

sex roles, utopia and change: the family in late nineteenth-century utopian literature

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I

In a late nineteenth-century utopian novel Fillmore Flagg, founder of an idealistic farm community, falls in love with Fern Fenwich, an attractive heiress. She finances his community, and in a "Twentieth Century Love Letter" he expresses his appreciation and affection: "My Darling Fern: Noblest, purest and most beautiful of women!" Her "Reply" is more excessive in its praise: "Ah, my chosen one! So manly; so noble, so true! . . . my hero . . . gallant Knight of Most Excellent Agriculture." Fern completes the image by crowning her future husband with a shining helmet adorned with corn tassel plumes.¹

Today, readers would mock these love letters as examples of the sentimental mush that pervaded nineteenth-century popular literature. Indeed even late nineteenth-century literary critics and the defenders of the *status quo* chastised the authors of utopian works for sugarcoating radical ideas with love stories and glimpses of marital bliss. To some extent, as Edward Bellamy admitted, this criticism was valid.² But the descriptions of present and future love affairs and family life found in the flood of utopian novels and tracts produced between 1888 (the publication date of Bellamy's immensely popular *Looking Backward*) and 1900 do, nevertheless, provide revealing insights into American attitudes about sex roles, and, furthermore, illuminate the complex mixture of "radicalism" and "conservatism" that characterizes many American reform movements.

No claims can be made for the completeness of the sample upon which this survey is based. Hundreds of political, economic, social and science-fiction novels which could vaguely be classified as utopian were written

between 1888 and 1900. From this body of literature 150 works were chosen that present detailed descriptions of an ideal American civilization or detailed plans for the founding of such a society. The sample includes well-known works such as Bellamy's *Looking Backward* as well as lesser-known books such as Henry Olerich's *A Cityless and Countryless World*. (For a complete listing of the sample see my annotated bibliography of utopian literature in *American Literary Realism*).³ Of course, in this survey emphasis will be placed upon works that offer thorough examinations of idealized sex roles in family life.

Although the geographical backgrounds of the 146 authors roughly paralleled the population distribution in 1890,⁴ no claims can be made for the representative nature of the sample. Available biographical data indicate the following about the typical author of a late nineteenth-century utopian work. His occupational experience was diversified, but he tended to be a well-educated, upper-middle-class professional from a good home. He might have experienced sudden financial difficulties, however, and he tended to choose professions, such as reform journalism, that were not traditionally associated with upper-class status. If he was a minister or a lawyer, he usually was classified as a social gospel minister or a reform lawyer. He was about fifty when he wrote his utopian piece, and thus was raised before the Civil War.⁵ He was often involved in reform politics and was almost certainly white, Protestant and a native American. He might have been a woman, but it was unlikely.⁶

Despite the unrepresentative nature of the sample, a survey of late nineteenth-century utopian concepts of sex roles in the family can be justified in several ways. First, the immense popularity of a book such as *Looking Backward* (indicated by sales records and the 500 Nationalist Clubs inspired by the novel⁷) suggests that many Americans shared Bellamy's discontent and longed for the ideal America he envisioned, though any attempts to link readers' opinions with those of one popular author are at best conjectural. Second, in their attempts to describe the ideal family structure, the utopian authors proposed specific reforms that are surprisingly relevant to current arguments about the future of the American family. Last, the unrepresentative nature of the sample helps to justify the survey. The authors were sincere advocates of fundamental reforms. Nevertheless, the survey should also reveal that repeatedly the ultimate goal of specific reforms was a return to traditional concepts of sex roles. This ambivalence should not be explained away with the familiar radical-means-to-achieve-conservative-ends argument. Rather, the utopian authors were caught in a situation similar to the dilemma faced by many important Mugwumps, Progressives and New Dealers. They realized that America was changing rapidly and that reforms were needed to adapt to the changes. But there was always the possibility that new reforms would foster new changes that would undermine the security of the upper-middle-class group to which the utopian author belonged.

Torn between a longing for and a fear of change, these authors often described truly fundamental reforms as returns to traditional values. This is why a survey of one of the most radical aspects of late nineteenth-century utopian literature may offer some fascinating insights into the forward-and-backward-looking nature of many American reform movements.

II

When the utopian authors attempted to define ideal sex roles in family life, they often disagreed about the proper functions of the family. In general, three types of ideal families were defended: the conventional, Victorian family; a family structure that freed women from economic dependence upon men; and an ideal family that eliminated both the economic and social functions of the family. The first model family became the framework for all discussion of sex roles and thus deserves to be described in some detail. It was defined as an essential institution that provided economic security for the wife and the children, offered the best environment for procreation and child rearing, and established a socially approved context for the gratification of "spiritual" and physical love.⁸ This conventional view was defended as if it were a sacred tenet that defined "natural" sex roles: it made woman "the handmaiden of male humanity . . . as the Gods intended," and taught man his proper station, since "God had created [him] for her protection and support." Besides, all women knew that economic dependence was a "trivial matter," and that any attempt to tamper with the family would stifle the "voice of nature" by creating conditions favorable to the creation of a race of "manly" women and "effete" men.⁹ Such changes would also be a threat to the "great socio-anatomical institution of the nineteenth century," the mother's knee.¹⁰ Several of Bellamy's critics saw character building, not new economic systems, as the key to an ideal future; and they maintained that the American Mother was the most important influence on character formation. For example, Richard C. Michaelis, a Chicago editor, argued that: "Nearly all our good qualities can be traced back to the influence and unfathomable love and patience of the mother. . . . Nearly all great men had good mothers."¹¹ Since an American utopia was to be a society of great men, attempts to alter the mother-child relationship would prevent the creation of an ideal civilization.

This concept of the family was vigorously opposed by another group of utopian authors who believed that the wife's economic dependence on her husband was a "remnant" of the Old World practice of stealing women from the enemy and forcing them into lives of servitude.¹² Other authors went further and declared that the nineteenth-century family was an inefficient economic unit, an inadequate environment for procreation and child rearing, and a barbaric institution that forced incompatible men and women to live together.

Which concept of the family was defended by the majority of these upper-middle-class idealists? Surprisingly enough in an era when rising divorce rates and the feminist movement made family structure an especially controversial topic,¹³ most of the utopian authors, including the popular Bellamy and the respected William Dean Howells, advocated the second form of the ideal family maintaining that women should “in no way be dependent on their husbands” for economic security.¹⁴ Only ten of the authors examined staunchly defended the economic function of the family;¹⁵ and the most thorough analyses of sex roles in the family were found in works written by authors who either agreed with Bellamy and Howells or went beyond them to strip the family of its child-rearing functions and to banish love from the home.

The conventional view of the family seemed barbaric to most utopian authors because it made slaves of both sexes and perverted a sacred relationship. They argued that the typical nineteenth-century marriage was nothing more than a “business partnership”: women sought men who could support them instead of men they admired and loved; men sought women who would be good housekeeper-mothers, or, if they desired prestige, they looked for a housekeeper-mother with social distinction. In both cases sex roles were severely limited. The man was the brute money maker; or as the Christian mystic Thomas Lake Harris put it, man was the “American civilizee; . . . producer, plutocrat,—prick the skin and we touch the savage still.”¹⁶ The woman was restricted to being the “home maker” and the “social butterfly.”¹⁷ Marriage was, in effect, a business arrangement between a featherheaded home-beauty and a money-making beast. Instead of being a union of two souls, marriage had become a form of legalized prostitution in which the woman sold herself for economic security and the man sold himself for free maid service, baby tending and perhaps prestige.¹⁸

The effects of this contract, it was argued, spread far beyond the confines of the home. Laurence Gronlund, a well-known economist-reformer, and several other utopian authors maintained that many young men did not marry because they were afraid they would not be able to support a wife and family. This decision, though practical, failed to satisfy their instincts for sexual gratification and encouraged them to fulfill these needs outside the home in a house of prostitution. (The “social crime” was, of course, another touchy issue during the late nineteenth century.) As might be expected, few authors admitted that women also desired sexual gratification.¹⁹ But the utopian authors did see part of the other side of the prostitution problem. They argued that women who lacked social distinction or domestic talents, or women who simply could not find employment because they were discriminated against, were often willing to become whores rather than starve.²⁰ At least two authors related the economic pressures of a typical marriage to more heinous crimes

than prostitution. Crawford S. Griffin, a Bostonian who supported Gronlund's and Bellamy's reform proposals, believed that rape was a direct result of postponed or "poor" marriages that forced men to reject the women they loved and marry incompatible women for convenience or money. Rabbi Solomon Schindler, a frequent contributor to reform magazines, maintained that economic pressures could drive parents to commit infanticide.²¹

According to the overwhelming majority of utopian authors (over 90%), the problems associated with conventional marriages could be avoided if women were not dependent upon their husbands and if they were treated as intelligent human beings instead of handmaidens. These authors realized, however, that *before* this could happen fundamental changes had to occur *outside* the home. For instance, new economic systems would help. In Bellamy's *Looking Backward* the state assumes the economic burdens, and everyone receives equal annual incomes. In utopian works opposing economic equality, women receive wages equal to the wages received by men engaged in the same occupations; or, if a woman prefers to be a full-time housewife and mother, the state pays her for her services as an investment in the future generation.²² (Recently this idea has been proposed as a radical alternative to day-care centers).²³ Changes in religious attitudes and new educational programs were also recognized as important elements in the liberation of men and women. Most utopian authors believed that the best way to express love for God was to love your neighbor as yourself. Therefore, women deserved to be loved and respected as much as men. In the utopias described women also merit respect because they can become fully educated. (Over 90% of the authors supported free universal education through college).²⁴ Women can choose to specialize in homemaking, which prepares them to be excellent wives or to get good paying jobs in cooperative kitchens, sewing shops and laundries. They may also compete directly with men by studying farming, mechanics, chemistry, politics and other traditionally masculine fields. The other side of this development is that the utopian men can become expert cooks.²⁵ Finally, technological advances, such as electric appliances, and even architectural changes, such as metallic floors that can be washed and drained in an instant, liberate men from their dependence on housekeepers in utopia and free women from the "dish-rag and the broom stick" creating a "housekeeper's millennium."²⁶

It was predicted that several more fundamental changes would result from the new economics, new religion, new education and new technology. First, true parenthood would blossom. In *Equality* (1897) Bellamy argued that economically secure couples would control their "impulses of cruel animalism" better than poor people. His hypothetical proof: without the aid of birth control pills, the utopians in the year 2000 have few children, which means that they can lavish attention on each child (see below). Bellamy and the majority of utopian authors also believed

that once women became financially independent, their children were bound to improve because women would be free to select their husbands by their womanly instincts, a basis of selection that would lead to ideal parental matches. Thus, according to Bellamy's Dr. Leete, the "race perfection" in 2000 can be explained by "the principle of sexual selection, with its tendency to preserve and transmit the better types of the race. . . . Every generation is sifted through a little finer mesh from the last."²⁷ Henry F. Allen, a Mid-Western reformer, even went so far as to describe the love instinct as "an absolute science" and an "absolute law of life."²⁸ Hence sexual love would be simultaneously banished and cherished in an American utopia, since—as every good Victorian knew—physical love was considered to be a "crude animalism" associated with poverty whereas Platonic love was an ideal guide that inspired perfectly matched lovers to meet and, occasionally, produce ideal cherubs. Then after the children were born, their well-educated parents (because of their economic security and the efficiency of the economic system and technological advances) would be free to spend much more time with them.²⁹ Therefore during the important pre-school years the children would be constantly exposed to excellent parent-teachers.

The economic security and increased leisure predicted by the majority of the utopian writers would also effect the third major function of the family, the socially accepted expression of love. Instead of having to postpone marriage and seek sexual gratification from prostitutes, a young man could marry the woman he loved without delay. After the wedding he and his wife would, moreover, have ample time to cultivate a pure and intense relationship. Thus, Rabbi Schindler could make the defenders of conventional marriages eat their self-righteous words by declaring that "only through a radical change in our social condition can . . . matrimony become a sacred institution."³⁰ Laurence Gronlund saw this new sacredness in relation to the ultimate religious goal of founding a society based on brotherly love. He explained that the typical American marriage forced a couple together for economic reasons and they never learned to love each other. They might be living in the same house, eating the same meals, and sleeping in the same bed; but they were still locked within their private selves. On the other hand, when men and women were free to choose one another for love and admiration and had the time to express their feelings, then "man [i.e., humanity] comes forth from his mere personality and learns to live in another while obeying his most powerful instincts."³¹

One final result of the proposed changes inside and outside the home would be that woman's influence would extend far beyond the limits of her family. Defenders of the conventional family saw women as society's conscience. But they pictured her role as being restricted to her moral influence on her children and husband. Even with these limitations it was doubtful whether she could prepare sons for the vicious competition

of the business world.³² To some extent Bellamy and most of the authors respected this stereotype by suggesting that women were inherently more moral than men. (Still, a few wealthy society women such as Howell's Mrs. Makely in *A Traveler from Altruria* demonstrated that women could be as rotten as men). But they believed that it was wrong to limit women's influence to the home. After women realized that they did not have to bend to the will of the breadwinner, and after they were encouraged to pursue any career that interested them, they should be free to exert their influence anywhere in society. In *Looking Backward* and *Equality*, for example, Julian West is surprised by Edith Leete's intelligence and by her "serene frankness and ingenuous directness." Later he is even more shocked to find that women serve at all ranks and in all professions in the Industrial Army (Edith is a farmhand) and that there is a permanent seat for a woman on the highest counsel in the nation. Besides having a vote like all the other men and women on the counsel, she has veto power on matters specifically relating to her sex.³³ In most of the other utopian works women are encouraged or at least permitted to pursue active careers outside the home; and in at least sixteen novels an inspiring woman and/or a women's movement play crucial roles in the reformation of America. In one, Dr. John McCoy's *A Prophetic Romance* (1896), a Martian visits an ideal America and is astonished to discover that a woman is president. In *The Building of the City Beautiful* (1893) written by the poet of the Sierras, Joaquin Miller, a beautiful Jewess succeeds in founding a perfect city while a solitary male reformer with the same goal is a complete failure; and in Mary Lane's *Mizora* (1889) the population is ruled by a group of wise and beneficent female chemists whose experiments lead to the creation of a perfect, all female race!³⁴

Depriving the family of its economic function and emancipating woman from the kitchen (and man from the brute, money money maker role) were two of the most radical aspects of late nineteenth-century utopian literature. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the new woman was still *primarily defined in relation to her children and husband*. Two of the major results of her liberation were that she would be free to be an ideal mother and an ideal wife. Furthermore, in several of the utopian works, including *Looking Backward*, a woman's role outside the home is shaped by her role within the home. True, as revealed by Bellamy's Dr. Leete, women in 2000 A.D. participate in all occupations and have important responsibilities; but Leete makes it very clear that only wives, and preferably mothers, are eligible for the highest ranks in the Industrial Army.³⁵ In Dr. McCoy's utopia the Martian finds a woman president; but he also discovers that if a woman reaches the age of thirty-five without marrying, she is sent to the "Matrimonial Department" for counseling. The emancipated mothers in James Cowan's *Day-*

break (1896) decide to relax their grip on child discipline. The result is a youth revolution that threatens to destroy the nation. A catastrophe is averted only because of swiftly enacted legislation protecting oppressed parents and, more importantly, because the liberated mothers realize that one of woman's primary duties is motherhood.³⁶ In an American utopia women would be liberated, but to the overwhelming majority of these reformers a liberated woman was equivalent to an emancipated mother-wife.

Thus most utopian authors simultaneously broke away from and clung to the conventional concept of the family. One important function of the family, economic security for the woman, was eliminated. But instead of predicting an entirely new form of family structure resulting from woman's new freedoms and responsibilities, the authors believed that the changes would lead to a reaffirmation and fulfillment of the two other major functions of the family, child-rearing and the expression of love. One possible explanation for this ambivalent attitude has been known to anthropologists for years: it is easier to criticize and change economic practices than to alter basic assumptions about socialization, such as child-rearing, and intensely personal behavior, such as the expression of love. Consciously or unconsciously most of the authors felt that the breadwinner and handmaiden sex roles had to be rejected as unjust anachronisms, but they feared that tampering with other family functions would be unacceptable to their readers and themselves. Such changes might only lead to more instability and confusion in an already bewildering era.

III

And yet, a few authors dared to go beyond criticism of the economic function of the family to challenge conventional assumptions about child-rearing and the expression of love. Although the opinions of these writers are even less representative than the typical utopian views, their ideas are interesting because of their relation to current debates about women and the future of the American family.

William Bishop (a Romance languages professor at Yale), Rabbi Schindler, and Edward Bellamy's younger brother Charles agreed that being a mother did not automatically transform a woman into an expert parent. Therefore, instead of being perched on the mother's knee, in their utopias toddlers are whisked off to nurseries where they are cared for by specially trained doctors, nurses, and teachers. This not only insures better child development, it also means more freedom for mother. As one indignant female in Bishop's *Garden of Eden* (1895) asks, "Do you think we want to be baby tenders every blessed minute of our lives?"³⁷ Actually in Bishop's utopia the nurseries are day nurseries, so mothers have quite a bit of tending to do. Still, in Eden Valley women are encouraged to study any profession including military science; there

is no preference given to wives or mothers; and middle-aged, single women are not sent off to be counseled. In Rabbi Schindler's utopia women have similar freedoms, but the Rabbi went one step further by making his nurseries twenty-four hour institutions. The hero of *Young West* (1894) even admits that he loved his nurse more than his mother.³⁸ In both these utopias, however, the loss of the economic and child-rearing functions of the family does not alter the assumption that marriage is to be shared by one man and one woman for life. Bishop's novel concludes with a large wedding that promises a lifelong union between the hero and the heroine, and Schindler's hero is encouraged throughout his long career by a faithful spouse.³⁹ This is not the case in Charles Bellamy's *An Experiment in Marriage* (1889), which advocates a form of serial marriage. In Grape Valley infants are sent to nurseries; and as in Bishop's and Schindler's utopias, they receive excellent care and training and mother is free to develop her talents and interests. But most importantly, the nurseries free men and women to cultivate "the greatest religious force of our existence," "sexual love" (i.e., love between a man and a woman, not just physical sex). The sole function of marriage is that it indicates when two people are sharing the religion of love. The instant love is felt, a couple can marry. The instant love dies, they can part and seek new lovers.⁴⁰

Although the *New England Homestead* claimed that 5,000 copies of *An Experiment in Marriage* "had been exhausted before it had been on sale two weeks," it is easy to understand why most reviewers felt that Charles Bellamy's utopia was more dangerously "different" than his brother's utopia; why Nicholas P. Gilman, a vocal critic of Edward Bellamy, reacted to Charles' book by raising the spectre of "sexual communism," "free love and free lust"; and why a reviewer for the respectable *Literary World* deplored the novel as encouraging a "return to the beast."⁴¹ Charles Bellamy's version of an easy-divorce utopia was simply too frightening to a generation that was hypersensitive about divorce. But in spite of his enthusiasm for serial marriage, Charles Bellamy's concept of the ideal sexual relation was very similar to the type of sentimentalized love celebrated in thousands of nineteenth-century romantic novels. Again we see the ambivalence that characterizes the reforms described up to this point: an apparently drastic restructuring of sexual relations leads to a reaffirmation of traditional goals associated with the family.

There was one utopian author, however, who seemed to challenge all the assumptions about the conventional family. In the Martian utopia described in Henry Olerich's *A Cityless and Countryless World* (1893) women are economically independent; children are raised in twenty-four hour nurseries; and each individual lives in a "splendid private apartment, to which [he or she] can retire at any moment." Every apartment complex or "big house" contains one thousand living units plus dining,

educational and recreational facilities. This community is defined as one "family." When a woman wants to have a baby, she selects an appropriate male to "co-operate" and shares an apartment with him until she is certain that she is pregnant. During pregnancy and childbirth she lives in a large apartment with a companion to help her. (The companion is not necessarily the father or even a man.) The child is weaned at an early age and sent to a nursery. The mother is paid by her "family" for her services and promptly returns to her usual occupation. Thus, as the narrator explains, his "cityless and countryless world" is also husbandless and wifeless: "we have fathers, but no husbands; mothers, but no wives." All the "quarrels, fights and murders" associated with marriage are avoided since "both sexes are . . . completely free of each other at all times." Are the Martians lonely without spouses? Far from it, claims the narrator. Everyone is always surrounded by 999 "kind, free, cultivated, non-aggressive persons," the members of his family. But Olerich's assault on marriage and the family is not the most surprising aspect of his utopia. After advocating the complete collapse of marriage and the nuclear family, the narrator justifies his culture's sexual relations by stating:

It is a well known fact that the exercise of the sexual function is an expenditure of vital energy; and, therefore, the person who has the sexual function so adjusted that he exercises it only for the special purpose of reproduction, is the most complete person sexually; while he who exercises it the most excessively either in a marital state, as you have here in [America], or under individual freedom, is the most incomplete or licentious sexually.⁴²

Why destroy the home, marriage and the family? To ensure chastity, of course.

IV

Olerich's version of perfect sexual relations thus becomes another example of the tension that can be traced throughout the criticisms of the three major functions of the conventional nineteenth-century American family. Bellamy and the majority of the utopian writers advocated woman's economic independence primarily so that she could become an ideal mother-wife. Charles Bellamy stripped the family of its child-rearing functions so that marriage could become a religious state of love. Olerich freed men and women from all traditional bonds of love so that a society built on conventlike communes could thrive.

As stated earlier, this is not simply a case of temporary radical means utilized to achieve conservative or backward-looking ends. During an era when Americans were hypersensitive about divorce and the feminist movement and "obsessed with family life,"⁴³ these reformers were willing to take a critical look at a sacred American institution and to propose a new *permanent* family structure that freed women from economic dependence. Moreover, their analysis of nineteenth-century sexual rela-

tions and their predictions about ideal relations were sophisticated on at least two interrelated levels. First, they not only realized that the nineteenth-century American woman was struggling to find a new place in society; the rejection of the male-as-breadwinner sex role demonstrates that these authors recognized that the nineteenth-century male needed liberating as much as the nineteenth-century female. Only recently have such scholars as Donald Meyer and Edward C. Kirkland stressed this.⁴⁴ Second, changes in sex roles were not perceived as isolated events. They, like most of the other changes described in the utopian works, were seen as the results of combinations of alterations in economic and social conditions, in religious and educational principles, in technology and even in the physical structure of the home. Furthermore, changes in sexual relations would initiate changes in child-rearing practices, in opportunities for self development, and in reform movements. Even fashions and physiques would change. In Bishop's *Garden of Eden* the heroine dramatically lets her skirt fall to the ground revealing a nineteenth-century version of hot pants, knickerbockers. To her the new fashions represent freedom from a "badge of . . . servitude" associated with being man's handmaiden.⁴⁵ Bradford Peck (a Maine department store owner), Bellamy and almost all the other utopian authors also emphasized that the bodies beneath the clothes would change. After women were liberated from the broom stick and allowed access to public gymnasiums, they would experience a "wonderful physical rebirth." (Bellamy's Julian West is especially intrigued by "the splendid chests" of the female utopians).⁴⁶ This tendency to perceive changes in sexual relations as an interrelated cultural change was aptly summarized in the Preface to *A Cityless and Countryless World*: "A change in sex-relations is accompanied with a corresponding change in dress, food, dwellings, education, modes of travel, amusements, individual freedom, in manner of rearing offspring, and in countless other ways. A system, in order to be natural and harmonious, must be a connected whole."⁴⁷

This desire to fit specific reforms into a vision of a "connected whole" is especially obvious in the utopian authors' attempts to delineate ideal sexual relations. But this tendency can also be detected in predictions about ideal economic systems, religions, educational programs, art forms and changes in many other cultural areas.⁴⁸ On the one hand, this inclination suggests that the utopian authors, unlike many Populist, Progressive, and New Deal leaders, were aware that in a complex industrial society it is almost impossible to isolate change. This characteristic is also understandable since one of the traditional functions of utopian literature has been to offer confused readers a glimpse of a coherent mode of experience to which they can compare the disorder of their own era. Then too, these writers and the movements they led or inspired were often branded as "promoters of confusion."⁴⁹ To avoid such criti-

cism, to gain a hearing for their ideas, they had to make their utopias appear to be more unified than the chaos of the 1880's and 1890's.

But the desire to place reforms into a "connected whole" combined with the mixture of forward-and-backward-looking elements that characterize the utopian concepts of the family suggest more than an awareness of the complexities of modern society, more than a willingness to conform to literary conventions, more than a wish to escape accusations of fighting confusion with confusion. They suggest a fundamental link between the limits of reform and the baffling rate of change in America. The 150 works examined supposedly represent some of the most radical late nineteenth-century American thought; and the specific reforms surveyed, changes in sex roles and family structure, represent some of the most extreme elements of this radical literature. And yet, a strong undercurrent of conservatism was discovered, conservatism defined as a longing to conserve certain assumptions about child-rearing and love and as a hope that American culture could still exist as an understandable "connected whole." Along with the anthropological explanation offered above, one possible reason for the mixture of old and new values can be found in the backgrounds of the typical utopian author. To repeat, he was a middle-aged, white, Protestant professional from a respectable family. He was willing, however, to risk his security and reputation by associating himself with reform movements. In other words, he was someone who sincerely believed in change; but because of his stable upper-middle-class background, he might not have been able to cope with the diverse and rapidly changing world of late nineteenth-century America. Therefore, even his most extreme reforms were tempered with a fear of change.

If this theory has some validity, then the utopian authors become a much more representative group than was suggested earlier. They do not reflect the diversity of the late nineteenth-century population, but their backgrounds, hopes and fears do resemble those of many upper-middle or upper-class reform leaders. (Ignatius Donnelly, Woodrow Wilson and the Roosevelts come to mind immediately). Like these leaders, the utopian authors seemed to be caught between a public desire to prepare for the future and a private longing to stabilize the present by reaffirming the past. This ambivalence is not necessarily good or bad. True, it limits the reformer's vision; but it may also enable him to communicate better with the public, and, therefore, initiate needed reforms.

Whether or not the forward-backward-looking brand of reform is intrinsically valuable is beyond the scope of this article. But the foregoing examination of several concepts of the family clearly demonstrates that late nineteenth-century utopian literature is an important source of two kinds of information: it offers a variety of specific examples of attitudes about sex roles and other problems that troubled and continue to trouble Americans; and it helps us to understand the mixture of new

and old values characterizing many American reforms, a mixture that will continue to baffle scholars who insist on stressing only the "conservative" or "progressive" nature of American reform movements.

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footnotes

1. Milan C. Edson, *Solaris Farm; A Story of the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1900), 164, 171, 176.

2. Bellamy confessed that he kept the conventional fictional trappings, including the relationship between West and Edith, "in the hope of inducing the more to give it [*Looking Backward*] at least a reading." See Edward Bellamy, "How I Came to Write 'Looking Backward,'" *The Nationalist* (May, 1889), 3.

3. The sample was compiled by consulting several published and unpublished bibliographies and by following up leads in reform magazines and in the utopian works themselves. See Kenneth M. Roemer, "American Utopian Literature (1888-1900): An Annotated Bibliography," *American Literary Realism*, IV, 3 (Summer, 1971), 227-54.

4. The following table compares the distribution of 107 utopian authors for whom geographical information is available to census data found in the Johnson reprint of *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1892).

	Utopian Authors	U.S. Population in 1890
Northeast &		
Middle Atlantic	48%	30%
Midwest	34%	34%
South	5%	24%
West	13%	12%

5. The average age of the authors in 1894 was 48.9. The year 1894 was chosen because about half the utopian works were written before and about half after this year.

6. Of the 150 works fourteen were written by women, one woman was a co-author, and *Unveiling a Parallel* (Boston, 1893) was written by "Two Women of the West." For a more detailed description of the authors' backgrounds, see Roemer, "America as Utopia, 1888-1900: New Visions, Old Dreams," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1971, 46-80.

7. See John L. Thomas, "Introduction," *Looking Backward* (Cambridge, 1967), 1-88.

8. See Solomon Schindler, "Is Marriage a Failure?" *The Nationalist* (May, 1889), 48. Schindler, the author of a fairly well-known utopian work entitled *Young West* (1894), did not defend this concept of the family but offered an excellent description of it.

9. The works quoted in this paragraph are: Richard C. Michaelis, *Looking Further Forward, An Answer to Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy (Chicago, 1890), 78-80; J. W. Roberts, *Looking Within. The Misleading Tendencies of "Looking Backward" Made Manifest* (New York, 1893), 6; Henry Athey and A. Herbert Bowers, *With Gyves of Gold. A Novel* (New York, 1898), 107; David Hilton Wheeler, *Our Industrial Utopia and Its Unhappy Citizens* (Chicago, 1895), 52, 195; Eva Wilder (Brodhead) McGlasson, *Diana's Livery* (New York, 1891), 215-16, 220.

10. William E. Bridges, "Warm Hearth, Cold World: Social Perspectives on the Household Poets," *American Quarterly*, XXI, 4 (Winter, 1969), 769.

11. Michaelis, *Looking Further Forward*, 78-80. See also Roberts, *Looking Within*, 6.

12. For example, see Charles Bellamy, *An Experiment in Marriage. A Romance* (Albany, N.Y., 1889), 102.

13. See William L. O'Neill, *Divorce in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, 1967), and *The Woman Movement* (London, 1969).

14. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 266. Although Howells did not place as much emphasis on women's economic independence as did Bellamy, in his Christian Socialist utopia women are not dependent on men for support; and, moreover, they are very active in "public affairs." See William Dean Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria, A Romance* (New York, 1894), 37, 39.

15. Besides the authors listed in footnote 11 see Charles E. Niswonger, *The Isle of Feminine* (Little Rock, Ark.: Brown Printing Company, 1893); Adelia Elizabeth Orpen, *Perfection City* (New York, 1897); George A. Sanders, *Reality: or Law and Order vs. Anarchy and Socialism, A Reply to Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward and Equality* (Cleveland, 1898); Arthur Dudley Vinton, *Looking Further Backward* (Albany, N.Y., 1890).

16. Thomas Lake Harris, *The New Republic: A Discourse of the Duties and Safeties of the Times* (Santa Rosa, Cal.: Fountaingrove Press, 1891), 31.
17. William Henry Bishop, *The Garden of Eden, U.S.A. A Very Possible Story* (Chicago, 1895), 157-58, 176; Schindler, "Marriage," 48.
18. For example see Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (New York, 1897), 141.
19. Only one author, Harris, attributed fierce desires to women; but this was mainly a result of a debased moral climate that encouraged even wealthy Vassar girls to become prostitutes. See Harris, *The New Republic*, 70.
20. Laurence Gronlund, *Our Destiny. The Influence of Nationalism on Morals and Religion* (*The Nationalist*, July, 1890), 306.
21. Crawford S. Griffin, *Nationalism* (Boston, 1889), 59; Schindler, "Marriage," 51.
22. For example see Clark Edmund Persinger, *Letters from New America; or An Attempt at Practical Socialism* (Chicago, 1900), 57-58.
23. See William V. Shannon, "A Radical, Direct, Simple, Utopian Alternative To Day-Care Centers," *The New York Times Magazine*, April 30, 1972.
24. See Roemer, "America as Utopia," 323-37; Charles J. Rooney, Jr., "Utopian Literature as a Reflection of Social Forces in America, 1865-1917," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1968, 105.
25. For example see [Warren S. Rehm,] *The Practical City. A Future City Romance, or, A Study in Environment*. By Omen Nemo [pseud.] (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster County Magazine, 1898), 15. A satire of the whole concept of the manly man is found in a utopian, anti-utopian novel by Paul Haedicke. During an age of cruel competition, a huge monument entitled "Man Chest" is erected to glorify manliness. See Paul Haedicke, *The Equalities of Para-Para* (Chicago, 1895), 85.
26. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 168, 188; Bishop, *The Garden of Eden*, 125-27.
27. Edward Bellamy, *Equality*, 410, 269-70.
28. [Henry Francis Allen,] *A Strange Voyage. . . . By Pruning Knife* [pseud.] (St. Louis, 1891), 99.
29. The average work period per day averaged about four to six hours in the utopian works examined. See Roemer, "America as Utopia," 406-11.
30. Schindler, "Marriage," 51.
31. Gronlund, *Our Destiny*, 306-07.
32. See Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), 55-56.
33. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 155, 262-66; Edward Bellamy, *Equality*, 43. There was a shift in emphasis between Bellamy's two major utopian works. In *Looking Backward* women took lighter jobs "adapted" to their sex (263); but in *Equality* they engage in all occupations (43).
34. For descriptions of the thirteen other works stressing the importance of women in the transition to utopia see the annotations in Roemer, "Bibliography" for the following authors: Edson, Grigsby, Lubin, Mason, Porter, Bartlett, Everett, Forbush, Bishop, Lloyd, Cowan, [Anon.,] *Unveiling a Parallel*, and Giles (*Shadows Before*).
35. Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 266.
36. [Dr. John McCoy,] *A Prophetic Romance, Mars to Earth* (Boston, 1896), 224-28; James Cowan, *Daybreak, A Romance of an Old World* (New York, 1896), 245-49. But the fact that the catastrophe was in part stemmed by the efforts of a female journalist suggests that women are still to be liberated from the kitchen.
37. Bishop, 259.
38. Solomon Schindler, *Young West: A Sequel to Looking Backward* (Boston, 1894), 22.
39. Also there is no free love in Bishop's *Garden of Eden*. If a man is caught being too "fresh," he is sent to "Purgatory," an all male cattle ranch on the outskirts of the valley (238).
40. Charles Bellamy, *Experiment in Marriage*, 17. The founder of the community justifies the short durations of many marriages with an argument reminiscent of Fourierism: ". . . these brief intimacies are the semesters of school life for the sympathies, the passions, the understanding" (229).
41. See the last two pages of advertisements (no pagination) in Vinton, *Looking Further Backward*; Nicholas P. Gilman, "The Way to Utopia," *Unitarian Review*, July 1890, 60; "Two Utopias," rev. of *An Experiment in Marriage*, by Charles Bellamy, *The Literary World* (February 1, 1890), 41.
42. Henry Olerich, *A Cityless and Countryless World. An Outline of Practical Co-operative Individualism* (Holstein, Iowa: Gilmore & Olerich, 1893), 65-66, 265-73. Professor Olerich also wrote two other utopian works: *Modern Paradise* (1915) and *The Story of the World Ten Thousand Years Hence* (1923).
43. O'Neill, *Woman Movement*, 26.
44. See Meyer, *Positive Thinkers*; Edward Chase Kirkland, *Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1956).
45. By implication it also liberated men from an unpleasant stereotype: "Are they babies and imbeciles that even our skirts must drag the streets as a defense against their hyena eyes and their unholy thoughts." Bishop, *Garden of Eden*, 271-75. McCoy goes one step further

in the cause of male liberation by allowing his male utopians to wear bright colors, beautiful silks and embroidered hose (*A Prophetic Romance*, 163-64). In most of the works examined the fashions could be described as a unisex classic Greek style. See Roemer, "America as Utopia," 399-402.

46. See especially Bradford Peck, *The World a Department Store, A Story of Life under a Cooperative System* (Lewiston, Me.: Bradford Peck, 1900), 109; Alvarado M. Fuller, *A.D. 2000* (Chicago, 1890), 289; Persinger, *Letters from New America*, 27; Edward Bellamy, *Equality*, 146-53.

47. Olerich, *A Cityless and Countryless World*, 8-9.

48. See Roemer, "America as Utopia," 272-417.

49. For example see Roberts, *Looking Within*, 63.