood as an explicit error. Lyautey’s predecessor had, in fact, taken just such an approach, instituting a regime of scorched-earth urban renewal in Rabat. Wharton complains that the city “had been subjected to the indignity of European ‘improvements,’ and one must traverse boulevards scored with tram-lines, and pass between hotel-terraces and cafes and cinema-palaces, to reach the surviving nucleus of the once beautiful native town” (182). With a sigh of relief, the narrator notes that pockets of uniquely Moroccan space have been preserved in the city, despite the colonial presence. Like maintaining the puppet sultanate under a guise of self-sovereignty, safeguarding Morocco’s cultural-architectural heritage while developing infrastructure serves as a central pillar of Lyautey’s wartime strategy. *In Morocco* reproduces Lyautey’s maxim and formula for preventing insurrection in the colony and feeding French soldiers on the Western Front: “‘a work-shop is worth a battalion’” (217). The

marshal's expression, "un chantier vaut une bataille," has been variously translated as "a construction site is worth a battalion," and speaks to Lyautey's innovation of exercising soft power through moderated spatial reform (qtd. in Crinson 7). Whether as wartime concession or in a genuine attitude of egalitarianism, the assumption implicitly made by Lyautey and seconded by Wharton – that modifying space can modify culture – reflects Fourierism's influence in French North Africa, albeit dialed back in scope and ambition. Fourier had himself pleaded with French authorities in 1834 that land be redistributed and seeded with phalanxes in the newly conquered territory of Algeria. "Algeria can become a superb kingdom for the king's second son," Fourier contended, "and if [France] wishes, the Bedouins, Moors, and Kabyles will turn into more docile and more active farmers than the gardeners of the Paris suburbs" (qtd. in Beecher 477). Fourier's recommendations were, in fact, partially implemented in Algeria by his acolytes, who established "village cooperatives" there (Maunier 642).⁷ The resident general's Fourierist inheritance has been additionally mediated by the show of benevolence – an approach Wharton qualifies as a "policy of the smile" consistently advocated by General Lyautey...and his household" (217). Such restraint has been adopted in order to "not 'break the egg-shell,'" since the onset of the war (217).

Bearing the marks Fourier's and Lyautey's dual influence, the haremspaces of *In Morocco* intermingle objects of Westernness with the indigenous. During Wharton's court visitation, Moulay Youssef, "his Majesty the Priest and Emperor of the Faithful," excuses himself to press "his sacred lips to the telephone," in an evident moment of anachronism and cultural discordance (181). An imposing symbol of

⁷ For the efforts of Fourier-inspired Utopian Socialists in French North Africa, see Gide, 41; Maunier, 642, 668; Prochaska, 67.

encroaching modernity, an oversized “Dutch ‘grandfather’” clock marks time in the harem (173). Of the timepieces in Morocco, “those in the Sultan’s harem of Rabat are remarkable for the fact that, while designed on current European models, they are proportioned in size to the Imperial dignity,” so that the artifact “becomes a wardrobe and the box-clock of the European mantelpiece a cupboard that has to be set on the floor” (173). Rather than engendering disdain or nostalgia, the cultural hybridity manifest in the presence of transculturated artifacts is received by the narrator somewhat matter-of-factly and as a virtual inevitability.

Wharton’s embrace of both cultural conservation and eclecticism underscores her hostility for the formidable instrument of pastness and cultural stagnation that still blocks Morocco’s (and the East’s) procession toward modernity. *In Morocco* reinstates, with an ironclad Orientalist conviction, the proper pathos and abhorrence to be cultivated by the reader regarding this domestic formation of the Other. For the criticisms of sentimentality imbricated into its narrative, the text repeatedly nullifies any intimations of sameness, mutual intelligibility, and sympathetic community enjoined between members of separate cultures – potentialities Suffragists had been deliberating over for more than half-a-century. Concluding that activations of transformative affect are impossible in the harem, the narrative implies that sentimental reform cannot be instigated from within. In the absence of such a home-grown reformatory force, by the logic of the text, it seems that change must instead be imposed through outside influence. Wharton’s portrayal of the harem indirectly, but firmly, legitimates the French protectorate in Morocco and its ongoing colonial-tutelary guidance. It does so notwithstanding the dire threat to French national continuity at home.

Lyautey, for the sympathetic approach to colonial administration insinuated in his ‘policy of the smile,’ would have had an obvious American analog for the reader of 1920. Despite the Suffrage Movement’s symbolic desertions of sentimental activism (both local and global) in the decades leading up to the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson would script the United States’ departure from hemispheric isolationism via a discourse that invoked the ever-broadening purchase of human sympathies. Wilson’s appropriation of this idiom would come well before the dog-whistle rhetoric of his September 1918 Senate speech on behalf of suffrage, in which women were to be enlisted into the “successful prosecution of the great war of humanity” in order to utilize their “sympathy and insight and clear moral instinct” (qtd. in Gottheimer 148). As early as 1887, the future president had wondered, “is it possible that in practical America we are becoming sentimentalists?” (qtd. in Pestritto 77). Sympathy in defense of the marginalized, the exploited, and the impoverished, Wilson holds, is no feminizing vice: “sentiment is not despicable – it may be elevating and noble, it may be inspiring” (qtd. in Pestritto 77).⁸

As president, Wilson would continue to advance his position, suggesting that American exceptionalism lay in the unique sympathetic capacities of the American people. In his first inaugural speech, Wilson attests, in 1913, that “nowhere else in the world have noble men and women exhibited in more striking forms the beauty and the energy of sympathy and helpfulness and counsel in their efforts to rectify wrong, alleviate suffering, and set the weak in the way of strength and hope” (qtd. in

⁸ Challenging the gender-specific connotation attached to the agentive force of sympathy, Wilson adds, “no man with a heart can withhold sympathy from the laborer whose strength is wasted and whose hope is thwarted in the service of the heartless and closefisted; but, then, no man with a head ought to speak that sympathy in the public prints unless he have some manly, thought out ways of betterment to propose” (qtd. in Pestritto 77).

DiNunzio 367). Wilson's anti-corporatist *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People* (1913) states, in a Gilmanian mood, "that there is beginning to beat in this nation a great pulse of irresistible sympathy which is going to transform the processes of government amongst us" (276). Informing Wilson's foreign policy, sentimentality initially served as the president's justification for American non-involvement in World War One. "The basis of neutrality is sympathy for mankind" (qtd. in Hart 80). A nation of immigrants, the blended peoples of the United States are uniquely capable of assaying the thinking in their various countries-of-extraction:

We are the mediating Nation of the world... We are compounded of the nations of the world; we mediate their blood, we mediate their traditions, we mediate their sentiments, their tastes, their passions; we are ourselves compounded of those things. We are, therefore, able to understand all nations; we are able to understand them in the compound, not separately, as partisans, but unitedly as knowing and comprehending and embodying them all. (qtd. in Hart 80)

Committed to the transformative global agency of American sympathies, Wilson's April 1917 declaration of war against Germany goes so far as to profess sympathy and friendship for the German people, who suffer under totalitarian rule.⁹

Wilson's career-long disquisition on the predominantly feminist discourse of sentimentality reverberates in his 1918 clarion call recognizing the right of self-determination among all peoples who should so desire it. A virtual enactment-by-decree of Enlightenment visions of cosmopolitanism, this "new world in which we now live" was, for the president, to no longer be "a place of mastery," including, perhaps, the domination of colonial powers (qtd. in Pestritto 263). A global right-to-self-representation was to be supplemented by a mandate system, a vitiated and experimental form of paternalist tutelage that was very nearly domestic: educating

⁹ Pestritto, 257.

pupils in proper hygiene, homemaking, and good citizenship.¹⁰ Exploiting an early iteration of the global media apparatus, the Wilson Administration's Committee on Public Information conducted what was, in effect, a planetwide public relations effort to publicize the president's pledge.¹¹ Intended as an ideological counterforce to the rising tide of Bolshevism, Wilson's sympathetic endorsement of universal self-determination was given with an evident disregard for the messy dilemmas of race and ethnic nationalism – of how heterogeneous cultural and ethnic landscapes prevent national borders from neatly encircling homogenous identitarian groups. It was also made in spite of his tenacious commitment to Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy and his attempts to re-segregate the federal government.¹² The president was, after all, a long-time friend of Thomas Dixon, a Johns Hopkins classmate and the author of *The Klansman* (1905). The film adaptation of Dixon's novel, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), tells the origins myth of the Ku Klux Klan and liberally cites Wilson's *History of the American People* (1902) in its intertitles.

Abroad, however, Wilson's proclamations hardly fell on deaf ears. Because of him, nationalists from all corners of the globe saw the 1919 peace conference at Versailles as an unprecedented opportunity to sue for nationhood and self-determination.¹³ Rather than focusing on outstanding points of contention among combatant nations and the fine print, Wilson pressed his vision for self-determination, the creation of the League of Nations, and the establishment of a mandate system.¹⁴ Subsequently outflanked by the Allied colonial powers, Wilson's shortcomings at the peace conference later forced him to issue a chain of polite retractions to the

¹⁰ Manela, 40, 75, 180.

¹¹ Manela, 45-8.

¹² Cooper, 111-3.

¹³ Manela, 4.

¹⁴ Manela, 15.

delegations that petitioned for nationhood. As Erez Manela observes, the hopes deferred during the era of Wilsonianism served as the germinal moment for any number of anti-colonial movements and strains of anti-Americanism around the globe. “The disillusionment that followed the collapse of this Wilsonian moment fueled a series of popular protest movements across the Middle East and Asia, heralding the emergence of anti-colonial nationalism as a major force in world affairs” (5). It also engendered a particularly virulent strain of anti-Americanism. Marking this influence in an October 2001 communique, the terrorist Osama bin Laden, for example, declared that, because of the atrocities of September 11, 2001, “the sword fell upon America after 80 years” (qtd. in Lincoln). By alluding to the dire outcomes of 1920, bin Laden gestured not only to the partitioning of the former Ottoman Empire by the French and British, but to the failures of Wilson’s mandate system and his rescinded pledge of self-determination worldwide. Wilson’s global deployment of sympathy additionally set an ideological rubric for future American foreign engagements, in which intrusions abroad are predicated upon both a presumption of readily accessing the perceived suffering of the Other and a pretense of sympathetic action. For much of the 20th and 21st centuries, assured sentimental depictions of far-off pathos and a cosmopolitanism nominally animated by sympathy have been used to instigate and legitimate American military and mercantile interventions, well beyond the nation’s borders.

At the time of its inception, the contradictions of Wilson’s millennial rhetoric were not lost on Suffragists, who had long applied a similar ideology and mode of appeal to challenge women’s disenfranchisement. In 1917, North Carolina Suffragist Virginia Arnold was photographed carrying a banner that turns some of Wilson’s own (borrowed) words against him: “KAISER WILSON: HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOUR

SYMPATHY WITH THE POOR GERMANS BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT SELF-GOVERNED?
20,000,000 AMERICAN WOMEN ARE NOT SELF-GOVERNED. TAKE THE BEAM OUT OF
YOUR OWN EYE.”¹⁵ Beginning in January of that year, Arnold and fellow Suffragists
had undertaken the previously unthinkable tactic of picketing the White House during
wartime. These “Silent Sentinels” were members of the National Woman’s Party, a
splinter group led by Alice Paul and Lucy Burns that had broken away from NAWSA.
Veterans of suffrage campaigning in the United Kingdom, Paul and Burns returned to
the United States ready to apply the more radical techniques of the militant British
Suffragettes. Beginning in June 1917, 168 of the White House protestors were
arrested, charged specifically with “blocking traffic and ‘disorderly assemblage’”
and detained at the Occoquan Workhouse in Lorton, Virginia.¹⁶

Refusing to pay fines or accept pardon from Wilson, approximately 30
Suffragists went on hunger strike, including Paul and Burns. Prison officials
responded with force feedings, a process in which a pap was administered via large
rubber feeding tubes inserted through the nostrils.¹⁷ Addressing approaches to “to
stop the progress of this wave of ‘sentimentality’” and quell the mounting public
outrage surrounding the events at Occoquan, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, honorary
president of the NAWSA old guard, repudiated the National Women’s Party for their
radical break with activist precedent. The hunger strikers had irresponsibly stirred
American public sympathies, Shaw claims, adding “we are a sentimental people, and
sentiment will appeal when common sense will not, and so today there is sweeping

¹⁵ Harris & Ewing. The banners also rebutted Wilson with his own statements from
The New Freedom. See article, “National Women’s Party Suffrage Movement.”

¹⁶ Bolt 244; Snodgrass 335. See also, article “National Women’s Party Suffrage
Movement.”

¹⁷ Snodgrass 337; Lumsden, 134.

over this country a great wave of sentimentality because it is said these women are receiving brutal treatment at the hands of the government.”¹⁸ Despite Shaw’s disdain, her prediction would prove to be correct. News of the abuse and brutality, leaked from Occoquan, served as a crucial turning point in popular opinion on the topic of women’s franchise, contributing pivotally to the subsequent passage and ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1919-1920. For more than five decades, the reconnoiters of pro-Suffrage authors in haremspaces had put to question American Suffrage’s tentative alignment with American colonialism by undercutting the affective clarity and authority with which Orientalism had apprehended the oppressions and pains of the Other. In many ways, the events at Occoquan – scenes of women violated in confined cells – brought home an Orientalist leitmotif of the harem. Spectacles of oppression and violence against women, so regularly displaced and cathected into the domestic spaces of the Other, were imported stateside to reveal the more localized oppression of women, estranging American culture to itself.

¹⁸ See article, “Dr. Anna Howard Shaw Repudiates Picketing.”

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