POSTHUMAN NURTURING IN AMERICAN LITERARY FUTURITIES

by

ANDREW RYAN TOLLE

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at

The University of Texas at Arlington

August, 2021

Arlington, Texas

Supervising Committee:

Jacqueline Fay, Supervising Professor

Neill Matheson, Supervising Professor

Heather Jacobson

Timothy Richardson

ABSTRACT

This dissertation applies posthuman theories to the concept of nurture in American literatures of 1880-1920 and 1980-2020 to explore how writers construct and imagine futurities that increasingly critique the liberal Cartesian human. While relationships between "subjects" and "objects" in Cartesian dualism can render the act of nurturing both problematic and violent, posthuman nurture decenters the nurturer, shifting focus onto the nurtured. This allows us to view nurture as an inherently mutual act that includes agencies beyond humans, including animals, plants, and other non-zoe. American literatures of 1880-1920, which often speculated futures taking place in 1980-2020, exhibit nascent strains of the "posthuman condition," decentering the human to nurture utopian futures. Marginalized authors during 1880-1920, such as queer and BIPOC writers, offer "subaltern futures" as alternatives to utopias written by white writers, in which kinnovation becomes a form of nurturing futures from which they were otherwise excluded. Once writers of 1980-2020 experienced and/or lived past those futures imagined one century prior, their texts reimagine what utopias can realistically entail; this leads to an emergent form of fiction that explores posthuman (and post-human) nurturing ethics, particularly those relating to the figure of the child. Moreover, writers of 1980-2020 develop ways of blending biogenetic and nonbiogenetic kinship networks, allowing kinnovation to remain responsive to issues related to the "primal wound" that are emphasized by the voices of adoptees, former foster youth, and first parents. This dissertation explores how challenges to the capitalist unit of "The Family" appear in American literatures and how relationships of power influence acts of nurture. Authors examined include Edward Bellamy, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Alice Ilgenfritz Jones & Ella Merchant, Edward Prime-Stevenson, S. Alice Callahan, Lillian Jones Horace, Frances E. W. Harper, Lydia Millet, and Joanne Ramos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am especially grateful to my dissertation co-chairs, Dr. Jacqueline Fay and Neill Matheson, for believing in this project and for their support and guidance throughout it. Dr. Timothy Richardson sparked many of the analytical inquiries central to this dissertation, while Dr. Heather Jacobson provided a model for how to approach parts of this study that did not easily overlap with my original disciplinary approach. I would also like to thank Dr. Denise Knight for helping me track down documents from digital archives and Dr. Kenneth Roemer for providing guidance and research materials when many locations were inaccessible during the beginning of the pandemic.

I would like to acknowledge the work of my friends and colleagues who offered me encouragement and advice throughout this project, specifically Courtney Craggett, Shannon Sawyer, Miriam Rowntree, Sarah Shelton, Kassandra Ramírez-Buck, MaryKate Messimer, Ashley Reis, April Murphy, Amber Pagel, Alessia Cavazos, Stephanie Tavera, and Sabine Winter. I would also like to thank the members of my writing group, Megan Sarno, Malgosia Wilk-Blaszczak, and Feirong Yuan for keeping me motivated and providing advice for the continuation of my writing.

Finally, I would like to thank those in the adoptee, former foster youth, and first parent community who helped to bring me “out of the fog” in ways that dramatically impacted each chapter of this dissertation. In particular, Brina Collins, Anne Glasser, and L. D. provided invaluable assistance in helping to understand the voices of those most marginalized by industries of nurture.

DEDICATION

For those who nurtured me first, Kari Tolle and Gary Tolle, and to all the enduring kin who unwaveringly supported my academic pursuits.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: NURTURING AS A POSTHUMAN LITERARY PRACTICE

What is "Posthuman Nurture"?

On July 13, 2021, the Senate's slim majority reached an agreement on a reconciliation bill that would facilitate the passage of President Joe Biden's infrastructure plan, which considers childcare, elder care, health care, and other essential "home care work" as part of the same infrastructure that traditionally refers to roads, bridges, buildings, and other physical structures ("Fact Sheet"). "Human infrastructure," Biden and his allies claim, is a "generational investment" worthy of the same level of attention that we might give to transportation or facility improvements, so immigration and education, it's argued, can be lumped into a traditional infrastructure bill. The next day, on July 14, 2021, a Los Angeles judge granted Britney Spears the right to choose her own lawyer in her conservatorship case, which was "hailed as a win by #FreeBritney activists and disability rights organizations" (Limbong). One day later, on July 15, 2021, Vox reported that the alarming rise of ticks and tick-borne diseases in the U.S. was the result of human environmental restoration efforts, giving us a "counterintuitive example of how reforestation can carry unwanted consequences" (Jones). And the day after that, July 16, 2021, I abruptly stopped watering my Knock-Out rosebush when I noticed that a cicada had chosen it as the location for its final molt. I returned a few hours later to find its exuviae left behind, the cicada's abandoned exoskeleton still hugging the strongest, most central branch of the rosebush — the only remaining evidence that a teneral cicada was close by, getting accustomed to its new wings, or perhaps drinking plant sap on a nearby tree.

If these four news events (if I may include my gardening as newsworthy) seem entirely unrelated, then I hope that this dissertation demonstrates how these events are, in fact, very much linked in terms of the "posthuman condition." Specifically, these four events demonstrate issues of *nurture* within the "posthuman condition," and how relationships between a "subject" and "object" in Cartesian dualism can render the act of nurturing both problematic and violent. Nurture, in the framework of the liberal Human subject, involves the nurturer as the agential subject taking action upon the nurtured as an object. This inherently removes agency from the nurtured. At first glance, the agency of the nurtured may not seem so important: a newborn infant, for example, *requires* nurturing by adults because humans are an altricial species, which means that newborns cannot acquire food or move about on their own.

But just because nurturing is necessary does not mean that all acts of nurturing are ethical within a posthuman framework. And, of course, not all nurturing relationships involve such drastic differences in agency or ability. Britney Spears, for example, is thirty-nine years old and has had no trouble walking around or finding sustenance, but she has been legally and financially stripped of her own agency since 2007.[1] When we nurture, we take actions on behalf of other material beings. When adults nurture children, they exert their own agency(ies) onto children, ostensibly on behalf of children, or "in the best interests of children." When we nurture our pets, we exert control over them; we justify this, of course, by saying that *we know better*, that we are doing these things in order to make them better. Even when adults nurture each other — say, one's spouse is ill or healing from an injury — we exert control over other adults. "No," we tell each other, "don't strain yourself because you need to rest. Eat your soup, go back to sleep, and

[1] This characterization of her conservatorship is mild: Spears alleges that her father not only abused the conservatorship, but also used the conservatorship to abuse her.

I'll come back to check on you." This involves control, and it implies a subject-object dualism that involves one "thing" (the subject) acting upon another "thing" (the object).

So who decides where the line between the nurturer and the nurtured is? And after that, who decides what the nurturer can do to, for, or on behalf of the nurtured? To borrow from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of subalternity, *can the nurtured speak?* And if it can, when must we listen? I believe that we can and we must, and I call this effort *posthuman nurture*. This dissertation operates under the belief that the nurtured is a subject that we ought to listen to and take into account. By referring to the nurtured as a subject, I do not aim to flip the Cartesian coin over and simply replace one problematic subject-object relationship with another. (If I intended this, I would capitalize "Subject," which I will do hereafter when drawing these distinctions.) Instead, the nurtured is part of a web of intersubjectivities. Perhaps counter-intuitively, my aim to view nurturing through the lens of intersubjectivity is similar to an object-oriented ontology (OOO) in its decentering of the Subject and its deprivileging of the Human. But it differs from most forms of OOO by embracing the fact that subjectivities — plural — are involved in the act of nurture. Posthuman nurture focuses on the nurtured, recognizing its agency/ies, even though quite often, nurturers will have to take actions that come into conflict with those agencies. Posthuman nurture also operates under the assumption that nurture, like agency, is a *mutual* action. Further, it recognizes that nurturing "intra-activities," to use Karen Barad's term, are not always intentional. Many nurturing relationships involve only effects — at least as far as our limited human perspectives can ascertain. This means that nurture often involves both *zoe* (nonhuman life) and non-*zoe* (non-"living") material beings.[2]

[2] I put "living" in quotation marks here, because, as Mel Chen writes in *Animacies*, even matter that is "insensate, immobile, or deathly" still "animates cultural lives." Thus, to consider it non-living without an asterisk would require a centering or privileging of human perspectives of "life."

Up until now, I have discussed the grey areas involved in determining the agency of the nurtured. But what constitutes nurturing, and thus who/what performs the act of nurture, is not clear-cut, either. The stability, protection, and camouflage of my Knock-Out rosebush nurtured the cicada in my garden from its emergence as a late nymph through its ecdysis as an adult. Generational investments in childcare or other forms of "human infrastructure" carry the potential to nurture not only individual people, but also households, family units, and the American population as a whole. Human attempts to nurture the environment through reforestation have also nurtured the entire tick population. But the rosebush did not act on its own; it had the help of an environment around it, and it wouldn't be alive at all without two years of my own efforts to save it from heat, drought, and deep freezes. And by simply leaving the cicada alone, allowing it to rest during its molt, I contributed somehow to its nurture, I hope, by preventing its accidental death from the pressure of my garden hose.

Theoretical Backgrounds

It is probably obvious by now that this dissertation is deeply invested in the posthumanities. But it blends a few other discourses as well. First and foremost, this project is a literary analysis. I engage with animal studies, adoption and surrogacy ethics, queer theory, alloparenting, and temporality over the course of these pages to reveal how American literary texts demonstrate emergent nurturing consciousnesses that we now articulate through posthuman discourse. Because nurture necessarily involves the passage of time, I engage with evolutionary theory and the literary genres of utopia and how American literary perspectives evolve into dystopias. To do so, I focus specifically on American literatures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (1880-1920), a period when utopias and literary responses to Darwinism were prolific. As I discuss in Chapter 2, I refer to this as the "late long nineteenth century,"

which spans a period often referred to as the Second Industrial Revolution. Then, I examine the corresponding period one century later (1980-2020). This latter selection is not arbitrary, either: it is important to this project not only because it is "our" era, but also because it corresponds to the emergence of posthuman scholarship as we know it today. More importantly, this latter period, often called the "Digital Revolution," happens to be the time period that the aforementioned utopian writers of the Second Industrial Revolution imagined – and that we have now lived past.

Rosi Braidotti begins the first chapter of her 2013 book *The Posthuman*, "Post-Humanism: Life Beyond the Self," by declaring that "[a]t the start of it all there is He: the classical ideal of 'Man', formulated first by Protagoras as 'the measure of all things', later renewed in the Italian Renaissance as a universal model and represented in Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man" (13). Because the Vitruvian Man – an "iconic image" functioning as the "emblem of Humanism" – is an "ideal of bodily perfection," it "uphold[s] a specific view of what is 'human' about humanity." She refers to a "mutation of the Humanistic ideal into a hegemonic cultural model" in which Europe becomes "not just a geo-political location, but rather a universal attribute of the human mind" (14). Accordingly, the Vitruvian Man is a symbol in posthuman theory for the notion that liberal Cartesian humanism is assumed to be a European male who is non-disabled.[3] Braidotti's foundational work of critical posthumanism argues that posthumanism offers ways for humans to understand the flexibility and multiplicity of their identities. (This, she repeatedly emphasizes, contrasts with anti-humanism.) In addition to critiquing the Vitruvian Man, Braidotti finds the "Vitruvian Woman" image to be an unsatisfying

[3] I use the term "non-disabled" in place of "able-bodied" (to refer to persons without physical "disabilities") and "neurotypical" (to refer to persons without mental "disabilities") in accordance with the style guide of the National Center on Disability and Journalism.

response because it reinforces the problems with the Vitruvian Man by emphasizing the Cartesian subject-object formulation of self (20-22). (Post)humans, Braidotti claims, should embrace the opportunities afforded by the posthuman condition to find new ways of social bonding and achieving sustainable development.

In this dissertation, I identify in late nineteenth and early twentieth century American literatures a growing recognition, particularly among marginalized authors, of something that I call the "Vitruvian line," which delineates boundaries of what society does and does not consider fully "Human." Marginalized authors, then, propose futures that can incorporate themselves as fully human within egalitarian societies. I call these "subaltern futures," borrowing the first word of the term from postcolonial theorists like Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Spivak. I develop the ideas of the "Vitruvian line" and "subaltern futures" in greatest detail in Chapter 3, but traces of these concepts are important to Chapters 2, 4, and 5 as well. In addition to "Vitruvian line" and "subaltern futures," I will also rely on a few other terms to describe concepts for which I cannot locate a precise term already used by scholars. In Chapter 2, for example, I discuss specific forms of posthuman nurture through what I call "reform nurture" and "reform care," which act in conversation with reform Darwinism.

Posthuman nurture, in its most ideal iteration, ignores Vitruvian boundaries, focuses on mutuality, and rejects the notion of ownership, control, or possession of the nurtured. Posthuman nurture embraces etymological roots that pre-exist "nurture" as a Cartesian act performed by a subject on an object. These etymological roots are *prehumanist* (as in, before Humanism), which puts them in a temporal space similar to, but the inverse of, posthuman thought. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, places the use of *nurture* as a noun at least a century earlier than the use of *nurture* as a verb. The chronology of these parts of speech is important when we

consider subjects and objects within nurturing relationships because grammar is such an important method of positioning Subjects and Objects. Related words such as *nourish*, *nurse*, and *nouriture* each bring into association a variety of actors and agential relationships. Their uses include education, the development of thoughts, the breeding of cattle, and the tending of plants, among others. The verb forms of these words occasionally refer to the *recipient* of the nurture as the subject; for example, an intransitive use of *nourish*, now considered obsolete, means "to take or receive nourishment." Harking further back to the Proto-Indo European root of all these words – "sna" – provides us with more indications of pre-Cartesian nurturing relationships. *Sna* forms the root of many languages' forms of *nurture, nourish,* and *nurse*, based on its extended form *(s)nāu*, meaning "to flow or let flow," which, in turn, relates to both "swim" and "suckle."

The etymological allowance for *nurture* and its cognates to mean "flow or *let flow*" suggests that posthuman nurture does not require intense, active control over each action of the nurtured. The history of these words shows various meanings that have an affinity with activities that linger on the margins of practices that these words designate, even if those practices are no longer central to those words' meanings. We can consider the late nineteenth century naturalists' attempts to nurture futurity through sociocultural evolution as an example of their attempt to adjust society's conditions and then "let society flow" thereafter.[4]

Alexander G. Weheliye's *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014) provides us with another term, "racializing assemblages," that will help us understand some of the subaltern futures envisioned at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Weheliye posits "racializing

[4] Another example can be found in the transplanting of the "rosebush of humanity" in *Looking Backward*, discussed in Chapter 2, in which the rosebush flourishes without active care once transplanted by the nurturer; when it no longer suffered the stress of struggling to adapt to its oppressive climate, it could thrive without further intervention.

assemblages" to emphasize the influence of race on what it means to be human in modern Western culture. Racializing assemblages are, in Weheliye's words, "a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (26). In other words, Weheliye takes up the "Vitruvian boundary," as I call it, specifically as it relates to race and gender. He argues that Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben's theories do not give enough credit to the role that constructions of race play in constructions of the human; he categorizes their works as "bare life and biopolitics discourse." The institution of slavery, Weheliye points out, relied on the material flesh for the separation of humanity based on certain origins, and he argues that gender and sexuality do the same with the flesh ("viscus"). Black material feminisms, for Weheliye, offer remedies to what he identifies as previous underestimations of race's role in constructing the Human.

Of course, no conversation about nurturing in the context of the posthuman condition could be complete without the inclusion of Donna Haraway's discussions of kinship. And by discussing her views on kinship, I can introduce a few more terms that will be important in future chapters, such as "Anthropocene," "Capitalocene," "Plantationocene," and "Chthulucene." Haraway notes that, although "Anthropocene" is a necessary concept to focus on, it is deficient because it locates the cause of today's climate crises in the human species, which existed long before the Anthropocene is supposed to have begun. *Capitalocene* is somewhat better in her view, because it focuses on the effects of a human *system*, rather than on the species itself. But both terms focus on death or endings because they center the perspective of the human. She offers instead the term "Chthulucene," which comes from "two Greek roots (khthôn and kainos) that together name a kind of time-place for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth" (11). This term centers the "chthonic ones," those beings

of the earth which "writhe" and slither within all the earth despite the challenges to living and dying created by Anthropos/Capital. Along with other scholars at a roundtable, Haraway has also proposed "Plantationocene," which focuses specifically on how race, coloniality, and agriculture, have contributed to the posthuman condition. I will expand on these terms in later chapters when I discuss posthuman nurturing as a way to envision hopeful futures, regardless of whether or not those futures allow humans themselves to thrive.

Creative kinmaking is essential to posthuman nurturing. So, terms like "inventive kinning" (Lewis), "radical kinship" (Lane-McKinley and Cetinic), "kinnovation" (Haraway, via Skurnick's "kinnovator"), making "oddkin" (Haraway), reemphasizing "kith" over "kin" (Lewis), embracing "full surrogacy now" (Lewis), "feminist kinning" (Firestone), establishing "queer kinship" (Freeman), and recognizing "elastic kinship" (Hartman) are all essential if we plan to consider sustainable and ethical futures in the Anthropocene (or Capitalocene, or Plantationocene, or Chthulucene, depending on whom one asks). But Haraway's concept of response-ability – that is, determining which "critters" we have the capacity and obligation to nurture – is particularly useful for this project. Other terms that I will use involve the recognition that there are no clear boundaries between us as individuals and the "things" in the world around us: "assemblage" (Deleuze & Guattari, among others) "the mesh" (Timothy Morton), "intra-actions" or "entanglements" and the "agential cut" (Karen Barad), "transcorporeality" (Stacy Alaimo), and "vibrant matter" or "vital materialism" (Jane Bennett). Posthuman nurture recognizes that this enmeshment expands our material networks infinitely, while Haraway's "response-ability" helps us narrow our nurturing obligations enough to make the effort manageable.

This dissertation also explores issues related to parenting, such as adoption, surrogacy, fostering, polymaternalism, and alloparenting, the last of which requires the parenting of something *other* than one's biogenetic offspring. When we consider these parenting concepts through the lens of posthuman nurture, we can reconsider the supposedly "future-negating" role of queerness that Lee Edelman describes in *No Futures*. One exciting example is that of the "gay plant dad" phenomenon on social media, which I first noticed in 2019, and which blossomed in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic when single gay men – and the rest of the world – were confined to their homes. This type of other-than-human is inherently future-oriented, especially given the celebration of plant enthusiasts each time they propagate new "life" from a splitting of one of their plants or manage to bring a seed to literal fruition. But by reaching back to literatures of the late nineteenth century, we can see that queer kinship ties that are future-oriented are not new, and they offer a posthuman response to Edelman. However, throughout the rest of this dissertation, I avoid the use of the word "parent" in this context, embracing instead "polymaternalism" or "queer polymaternalism." I eschew "polypaternalism," even if only male-identified nurturers are involved, because of its many proprietarian connotations ("paternalistic," for example); and the word "parent" has become so ingrained in the capitalist formation of "The Family" that I feel it works linguistically against the idea of nurturing in the posthuman condition.

Organization: What's to Come

In Chapter 2, "Planning an American Century: Reform Care, Sympathetic Selection, and Nurturing Futurity in Progressive Era Speculative Writing," I first define the "late long nineteenth century" as a distinct literary period spanning the two decades bookending the year 1900. I then explain the significance of debates during that period over how to interpret Darwin's

evolutionary theories. I demonstrate that Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism misrepresented Charles Darwin's own theories regarding sociocultural evolution and the role that sympathy plays in nurturing the future of a species (not just the human species). "Reform Darwinists" recognized this problem, despite Spencer's stranglehold over evolutionary debates in the United States during that period. Their responses to social Darwinism I call "reform nurture" and "reform care," using their own adjective to describe their efforts at nurturing futures that show emerging recognitions of what we now call the "posthuman condition." This period's literature contained a utopian impulse that has not been seen in American literature before or after, and the prolific nature of the genre was part of a "reform nurture" that increasingly recognized the problem of centering the Subject (even if they did not phrase it in such terms). I perform close readings of texts by Edward Bellamy, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant. This chapter is necessarily longer in scope than other chapters because I also aim to demonstrate how central the decades bookending 2000 were to writers during the late long nineteenth century.

In Chapter 3, "Crossing the Vitruvian Line: Subaltern Futurity and Kinship in the Late Long Nineteenth Century," I examine the same period, but this time I focus on queer and BIPOC authors. I demonstrate how utopias written by heterosexual white Americans of the era leave marginalized identities out of their futures. In response, queer and BIPOC writers offer what I call "subaltern futures," which allow for utopias that include "homosexuals," Black women, and Native American women. Because the notion of subalternity is concerned with the idea that we cannot adequately speak for or on behalf of identities that we do not share, my close reading in this chapter focuses primarily on the novel written by a white gay man. Edward Irenaeus Prime-Stevenson's *Imre: A Memorandum*, which he wrote under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne. I argue

that this novel is, in fact, American literature's first gay novel because it not only depicts homosexuality openly, without the "code" of friendship, but also because it allows for a utopian future in which the two men can be together. "Happy" endings for queer characters in fiction, even in 2021, remain subversive, and although the text of this novel "ends," their story, thankfully, does not. I contextualize this work throughout the chapter with examples from novels written by authors representing identities that I do not share: S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema: A Child of the Forest* depicts indigenous futurities, while Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted* and Lillian Jones Horace's *Five Generations Hence* explore futurities from the perspective of Black women. Characters in all of these novels must re-think kinship and nurturing in order to navigate being excluded from the "Human" due to Vitruvian boundaries.

Chapter 4, "Utopias Interrupted: Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible* and the Development of Posthuman and Post-Human Nurturing Ethics" brings us to the corresponding time period one century into the future – our present. In this chapter I explore, using Millet's 2020 novel as an example of a larger contemporary trend, the ways in which writers must grapple with the fact that we did not accomplish the utopias imagined by writers one century prior. Having lived past the moment imagined in late nineteenth and early twentieth century utopian fiction, saddled with an awareness of humanity's possible extinction, writers must decenter the human if they plan to imagine futurity. But instead of insisting that writers today must revert to dystopias in response to the Capitalocene, I demonstrate that they can, and often do, renegotiate the genre of utopia in response to the posthuman condition. Doing so allows for nurturing in a posthuman way that also, if it becomes necessary, nurtures in a post-Human way. Moreover, I show that writers "look

back," to use Bellamy's word, at the late long nineteenth century when they go through the process of this renegotiation of utopia.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, "Responsibilities, Response-abilities, and the Ethics of Making Kin in Joanne Ramos's *The Farm*," I focus on surrogacy, adoption, pregnancy, and parasitism as the making of new agencies and not just the making of creative kinship ties. Using Ramos's novel, supported by contemporaneous nonfiction texts, I show how the blending of biogenetic and nonbiogenetic kin is necessary for a posthuman nurture in order to avoid the generational traumas handed down as the result of biogenetic separation. This chapter begins from the concern that posthuman scholarship's exciting new forms of creative kinmaking threatens to elide the voices of adoptees, former foster youth, donor-conceived persons, and "first families," who are already suppressed voices. I synthesize extensive field research within these communities from October 2019 to July 2021 and contextualize it within the legal codification of "artificial families," which began in the late nineteenth century.[5] These voices emphasize the importance of their biogenetic connections, which peer-reviewed studies are increasingly corroborating (as though their lived experiences were not enough). Exploring the role of pregnancy specifically, I demonstrate the distinctions between *personhood* and *agency* in defining the fetal "subject" and the ethics of creating *new* subjects instead of new kin.

[5] I am indebted to these communities, which I discuss more fully in Chapter 5, for allowing me into their spaces to learn from them and to unlearn predominant cultural misconceptions about their experiences. This "unlearning" is referred to by these communities as "coming out of the fog."

CHAPTER TWO

PLANNING AN AMERICAN CENTURY: REFORM CARE, SYMPATHETIC SELECTION, AND NURTURING FUTURITY IN PROGRESSIVE ERA SPECULATIVE WRITING

In this chapter, I first establish common themes used by "SF" writers in the late nineteenth century who look toward the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Unbeknownst to these authors, we would eventually call the equivalent period (two decades on each side of the century mark) the "Digital Revolution," and it would be bookended by the Cold War and COVID-19. Then, I focus on three texts that, taken together, demonstrate a collective sense of what I call "reform nurturing" and "reform care," which cultivated nascent ideas about materiality, agency, and evolutionary determination that would complicate gender and racial politics for the next century. These three texts — or, more accurately, sets of texts — comprise Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888) and his other works defending it; Charlotte Perkins Gilman's manifesto *Women & Economics* (1898) and her works in other genres deploying its theories, published both before and after; and the novel *Unveiling a Parallel* (1893), co-authored by "two women of the West," whom we now know to be Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant from Iowa. By examining these texts, I reveal a collective attempt at the end of the nineteenth century to reject Herbert Spencer's brand of social Darwinism by celebrating the "selection" part of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories, which allowed people — or, the writers might argue, even *obligated* people — to guide social evolution to nurture futures that improved individual happiness. Second, the differences among these texts' depictions of reform Darwinism illustrate a

disconnect regarding how gender relates to ideas of nurturing, care, and surrogacy. Finally, the texts' collective blindness toward the materiality of race illustrates the problems that white writers in the United States had incorporating nonwhite and queer Americans into their nurtured futures.

The "*Late* Long Nineteenth Century"

Time is so vital to the human experience that infants recognize the difference between the past and the future as early as one month old (Brackbill and Fitzgerald). Then, as early as six months old, human babies begin to fine-tune their "temporal discrimination" skills (Brannon et al). Sure, time is a human construct involving arbitrary measurements that not all cultures agree upon, but it's real enough that humans generally agree that we live in the *present*, that events that have already happened are in the *past*, and that events that have not yet happened are in the *future*. But the boundaries between those three dimensions get blurry even if we try to simplify things by sticking to a linear, rather than cyclical, conception of time. For Martin Heidegger, "care" is essential to temporal discrimination. Michael Wheeler notes that, in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, it is "with the configuration of care that we encounter the first tentative emergence of temporality as a theme" because Heidegger interprets the "dimensionality of care" through the "three dimensions" of past, present, and future. Some examples that Heidegger gives for care in the context of time are "producing something," "attending to something and looking after it," "making use of something," "giving something up and letting it go," "undertaking," and "accomplishing" (Heidegger 56). "Care," for Heidegger, is a link between his titular concepts of "being" and "time" because care compels differentiation between the slippery notions of past, present, and future.

Time's slipperiness becomes particularly difficult when partitioning off literary or historical periods with boundaries that, wherever placed, somehow end up separating contemporaries who deserve to be linked. For example, the term "long nineteenth century" reflects the fact that scholars must include the technological, political, religious, and social developments of the years preceding and following when they examine the historical context of the 1800s. The official start and end dates of the "long nineteenth century" are heavily debated, but the first iteration of the term, from historian Ilya Ehrenburg, uses the dates 1789-1914.[6] Other historians place its beginning as far back as 1750 and extend its ending to as late as 1920. The specific dates are inconsequential to the point I am making: what matters is that the term "long nineteenth century" recognizes the reach of nineteenth-century ideas into the first two decades of the twentieth century. Thus, the "*late* long nineteenth century" can refer, for the purpose of this dissertation, to the two decades that bookend 1900: approximately 1880-1920. Writers of this period sensed that they lived in a unique historical moment. Many of them believed that there was a direct link between their *fin-de-siècle* and the Digital Revolution — the next *fin-de-siècle* that would both close and open an entire millennium, just one brief century later in the decades bookending 2000.

A Milieu of Momentum

The "late long nineteenth century," as I am using the term, falls within the period of American and European history that is often referred to as the "Second Industrial Revolution," and, less frequently, the "Technological Revolution." Scholars usually suppose it to have begun around 1870, with the rapid spread of railroads and telegraphs, and most consider it to have ended upon World War II. The term "Second Industrial Revolution" contrasts the zeitgeist of the

[6] And at least one scholar locates the end of the medieval period in the nineteenth century, which further emphasizes the elusiveness of temporal boundaries.

late long nineteenth century with that of the First Industrial Revolution, which had ended by the middle of the century, and had focused on steam, iron, and textiles. But, as with most periods or movements, the era's name was not known to those living in it. To *fin-de-siecle* contemporaries, the "Industrial Revolution" (no "first" needed quite yet) had already occurred. What they sensed emerging was the spark of something new. And that something new was *after* and *distinct from* the revolution before.

In other words, they sensed momentum. Alfred Russel Wallace, the British naturalist who coauthored with Charles Darwin and independently developed the idea of natural selection, published *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Its Failures* in 1898, touting the advancements made during the nineteenth century (which had not yet even finished). His comparative analysis of historical periods led him to believe that the scope of accomplishments and failings during the 1800s outpaced that of any prior century. In fact, he argues that "to get any adequate comparison with the nineteenth century, we must take, not any preceding century nor group of centuries, but rather the whole preceding epoch of human history" (402). The comparative "difference shown by the mere numbers" of advances in science, the arts, and human knowledge of "our earth and of the whole visible universe," he argues, demonstrate quantitatively that the nineteenth century's imprint on history in "all the possibilities of human intercourse" dwarfs that of all prior centuries combined. Marveling at the period's uniqueness was not an act of vanity but rather an act of encouragement and, more importantly, caution. The century that they were ushering in promised to be full of upheaval, but the magnitude of potentialities came with responsibilities to (and for) the future. The "vast possibilities of further development" meant that humans in the Second Industrial Revolution held control over the "quality of its onward advances," which gave them obligations to use these advances properly.

Channeling the rhetoric of many reformers at the time, Wallace argues that capitalist societies had "sinfully mismanaged" these unprecedented advancements in ways that brought unnecessary suffering (379). The counterpart of natural selection — artificial selection — gave humans the ability to nurture society's future.

Nurturing the future is precisely what Progressive Era reformers in the United States sought to do. But, ironically, Darwinian natural selection (or, more accurately, a persistent misapplication of Darwin's theory) posed significant rhetorical challenges for American reformers. Herbert Spencer's use of the phrase "survival of the fittest" to describe natural selection took hold throughout the United States. As early as 1866, Henry Ward Beecher wrote to Spencer that the latter's writings were "far more fruitful and quickening here than in Europe" (qtd. in Hofstadter 389). But Darwin had already written that "it hardly seems probable" that "survival of the fittest" would allow the development of sympathy and courage, both traits that humans had already developed. He believed that compassion and "social instinct" evolved through natural selection in humans and in other species. While Spencer's main concern was to uphold the value of competition, arguing that "superior" races should "exterminate all the brutes" with "no account of incidental suffering," Darwin argued that evolution fostered "love," "sympathy," "conscience," and the "instinct" to "aid one another." In other words, Darwin's evolutionary theories cared about *care* itself. Animals have "special instincts," he writes, "in the aid which they give to the members of the same community; but they are likewise in part impelled by mutual love and sympathy, assisted apparently by some amount of reason." Nevertheless, Reform Darwinists faced many obstacles due to the widespread acceptance of Spencer's competitive evolutionary model in the United States.

To combat this, many reformers turned to utopian visions to illustrate the possibilities of steering evolution with Darwinian sympathy rather than Spencerian brutality. These efforts are what I call "reform care" or "reform nurture," because they emphasize the nurturing aspects of reform Darwinism. Not all of these visions can correctly be labeled "science fiction" or "speculative fiction" because many authors wrote with the belief that they were merely deploying the laws of empirical science to human society. The fields of sociology, political science, and other social sciences were emerging, and the idea of applying evolutionary models to human life was popular among both conservatives and progressives. Donna Haraway's use of "SF," a convenient catch-all for "speculative fiction," "science fiction," "speculative feminism," "science fact," "string figures," "so far," and "strange futures," among others, is useful here (*Staying* 2), although I suggest adding "speculative families" to the mix, given the importance of family law in shaping national futures.[7] Progressive Era writers had seen the impact of fiction on social reform after Harriet Beecher Stowe's abolitionist novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) sold more copies than any other book that century. By the time they were writing about social improvement, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery, had been part of the constitution for two decades, and many people credited (or blamed) Stowe's novel with effecting that change.[8] Now that they were armed with new empirical science to apply to social reform efforts — a science that is temporal by its very nature because it examines causal links from the past into the future — SF writers of the late long nineteenth century could redeploy a tried and true rhetorical tool in an exciting new way.

---

[7] See Michael Grossburg's *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth Century America*, 1985, for more on the creation of the family as a legal and social construct during this period.

[8] It must be noted that Jim Crow laws and other forms of institutionalized racism allowed it to continue for many more decades. Moreover, the Thirteenth Amendment did not entirely abolish slavery, given that it allowed it as "as a punishment for crime." Finally, any characterization of abolition that gives Stowe full credit does disservice to the diversity of reformers who worked for decades to accomplish it.

Fin-de-Siècle SF, the Millennium, and Spatial Time

Even if we focus entirely on American literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, excluding any written by thinkers in Great Britain or other countries, the genre of the utopia peaked during this period. This is important because utopias are inherently future-oriented (even when a utopia calls for a "return" to some supposed past pastoral or prelapsarian society, it requires nurturing those past conditions into futurity) and because, during this time, reform Darwinists relied on the utopia to flesh out their social theories. Never before or after the late long nineteenth century did the number of utopias written in the United States ever reach this rate of output again. And it is important to note that the utopian socialist movements were Transatlantic: Bellamy clubs, Fabian societies, Fourier communities, and Owenite cooperatives were widespread in the United States, Great Britain, France, and elsewhere, and they involved a wide array of authors that we do not always place within this context. George Bernard Shaw, William Morris, and H. G. Wells each associated in some way with a utopian socialist movement or intentional community, and "Bellamy Clubs," also called "Nationalist Clubs," spread by the hundreds in The Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden. But the United States had just begun a "rebirth" after the Civil War: "Reconstruction" literally means to "again" (*re-*) "make or form by fitting the parts together" (*construct*). Another literal meaning of "reconstruction" is to "form by the mind" anew. Because Americans had an opportunity (or, perhaps, an obligation) to "re-do" the building of their nation both theoretically and materially, they had a laser-like focus on how best to nurture the United States of their present into the most ideal future. If the "Founding Fathers" (which, we should note, included mothers) gave birth to the country as an infant, then Americans during the Second Industrial Revolution became "Founding Parents" to the country as a teenager, one that had just experienced severe adolescent trauma and that required intentional

rehabilitative care. The future adult nation would be the product of this nursing back to vitality. Neither generation of parents had a *tabula rasa*, of course (the infant was "born" where societies already had existed, and the teenager was a transformed, but not new, nation) — but both generations of "parents" acted as though they had a blank slate from which to rear an ideal future. "Utopia," which literally means "no place," thrives on perceived *tabula rasas*.

So, while utopias in both America and Europe dealt with reconciling the future with present conditions of suffering caused by capitalist growth of the recent past, American utopias did so while recreating a nation that, at the same time, was growing in physical space through expansion and in population due to immigration. Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis" considered the 1880s to have been preoccupied with the completion of Manifest Destiny to the western frontier — a line that Turner noted continuously moved west over the course of United States history. He declared the 1890 Census to have marked the end of westward expansion because, it seemed to him, the American frontier had at that point gone as far west as it possibly could go, and thus the frontier was "closed." (New Imperialism, however, revealed that American expansionism could indeed continue even after butting up against the boundary of the Pacific Ocean.) Moreover, the so-called "Second Wave" of European immigration to the United States more than doubled the number of "new" Americans during the period from the 1880 Census to the 1920 Census. But this time the immigrants came from countries that had previously not been sources of influxes, such as Ireland, Mediterranean countries, eastern European countries, China, and the Ottoman Empire. Most immigrants of the period were escaping famine, poverty, or political oppression. During 1880-1920, in fact, the percentage of immigrants as a proportion of the total U.S. population was higher than at any point in United States history including today, even though the raw total of immigrants by 2019 had far

surpassed the raw count of immigrants from a century before ("U.S. Immigrant Population"). The geographical expansion of the United States, its population growth fueled by ethnicities that had not yet "assimilated" into American identity, and the already-frightening conditions of capitalist wealth accumulation at the expense of the American poor combined to produce a sense of urgency for *fin-de-siecle* Americans to nurture society to reduce the growing unease so that they could avoid another bloody war to resolve social unrest.

Kenneth Roemer attributes the "sudden upsurge of literary utopianism" in SF during the late nineteenth century in America to turbulent economic transitions that began with the Panic of 1873, culminated with the Crash of 1893, and led to labor strikes (*Obsolete Necessity* 4). This accords with Lewis Mumford's contention that utopias are concerned with attempts to face the "difficult problem of transition" (114). Joyce Hertzler agrees, placing the utopian impulse during times of "upheaval, a period of transition, when the tumult of the world reflect[s] itself in men's minds" (126). Although Gilman's utopian impulses are more frequently attributed to her novel *Herland* (1915), she wrote *Women & Economics* in 1898, a non-fiction text that laid out the reform Darwinist ideas that she would eventually put into practice in *Herland*. Earlier in the late 1880s and early 1890s, she had already tested these theories through short "practice plays" (very brief experimental closet dramas) published in *Kate Field's Washington*, and several poems on the topic that were widely distributed at "Bellamy Clubs" (Tolle 38). Ann J. Lane, in her preface to the recovered edition of Gilman's *Herland*, notes that "two-thirds of all utopias were written in the nineteenth century, when the world was, indeed, in the process of visible and enormous change" in the "wake of capitalist growth and disorder" (xxii). These utopias, she continues, were seen as "call[s] to action." Focusing only on the thirteen years spanning 1888-1900,

Roemer catalogs at least 154 utopias written and published by American writers ("American Utopian Literature"). Transitions are breeding grounds for SF.

However, Roemer notes elsewhere that there were actually "hundreds" of SF works that could be classified as utopias during 1888-1900 and that he focuses specifically on the 146 authors whose utopias he claims "present detailed descriptions of ideal American civilizations" ("Sex Roles, Utopia, and Change" 34).[9] These authors were almost entirely "white," "Protestant," and "native" (meaning "born in the U.S.," but *not* meaning indigenous), and they were usually well-educated, middle class, and "involved in reform politics" (34). The "typical author of late nineteenth-century utopian work," he points out, "might have been a woman, but it was unlikely." Roemer is correct that women comprised a smaller percentage of utopian novels, but Carol A. Kolmerten finds that "more than thirty American women wrote utopian novels depicting their versions of a better world" from 1890 through 1919 (107). Among these women was a Black woman from Fort Worth, Texas, Lillian Jones, who provides a valuable exception to prove Roemer's rule.[10] Frederic Jameson notes that it is a "commonplace of the history of SF that it emerged...during the second half of the nineteenth century" with the production of a "host of utopias," which leads him to consider the "genre as a symptom and reflex of historical change" (284).

I would now like to focus specifically on the utopias of this period that imagine the decades just before and after the year 2000: the Digital Revolution, "Cold War to COVID-19," or the end of the millennium and the start of a new one.[11] One of the first examples of American

[9] The discrepancy between 146 authors and 154 texts is due to the fact that several authors wrote more than one utopia during this period.
[10] See Chapter 3 for more about Lillian Jones's utopian visions.
[11] This temporal link also works in reverse. Many authors of fiction and nonfiction appeal to the late nineteenth century to situate their writings. In *Animalia Americana* (2013), Colleen Glenney Boggs uses late nineteenth century literature to illustrate issues regarding biopower in the twenty-first century, for example. Don Bluth's 1986 animated musical *An American Tail* reaches back to 1885. Sarah Ruhl's 2009 play *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play*

nineteenth-century SF to imagine 2000 A.D. was written by William H. Graham in 1846, well before the Second Industrial Revolution. In *Henry Russell, Or, The Year of the Lord Two Thousand: A Novel*, Fourierist communes throughout the United States lead to peace and prosperity. Graham posits a future history to the nineteenth century that involves the abolition of slavery and eradication not of crime, but of the *reasons* for crime. This was ahead of its time, given that consideration of "atavism" in relation to crime would become a focus of social scientists and reform writers at the end of the century. The most famous work to imagine the year 2000, however, was Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, which offered a future history of the twenty-first century through Rip Van Winkle-style time travel. The magnitude of its impact in the United States and overseas has been well documented by Silvia Bowman, Krishan Kupar, Daphne Patai, Ruth Levitas, and Kenneth Roemer, among others.

The novel's protagonist, Julian West, wakes in 2000 A. D. after a 113-year long hypnosis-induced slumber to find that America has transformed since 1887 into a socialist utopia guided by "Nationalism." This "Nationalism" refers to nationalization of the economy for the common welfare and not to the exclusionary xenophobic politics that the word "nationalism" connotes for today's readers. However, as I discuss later in this chapter and in Chapter 3, Bellamy's utopian framework and others inspired by it nevertheless excluded many Americans. West encounters Dr. Leete, who explains the benefits of the future's advanced culture, including retirement, food, housing, healthcare, and rapid delivery of goods from warehouses to residences through a series of tubes. He learns from Dr. Leete and Leete's daughter Edith about the "social

takes place in the "late nineteenth century" and examines the intersection of electricity, women's health, motherhood, and the family. Several short stories in the collection *Alternate Presidents*, edited by Mike Resnick in 1992, imagine alternate histories of the late long nineteenth century; in particular, "Love Our Lockwood," by Janet Kagan, reimagines the 1888 presidential election to have been won by Belva Ann Lockwood, and follows her 1892 re-election campaign against Grover Cleveland.

contrasts between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" and readers learn along with West how the Americans of Bellamy's speculative future had carefully nurtured sociocultural evolution to achieve an egalitarian socialist utopia (1). While West "looks back" at the close of the nineteenth century, Bellamy "looks forward" to the close of the twentieth century; but Bellamy also "looks back" at the whole of the nineteenth century to illustrate how the society he shares with his narrator at the turn of the last century became so fundamentally flawed.

While he was in the nineteenth century, West knew that it was the "common opinion of thoughtful men" that their society was "approaching a critical period which might result in great changes," but, of course, he had no way of knowing what those changes would be until he learned about the establishment of the "nation as sole capitalist" (8, 30). The establishment of "Nationalism," Bellamy's preferred term for socialism, took place through the "logical evolution to open a golden future of humanity" that required society to "cooperate with that evolution" (26, 24). Notably, in Chapter XI, Julian speaks to his nineteenth-century readers about a "tremendous revolution," while Dr. Leete refers to that process consistently throughout the book as an "evolution" (28). While this could signify the assumption that many nineteenth-century readers had that such changes would require violence (after all, the Civil War was still in their rear-view mirror), it also underscores the preoccupation that reformers of the period had with applying the principles of Darwinism (but not Spencerian Darwinism) to social reform. I provide a closer examination of *Looking Backward* later when I synthesize it with the futures imagined by the SF of Gilman and Jones & Merchant. However, Bellamy's *Looking Backward* was so famous — it "quite possibly" sold more copies than any American book in the nineteenth century besides *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Auerbach 27) — that it is important to keep in mind when discussing other

futures that imagine 2000 A.D. Indeed, a considerable portion of other texts that imagine the same future do so in response to Bellamy.

Bellamy insists in the postscript to the novel, which responds to reviewers of his first edition, that his imagined future must take place in 2000 A.D. and no later, despite reviewers' incredulity that such a complete transformation of the United States into a socialist utopia could be accomplished, gradually and without violence, in barely over one hundred years. His book, he says, is only a "fanciful romance" in genre; it is intended, however, "in all seriousness, as a forecast, in accordance with the principles of evolution, of the next stage in the industrial and social development of humanity" (163). Moreover, this forecast is based on "indications of probability" and on predictions that the "dawn of the new era is already at hand." Some had suggested that his transformation ought not to be "fifty years ahead," as it was in the book, but rather "seventy-five centuries."[12] His historical moment, Bellamy believed, contained even more "resistless momentum" than previous "great national transformations" that went faster than populations had expected. One of those examples was the fact that the Anti-Slavery Society was founded in Boston in 1832, and "thirty-eight years later, the society disbanded, its programme fully carried out" (164). "All thoughtful men agree," therefore, that America in the *fin-de-siecle* "is portentous of great changes": the Golden Age "lies before us and not behind us and is not far away" (164-5). His final sentence evokes the figure of the child-as-future but with more immediacy: "our children will surely see it, and we, too" (165). Although "our children" in the context of sociocultural evolution is typically used collectively, it is clear from Bellamy's context that he is in fact referring specifically to his and his reader's own children. This appeal to

[12] In Bellamy's 2000 A.D., the transformation had already taken place, which accounts for his use of "fifty years" rather than "one hundred years."

one's own children as a way to get readers to "care" about the collective future is effective, and today's readers would be most familiar with this rhetoric in the context of climate activism.[13]

Like Bellamy, Gilman believed that the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was an important historical moment that would decide the future of the human species. Moreover, she believed that the humans living during that moment would actively steer human evolution toward that future. Writing in 1894 in *The Impress*, she criticizes the overuse of the phrase "fin-de-siecle" by her contemporaries, arguing that they placed an arbitrary value on a number invented by humans. She did not reject the importance of the period, but instead objected to the insinuation that the year 1900 (or 1901, depending on how one counts the beginning of a new century) would mark the "end" of anything. "Is it, then," she asks, "that the vast ever flowing river of time is a locked canal, and our life to-day is slowly rising, rising, waiting for the gate of 1901 to open and let it pass?" The "end of the century," she claims, is merely a "mark we have made for our convenience on the dial of history," and she implies that focusing too much on this "mark" causes "idleness and feebleness." Her view in 1894 of the phrase "fin-de-siecle," in fact, more closely aligns with how scholars today discuss the term: now, we are more likely to consider "fin-de-siecle" to encompass both the *end* of the century and the *beginning* of the new one (roughly the years 1890-1910). That's why "fin-de-siecle" is often translated to "turn of the century" rather than the literal translation of "end of the century." But "[i]n life, there is no time," she asserts: "It is always Now, and never in our long history was

[13] For more on the intersection of climate catastrophe and the future of the child, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation and Rebekah Sheldon's *The Child to Come: Life After the Human Catastrophe*, which explores the "pervasive conjunction of the imperiled child and the threatened Earth."

there a Now so live, so stirring, so luminous with hope and invincible in power half-felt, as this thrilling, hesitant, uncertain giant Now of our end of the century."[14]

Gilman's personal notes also underscore her enthusiasm about the pace of human progress during her era. We know from her diaries and letters that she read Wallace's *The Wonderful Century* and that she associated with him both personally and professionally. In 1896, two years before Wallace published *The Wonderful Century*, Gilman wrote to Lester Ward, her mentor and a founder of Reform Darwinism, that speaking in front of Wallace — "that great man!" — was an honor and that he enjoyed her ideas "immensely" (*Selected Letters* 246). Perhaps far more interesting than Gilman's familiarity with Wallace's belief in the uniqueness of the nineteenth century compared to previous centuries is that we know which parts of the book spoke to her the most. Of its twenty-two chapters, she seems to have been inspired primarily by Chapter XV, titled "Estimate of Achievements: The Nineteenth Century as Compared with Earlier Centuries." She typed up a note compiling its quantitative findings in an organizational method that mimics today's spreadsheets. This is in and of itself important because Gilman's archives contain very few typewritten notes: most documents of this kind in her archives are handwritten, while those in typeface are usually copies of published works or manuscripts for works that went unpublished. This chapter's findings, however, deserved a neat, easy-to-analyze organization of data that she could easily reference. To the side, she expands upon his data by performing some calculations of her own to further demonstrate the case for her generation's potential. Her final conclusion: "19th Century [is] 9 [major achievements] ahead as compared

[14] In Chapter 4, I discuss one of the characters in Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible* (2020), who says something very similar: "it's all for now" (200). But in that character's case, he is not "luminous with hope" because humans had not nurtured a future over the previous century that could sustain humanity.

with all previous ages together" and that figure, she noted, did not include "industrial machinery revolutionizing industry, and great social movements" that Wallace had not listed.

Clearly, even as Gilman took issue with the arbitrariness of the term "*fin-de-siecle*," she certainly believed that the generation associated with that period, more than any generation before, held a special place in sociocultural evolution. More than any other "Now," *her* "giant Now" was more "stirring" and "luminous with hope"; but even though it was "invincible," its power was only "half-felt" due to the aforementioned "idleness." And despite the fact that it was "thrilling," it was also both "hesitant" and "uncertain." This unresolved status gave a special sense of potentiality to Gilman and Bellamy's generation. Writing in 1909, at the latter end of what we now consider the *fin-de-siecle*, Gilman asks why many people of her generation focus on the past in lieu of the present ("Why Walk Backward?"). Refuting the notion that "no man can read the future," she asks, if that were true, why anyone would bother to plant "fruit trees," "study a profession," or even "build ships."

> Let this be recognized: every step of intelligent conduct rests on our perception of the future. It is this which distinguishes human beings from brutes: the degree in which we are able to read the future and guide our behavior thereby… It is laughable, this pompous claim that we don't know anything about the future, when the whole structure of civilized life is based on our knowledge of it… We find ourselves in a given place, and make a point. We look back some distance, note our position then, and make another point. A line drawn from these two and projected beyond indicates the way we are going.

Gilman's belief in the importance of her generation, combined with her belief in the importance of "guid[ing] our behavior" toward the future, underscores not only her link to Bellamy, but also her belief that her generation held the unique potential to nurture a utopian future. This belief

famously placed her at odds with Spencer's social Darwinism, which held sway in late nineteenth century America, but rests comfortably in accord with Darwin's own beliefs about sexual and artificial selection.

Let us take a cue from Gilman and Wallace and look at the numbers to demonstrate the preoccupation that late long nineteenth century reformers had with the years bookending 2000. In Everett F. Bleiler's annotated bibliography of more than 3,000 SF texts from its first iterations to 1930, *Science Fiction: The Early Years*, at least ninety-two texts imagine the period of 1980-2020. Most of these texts are, as we might expect, concentrated on the year 2000 itself; still, futures set in the decades preceding and following 2000 show up considerably more than any other time periods in SF texts. For example, twenty-eight SF texts represent a future in the years 1980-1999, six of which focus on 1999 alone. For SF that imagines futures in the years 2001-2020, there are twenty-four, five of which represent 2001-2002. In addition to those, ten SF texts imagine a future somewhere in the "late twentieth century," but the authors do not specify exact years or decades. And on the other side of the year 2000, twelve SF texts imagine an unspecified future set somewhere in the first part of the twentieth century. Given that Bleiler's annotated bibliography is now more than thirty years old, it is quite possible that other texts depicting this same period have since been recovered.

More statistics reveal the role of social evolution in these future histories. Bleiler identifies twenty-nine SF texts that explore evolution as a process important to the nurturing of futures. Some are Darwinian, others provide alternatives to Darwinian evolution, and at least one involves a form of evolution that pre-dates Darwin (index, 876). Eugenics — which relies on theories about natural, artificial, and sexual selection that relate to evolution — has fifty-five entries in the index of Bleiler's bibliography of SF. But because his index splits eugenics into

various categories, twelve texts are listed more than once, which makes forty-three distinct SF texts that depict eugenics. Some of these texts overlap with the twenty-nine that explore evolution, but not all of them do. One hundred texts examine "ideal societies" based on "socialism": seventy-six of these are in favor of socialism, twenty-two reject socialism's merits, and the remaining two leave their impression of socialism in "doubt." Twenty-three SF texts engage with Bellamism specifically: fifteen can be considered pro-Bellamy, five are anti-Bellamy, and the remaining three leave their assessment of Bellamism unclear.

Some examples from the statistics above demonstrate Bellamy's influence on fin-de-siècle attempts to nurture the future of the next century's turn. In 1890, John Bachelder, in *AD: 2050: Electrical Development at Atlantis*, attempts to demonstrate that Bellamy's future history of 1888-2000 might be possible, but that it is doomed to fail shortly after 2000. The narrator, Captain Jones, himself travels to the year 2000 using the same method Julian West uses. In Bellamy's future Boston, Bachelder's Captain Jones meets Dr. Leete and determines that Leete had misrepresented the process of social evolution to West. Although the title refers to 2050, most of the action of the story takes place from 2000-2034. On the other hand, Solomon Schindler, a rabbi in Boston who was born in Russian Poland, writes more favorably of the decades following Bellamy's version of 2000. In his 1894 novel *Young West: A Sequel to Looking Backward*, readers follow West's son, Julian West, Jr., or "Young West," in the first half of the twentieth century. By including more details about the operations of society, many of which recall Fourierism, Schindler provides an antidote to the diagnoses offered by Bachelder. Although the ending acknowledges some flaws of the socialist future nurtured by Bellamy, the novel is otherwise an affirmation of Nationalism's ability to last beyond the millennium.

Another American rabbi, this one born in England, provides a response to Bellamy that is entirely devoid of Bellamism, and which is eerily prescient about twentieth-century history. Henry Pereira-Mendes's 1899 novel *Looking Ahead: Twentieth Century Happenings* provides a future history of the twentieth century that is marked by Zionism. Its title, linguistically the inverse of Bellamy's, seems to be its only relationship with *Looking Backward*, which suggests that Pereira-Mendes sought to enter a conversation about futurity that Bellamy had prompted, but that he did not concern himself with addressing the merits of Bellamy's brand of socialism. The author's foresight is almost frightening. His novel imagines that the twentieth century would be, in Bleiler's summation, "characterized by a succession of world wars" and that an Anglo-Saxon confederation (created by the United States and Great Britain) would work with other Western nations to end the Ottoman Empire and hand Palestine over to the Jewish people. As we know, the twentieth century indeed became characterized by several world wars, two of which even earned the title "World War." The first of those two ended the Ottoman Empire upon the victory of a Western alliance led by a "Special Relationship" between the U.S. and Great Britain, and the second of the two resulted in the same countries recognizing the independence of the state of Israel.

Another eerily prescient novel takes place at an unspecified time in America's future; but its subject matter, for today's readers, make it difficult to ignore the context of the latter half of the 1980-2020 period that I focus on. Archibald McCowan's *The Billionaire: A Peep into the Future*, published in 1900 (though the author claims it was first published in a magazine before then), concerns itself with the inability of the U. S. Constitution to thwart a tyrant. Specifically, it considers what will happen upon the emergence of the "first billionaire the world has ever seen" (6). The novel is surely a criticism of the robber barons of the late nineteenth century, but its

similarities to current events are hard to miss. McCowan's preface indicates that the emergence of a billionaire could only be possible in America because the "Old World" tends to intervene in the "evolution of a monopolist," while Americans allow unfettered individualism (22, 6). The real problem, in McCowan's view, is the U.S. Constitution's "flexibility," which allows shrewd attorneys and corrupt judges to twist it to mean whatever they want it to mean. The great flaw of the Founding Parents was that they were honorable and did not foresee what could happen if "unprincipled men might abuse the liberties so carefully secured for them." John Smith, the titular billionaire, extracts oxygen from the air and monopolizes it for financial gain. The government is unable to stop him because they cannot overcome arguments that, according to the Constitution, he has not done anything illegal. Because the Constitution is unable to do anything about Smith's tyranny, the only way to fight him is to force him to leave the country, upon which he sails to Russia, extracting oxygen along the way. He explains the "nature of his business in Russia," but he does not agree to sell his patent to the Russians (33). The only time people become safe from John Smith's tyranny is when he dies, because the legal system had no way to rein him in while he was alive. According to *Forbes*, as of 2020, the United States indeed has more billionaires than any other country (more than all European countries combined, and more than twice the number of the next highest, China). And the United States continues to struggle with how to use its legal system, particularly the Constitution, to prevent the unchecked power of billionaires (with ties to Russia!) who disregard the principles of the Framers.

Other visions of the turn of the twentieth century by American writers at the turn of the nineteenth century exist outside Bellamy's imagined future. Charles Godfrey Leland's *Flaxius: Leaves from the Life of an Immortal*, published in 1902, follows an ancient Etruscan who gains the ability to live forever from a fairy. We follow the narrator's immortality through both

temporal and spatial distance as he travels throughout Europe, Asia, and "dimensions" that are not on Earth. After his time in antiquity, he spends time off Earth, and when he returns, it is the year 2000, and he is in China. He learns about the technological advances that have happened since he was last on Earth, which involve a form of socialism and the absence of organized religion. At the end of the story, Flaxius and the fairy discuss evolution as a process that allows humans to "commune *directly* with God" (317). James B. Alexander's 1909 novel, *The Lunarian Professor*, also depicts spatial and temporal travel, taking readers from Minnesota to Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa and from 1892 to 2000 A.D., where we spend most of our time before the book ends in 2100 A.D. Alexander offers fascinating alternatives to gender essentialism by positing the ramifications of being able to determine the sex of a fetus, which prompts him to learn that Lunarians have solved the problem by instituting a third "neutral" gender called "The Third Sex." As exciting as this sounds for today's genderqueer readers, the neutral sex cannot procreate, which recalls Lee Edelman's discussion of the "death drive" caused by "future-negating" heteronormativity — an issue which I shall discuss in more detail below when I examine the role of the family in Jones & Merchant, Gilman, and Bellamy.

Costello Holford's 1896 novel *Aristopia: A Romance-History of the New World* contemplates temporal reform in the reverse. His utopia reaches backward, providing an alternate past of the colonial era to the present (his present, that is). Neither a speculative future like Pereira-Mendes's *Looking Ahead* nor a future history like Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Holford's *Aristopia* is a speculative history that considers what would have happened if the colonists had intentionally created a socialist community based on (but differing in important ways from) Thomas More's *Utopia*. Ralph Morton establishes a colony named Aristopia, which blends socialism with a utopian model that predated socialism. The narrator explains in Chapter

IX that More's book provided the "model" for Morton's commonwealth, which the narrator asserts has been "misrepresented" and "misunderstood" for a long time (88). Despite the temporal distance, More "anticipates all those reforms...which distinguish the nineteenth from the brutal and savage sixteenth century" (92). By the time Aristopia experiences the American Revolution, they have absorbed what was Canada and now have expanded as far south as the Rio Grande. Aristopia, for Holford's time, was an analog to the United States, but it had even more territory annexed in the north. The real-world United States government's paternalistic "civilizing missions" to colonize overseas territories at the time meant that this analog would prompt readers to consider their country's role in the future of global affairs going into the twentieth century. And such New Imperialist foreign policies are shaped by Spencerian social Darwinism due to their reliance on the assumption that "backward" cultures could not develop — that is, *socially evolve* — on their own because they were "unfit."[15]

"The Artificial Man," published in 1884 in *The Argonaut* under the alias Don Quichotte (who has never been identified), appeals to temporality to engage with the idea of evolution, but it does so by collapsing time. Because I have not yet been able to acquire a copy of this short story, I rely on summaries provided by Bleiler's annotated bibliography and a blog post by Edward Wozniak, who goes by the username "Balladeer." A man who appears both elderly and ill claims to be eighteen years old and that he is a synthetic human cultivated in a bell jar by a scientist. The supposed artificial man tells the unconvinced narrator that he was created with a fake stomach containing the gastric material of a young cow to process injected nutrients. Moreover, the man claims that his physical frailty and mental fitness represent the future of the

[15] See Chapter 3 of this dissertation and Hofstadter's "Race and Imperialism," in *Social Darwinism in American Thought* for more on the links between race, coloniality, and the application of evolutionary theories. See also Johnson's *Latin America in Caricature* for parent-child metaphors in American political cartoons that relate to America's colonial relationships with other nations.

human species. Because he was manufactured with evolution in mind, he is physically frailer, but more cerebral, much the same way that humans of the nineteenth century seem less physically fit, but more mentally acute, than cavemen. The narrator only comes to believe the man's story once he opens the man's head to demonstrate the ability of his race to fine-tune his brain, like a machine's engine. At the end, the artificial man reveals that evolution, in Bleiler's characterization, "moves in a perpetual cycle," meaning that his race will be succeeded by more physically brutish beings even as the human race breeds out brutish descendants. The story reflects anxieties about the application of evolution to technology put forth in 1864 by Samuel Butler in "Darwin and the Machines." Butler never mentions "evolution," but his title's reference to Darwin and his focus on the relationship of current generations to future ones make the subject clear. He worries that machinery would soon "beget[] machinery" and become "the parent of machines often after its own kind."[16] He implicitly appeals to sexual selection by noting that "the days of flirtation, courtship, and matrimony [of the machines] appear to be very remote, and indeed can hardly be realised by our feeble and imperfect imagination." Whoever "Don Quichotte" was seems to have sensed a similar concern when he wrote "The Artificial Man." I have included this story from the time period despite its confusing conclusion and inaccessible text because it underscores the intersection of evolutionary science, temporality, and intellectual improvement that characterizes the SF works I have just discussed.[17]

[16] Today, the tech industry refers to AI technologies in terms of "generations," which illustrates how this concept has materialized.

[17] In 1906, R. F. Adams and J. A. Tiffany published the short story "An Assisted Evolution," wherein a professor proclaims that he could reconstruct the human species if it were to go extinct. In a plot that feels like the germ that grew into Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, he cultivates a male and female human from grains of salt that are identical to embryonic humans and names them "Adam" and "Eve." They become small humanoids that must be kept in separate air-controlled containers. When he lifts the curtain separating their containers, Eve becomes maniacal, leading to Adam's accidental breaking of his air tube, which kills him, and the professor dies from a heart attack as a result. Realizing that Eve is soulless, the narrator pushes a destruct button.

Other writers of this period use physical distance instead of temporal distance to alienate their readers from their current social environment, and some of the most notable examples are works of SF by women. In such works, geographical or celestial distances replace time as the mechanism writers use to estrange readers from their world so that readers can compare it with other utopian alternatives. Jones & Merchant's *Unveiling a Parallel* takes readers to Mars in an "aeroplane" in 1893; although it's clear that nineteenth century technology prohibits landing on Mars, the novel never claims to depict the future. This leaves readers to believe that it is an alternative present, or that the technology (such as "aeroplane," which had been conceived of as early as 1868 in *The English Mechanic*) was in the very near future. Mary E. Bradley Lane's feminist utopia *Mizora: A Prophecy* playfully engages with the then-debunked hollow earth theory by positing a technological futurity that thrives right under the noses of Lane's readers living on Earth's surface in the late nineteenth century. Published serially in 1880-1881, and then published in its entirety in 1890, Lane's all-woman society is an ambitious, albeit ruthlessly exclusionary, biotechnological paradise accessed from the waters of the north pole. The history of Mizora parallels the history of the United States until the Civil War, at which point it diverges. Predating Gilman's *Herland* by thirty-five years, *Mizora* uses a geographical "no place" to depict both the possibilities of technological advancement and the possibilities of an alternate past. *Herland* is also set during the same time as its publication of 1915, but the feminist utopia Gilman offers is located in a "strange country" unknown to the rest of the Earth, but spoken of in "legends" by people who have "never seen it" because any man who has penetrated that uncharted territory has never returned (2-3). Herland, then, is neither a hollow Earth, nor another planet, but is still a utopia that estranges readers using distance rather than time. It is important to note that both Gilman's Herlanders and Lane's Mizorans are framed within a "two thousand

year" period of development, and Jones & Merchant's Marsians refer to Caskian history in "thousands" of years rather than in centuries. What Jane Donawerth and Carol A. Klomerten call "women's literatures of estrangement" began, in the nineteenth century, to incorporate "scientific solutions of social problems" (6). This did not always require temporal distance, but when it did, it still evoked the era's temporal fixation with the millennium.

Male writers also toyed with geography to distance readers from their own environments. Our first example of this was Leland's *Flaxius*. But what I hope is becoming evident is that literary efforts to deploy space often end up deploying time as well. In the 1896 novel *Daybreak: A Romance of an Old World*, James Cowan uses the distance between Earth, the moon, and Mars to defamiliarize his readers with their world on Earth, thereby preparing them to explore alternatives to it. Cowan seems primarily concerned with having his readers consider the value of psychology and the merits of a political philosophy that today's readers would call Christian socialism. But he slips the rug out from under the reader at the end by declaring that Walter, the narrator, had merely dreamed his time on Mars in a subconscious effort to process a real-world psychological issue. (Late twentieth century audiences, familiar with *Newhart* and *Dallas*, would sympathize with their temporal counterparts on this.)[18] Transitioning from the dream state to the waking state, psychologically speaking, would also transport Walter's consciousness from one setting, Mars, to another setting, late nineteenth-century America. Although his body did not change location, his consciousness did, and in the context of the story's exploration of dream psychology, that is an important point when considering blended uses of temporal and physical

[18] The entry in *TV Tropes* for "All Just a Dream" covers thirty-one distinct genres to categorize its extensive list of examples of this plot device over centuries of literary history, but it is nevertheless far more prevalent *after* the emergence of modern psychology. In the United States, modern psychology emerged in the 1870s and took off in the 1890s, and became even more visible in the twentieth century after Sigmund Freud solidified dream interpretation as a way of probing the inner psyche of characters. Bellamy himself uses this trope, but does so subversively by having West "wake up" in the nineteenth century, as though his time in 2000 had been a dream, only to "wake up" yet again in 2000, realizing that his "return" to the nineteenth century had been the dream.

estrangement. Milton W. Ramsey's *The Austral Globe* in 1892 follows Captain Armstrong of the "Middle West" as he leaves Minnesota to sail on an "electric" ship with his friends. A storm sends them to the Antarctic, where they end up discovering a planet connected to the Earth's south pole: humans live, in fact, on a double-sphere rather than a single globe. The traces of society they find there is, to them, primitive, and they encounter two humanoids, a male (whom they name Austrus) and a female (whom they name Auma). After they learn English, they reveal Austrus's origin story: he woke up in the forest being suckled by the teat of a large mollusk, and Auma was later nurtured by Austrus with the help of a serpent. Based on his observations of animals and plants on the Austral globe that were by then extinct on Earth, Armstrong concludes that mammals must have originated there and migrated here. When Armstrong and his friends finally return to the "Middle West" via the Indian Ocean, significant technological advancements have unfolded, including precipitation control and a "small second sun" that can provide sunlight to the north pole (Bleiler 613).[19] In other words, enough time had passed since they had been on the Austral globe that by the time they returned, they experienced a form of "future shock," as Alfin Tofler and Adelaide Farrell put it. By the end of this story, then, Armstrong merges geographical distance with temporal distance in his estrangement of readers from nineteenth century American society.

William Dean Howells, the so-called "Dean of American Letters," reverses the geographic estrangement by bringing the inhabitant of a distant "no place" to late nineteenth-century America. *A Traveler From Altruria: A Romance*, which Howells published serially in 1892-3 before publishing it as a book in 1894, is set in the 1890s somewhere along the Atlantic coast of the United States. The narrator, Mr. Twelvemaugh, hosts a visitor from Altruria named

[19] I am currently basing my characterization of this story on Bleiler's annotation until I can access the original text.

Mr. Homos, whose time in the United States allows him to contrast Alturia's egalitarian, altruistic society with America's relative egotism and inequity. Altruria is unknown to the rest of the globe, but exists in the same universe as Howells's readers. Its name evokes "altruism," which had been coined in the nineteenth century by Auguste Comte from the Latin for "other" as a proposed antonym for "egoism." It is not a small island of the sort the United States was currently encouraging private citizens to seize through the Guano Islands Act of 1856, which led to the control of ninety-six insular areas, sixty-six of which were recognized as territories by 1903 (Vandermeer 149). Instead, it is quite large. It is "perfectly astonishing" that an island "so large as Altruria should have been lost to the knowledge of the rest of the world" despite the assumption that "every space of the ocean's surface" should presumably have been "traversed by a thousand keels since Columbus sailed westward" (48). While exposing the brutalities of capitalism in the Gilded Age, Howells also engages with the history of utopia as a literary genre by having his characters make repeated references to the tradition, such as Plato's *Republic* (375 BCE), More's *Utopia* (1551), Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1602), Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1623), Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, and William Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890), which had offered a British response to Bellamy. By tracing the history of utopias as a tradition up to the most recent influential utopia shaping public conversation over social evolution, Howells's geographic distancing intersects with an appeal to temporality.

The Eclipse of Darwinism and the Brutality of Spencer

It is fitting that Frank X. Ryan's 2001 three-volume set, *Darwin's Impact: Social Evolution in America, 1880-1920*, spans the same decades that I argue must be considered together when considering literary history's sense of temporality. In the history of evolutionary biology, the same period is known as the "Eclipse of Darwinism," a term coined by Julian

Huxley in 1942 to describe the rise and fall of anti-Darwinian theories (or theories that embraced Darwinian evolution but sought to explain it through something other than natural selection). Huxley declared that the eclipse was resolved when Darwinian evolution was reconciled with Greger Mendel's theories of genetic inheritance, in what he called the "modern synthesis." Biology historian Peter Bowler phrases this period as "the decades around 1900," and declares it to be "widely accepted" that the rise and fall of anti-Darwinian discourse during the Eclipse was crucial in the development of evolutionary theory as we know it today (ix).

Any sort of "reform nurturing" offered by Progressive Era imagined futures would have to contend with the stranglehold Spencer had on Darwinist discourse in the United States. Darwin, it is important to remember, did *not* write about morality. Darwin wrote *descriptively* about his biological observations and developed his observations into a theory based on that description. Spencer, however, applied morality to these principles, turning evolution itself, and thus many of Darwin's own words, into *prescriptive* ideas. Using what G. E. Moore in 1903 called the "naturalistic fallacy," Spencer's social Darwinism linked what is *natural* to what is *good*. Over two centuries earlier, David Hume had already described a version of this fallacy, now known as the "is-ought problem," in which a speaker claims what *should be* merely by appealing to what *is currently*. Understanding the tension between Darwin's descriptive *is* vs. Spencer's prescriptive *ought* is essential to understanding why Darwin could later adopt language Spencer offered in response to his theories — such as "survival of the fittest," which he added, citing Spencer, as a synonym for "natural selection" to later editions of *On the Origin of Species* — without himself condoning "social Darwinism" and its oppressive, eugenic consequences when applied socio-economically.

In fact, as I noted earlier, Darwin both implicitly and explicitly rejects the extrapolation of *ought* from his theory of natural selection. In the original 1859 version of *On the Origin of Species*, he writes that we can "look with some confidence to a secure future...and as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection" (489). War, famine, and death cannot deter humankind from "the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals" (490). He concludes the book by saying that "endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved" (490). Reminding readers that plant and animal breeding are among the forms of human-created selection that can work in tandem with natural selection, Darwin writes that

> if feeble man can do much by his powers of artificial selection, I can see no limit to the amount of change, to the beauty and infinite complexity of the coadaptations between all organic beings, one with another and with their physical conditions of life, which may be effected in the long course of time by nature's power of selection…Why, if man can by patience select variations most useful to himself, should nature fail in selecting variations useful, under changing conditions of life, to her living products? What limit can be put to this power, acting during long ages and rigidly scrutinising the whole constitution, structure, and habits of each creature,—favouring the good and rejecting the bad? I can see no limit to this power, in slowly and beautifully adapting each form to the most complex relations of life. (109, 469)

What is important in these passages is not the fact that Darwin's rhetoric channels an optimistic (even utopian) impulse in its positive characterization of evolution's potentialities. After all, social Darwinists would not disagree with the idea that evolution would "perfect" the species to

its most "beautiful" and "wonderful" potential futures. It's just that their version would require the elimination of those considered "weak" by white men of the Global North. What is important in these passages is the fact that when Darwin writes with such optimistic language, he focuses on what *is* and concludes what *could be*, but he never makes a case for anything that *ought to be*.

At various periods during the Eclipse of Darwinism, Henri Bergson positions himself in staunch opposition to Spencer, embracing Darwinian evolution but offering alternatives to natural selection as its mechanism. He cautions people not to become "dupes of an illusion like that of Spencer," and says that Spencer's "cardinal error" was conflating experiences "as given" with experiences "as worked" (153, 368). Spencer, he claims, "takes reality in its present form," then "breaks it into pieces," puts them back together; "having *imitated* the Whole by a work of mosaic, he imagines he has retraced the design of it, and made the genesis" (*Creative Evolution* 365). In 1889, he writes that "the idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities" is actually "more fruitful than the future itself," which explains why humans "find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams, than in reality" (*Time and Free Will* 10). (This anticipates Jacques Lacan's later articulation of "*objet petit a*": that which is desired but remains eternally unattainable.) Reflecting the Transatlantic effort to merge Darwinian evolution with Mendellian inheritance, Bergson refers to life as a "a current passing from germ to germ through the medium of a developed organism" (27). The social organism allows "continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances," permitting humans to "foresee the future" and, in some ways, make humans "masters of events" (4, 342).

Bergson uses the figure of a tree as an example of the social organism, in a metaphor that contains elements of new materialist thought. A tree, he writes, never ages because "the tips of its branches are equally young, always equally capable of engendering new trees by budding"

(16). Still, "in such an organism — which is, after all, a society rather than an individual — something ages, if only the leaves and the interior of the trunk." This description evokes posthuman theoretical concepts discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation, such as an "assemblage" (Deleuze & Guattari, among others) "the mesh" (Timothy Morton), "intra-actions" or "entanglements" (Karen Barad), "transcorporeality" (Stacy Alaimo), and "vibrant matter" or "vital materialism" (Jane Bennett). As I will show below, this metaphor will prove useful to others writing about social change during the late long nineteenth century. Applying his tree metaphor to humans, Bergson explains that individuals come together to form society, but that society then "melt[s] the associated individuals into a new organism, so as to become itself an individual, able in its turn to be part and parcel of a new association" (259). Although Bergson's orthogenetic evolution became rejected by biologists for most of the twentieth century, it has recently been observed by biologists in isolated cases (Stoltzfus and Yampolsky). And his envisioning of all of society as one entity, in which all constituent parts are materially interconnected with no clear boundaries between them, is a concept embraced by posthuman scholars today, who emphasize the need to extend this concept beyond human-human "intra-actions."

Reform Nurture and the Nationalists

In America, Progressive Era reformers advocated alternatives to individualistic social Darwinism. These alternatives became known collectively as "Reform Darwinism." Lester Ward, the first president of the American Sociological Association, was the most well-known of the Reform Darwinists, although Henry George, whose earlier economic proposals advocated communal responsibilities to the poor, had prepared readers for some of Ward's economic proposals. George's *Progress and Poverty* (1879) prompted people to identify as "Georgists" in

ways similar to Bellamy's *Looking Backward* creating the identification of "Bellamist" or "Nationalist." One of those Georgists was the aforementioned Alfred Russell Wallace, who, in 1881 designated *Progress and Poverty* as "undoubtedly the most remarkable and important book of the present century," which would have placed it above Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* ("Letter"). Bellamy's *Looking Backward* had not yet been written when Wallace made this claim. Once Bellamy had published his novel and it spawned "Bellamy Clubs" throughout the nation and overseas, John Dewey would posit that "[w]hat *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was to the anti-slavery movement, Bellamy's book may well be to the shaping of popular opinion for a new social order" (106). Gilman read George's works (Scharnhorst and Knight 182), she was a "disciple" of Ward (Rafferty 174-213), she socialized with Wallace (*Abridged Diaries*; *Selected Letters*), she corresponded with Bellamy, who praised her work (*"*Letter"), and she was a descendent of the Beecher family, which included Stowe and the aforementioned Henry Ward Beecher.

The wide range of important literary and political figures that Gilman associated with is well known, but I'd like to focus specifically on her connections to Ward, Wallace, and Bellamy because they contextualize her stance on the role of nurture in evolutionary progress. Ward, whom Gilman met in 1896, had published his "Gynaecocentric Theory" six years prior. His theory held that, early in evolutionary history, female humans were superior to males. In the "economy of organic nature," he asserts, "the female sex is the primary, and the male a secondary element" (266). While males parried external threats and acquired the *material* for nourishment, the female represented a "conserving force whose function was nurturing" and facilitated the nourishment of the young (Egan 113). The "maternal instinct," to Ward, is why "females of all wild animals are more dangerous to encounter than males" (207). Moreover,

"females" make the choices that drive sexual selection: they decide from among males who compete with other males using their secondary sex characteristics. They nurture at both the individual and the social level: they nurture the young by caring for them and they nurture the species by determining its evolutionary future. Using an arboreal metaphor like Bergson, Ward calls women the "unchanging trunk of the great genealogical tree," with men just "grafted" branches (275). He makes connections between his "gynaecocentric" view of evolutionary history and the late nineteenth century "Woman Question" by claiming that "[t]rue science teaches that the elevation of woman is the only sure road to the elevation of man" (275). Emphasizing that woman "*is* the race," he declares that her contribution continues "on to futurity" while "man's qualities die with the individual" (275). Ward was perhaps better known for his belief that because humans had rational thought unlike other species (a now-debunked view that was not uncommon at the time, or today, for that matter), humans could, and should, intentionally apply it to steer their own evolution. But it was Ward's ideas regarding the primary role of the "female sex" that inspired Gilman, who had already been fleshing out similar theories in poems, closet dramas, letters, diary entries, and short stories. In *Women & Economics*, she cites Ward as an influence, but her focus is on how economic dependence upon men through man-made concepts such as "home" and the "family" caused the evolutionary transition away from female superiority.[20] I use the term "man-made" intentionally here because Gilman claims not only that humans constructed these concepts, but that the male of the species specifically used them to change the "sexuo-economic relation" in their favor.

Among the places Gilman explored reform Darwinism to develop her embryonic theory of the "sexuo-economic relation" was Bellamy's own newspaper *The Nationalist*. She began

[20] As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, dependence is often used as a pretext for more coercive forms of nurture, in which the nurturer's control over the nurtured is predicated on the latter's dependence.

attending Nationalist Clubs, where she interacted with other Progressive Era reformers who sought to begin the process of implementing Bellamy's vision that would be complete by the year 2000. In 1891, Bellamy reached out to Gilman in response to two poems that had proved beneficial to "club exercises" at Nationalist Clubs in Boston, where he lived. "Survival of the Fittest," a poem in which Gilman uses Spencer's phrase as both the title and the end refrain for each stanza, demonstrates that the "simple, common human race" could intentionally "improve their dwelling place," which would result in no more "millionaires." Humankind's ability to deploy Darwin's theories for collective welfare rather than for competition that exploits the weak, to Gilman, "prove[s]" that "survival of the fittest" does not have to imply a Spencerian *ought*. It can use the descriptivist *is* to achieve a socialist utopia, thereby creating an alternative *could be* based on cooperation. (This *could be*, though, can involve an implied *ought*, such as the notion that inequality *ought* not exist.) Bellamy was impressed by the poem, writing that "its reading has formed a feature of club exercises."[21] He then adds that "Similar Cases," which she had published the year prior in *The Nationalist*, had "quite made her fam[ous] hereabouts." Bellamy's temporal discrimination must have been impaired that day because he mentions that she published "Similar Cases" in his paper "a couple years ago" and that the Boston clubs had been discussing her since then. It's possible that Bellamy is conflating this poem with another work, however, or that those in his coterie had been aware of any number of Gilman's works, which were, by then, voluminous and widespread.

"Similar Cases" called even greater attention to the absurdity, in Gilman's view, of Spencerian prescriptivist evolutionary theory. Each stanza provides the narrative of a different ancient species, following it as it determines to evolve a particular way, much to the horror of

[21] Bellamy might have written "framed" rather than "formed." His handwriting is difficult to transcribe; some words remain illegible as of this writing.

other animals around them. First, an "Eohippus" declares, "I'm going to be a horse!" even though the "Dinoceras" and the "Coryphodon," who form the "heavy aristocracy" of the time mock him for not assuming that because he has always been "small," he can never be a "great, tall handsome beast, / With hoofs to gallop on." As Gilman's readers would have noticed, the evolution of ungulates into horses did occur, and the poem implies that the intransigence of the Dinoceras and Coryphodon meant that they became extinct rather than evolving into the future. The Anthropoidal Ape decides to stand and become Neolithic Man, then Neolithic Man determines to become "civilized" and to solve social problems. Through each transformation, other animals ridicule the effort as "Absurd!" and "Utopian!" because, to accomplish the evolutionary plan, animals would "have to change their nature." The poem ends by declaring that such an argument could only be compelling to a "Neolithic mind." This rejection of individualist social Darwinism was well-received by Bellamy, who believed, like Ward, that humans could steer the direction of evolution and did not have to settle for what *was*. At the end of his letter to Gilman, he offers her a free year of *The Nationalist* and says that, "of course," she does not "need to be told" that any time she would like to publish in it, her submissions would be "most welcome."

There is no evidence that Gilman responded to Bellamy, but her letters indicate that she valued his opinion, and she aggressively promoted Bellamy's Nationalism throughout the 1890s. Before the publication of "Similar Cases," Gilman wrote to long-time friend Martha Luther Lane on March 15, 1890 that she had just sent *The Nationalist* "a poem, funny, which I think they will take, as it was upon invitation from one of the editorial boards...I know it will amuse you." It is unclear who from the *Nationalist* solicited her work, or whether it was Bellamy himself, but her letter to Martha does not mention Bellamy. On June 17, 1890, Gilman wrote again to Martha,

with excitement that an important figure had written her a letter of approval about "Similar Cases," but it's actually referring to Howells, who had authored *Altruria*. The letter reveals that Martha had at some point responded favorably to the poem, and Gilman "boastfully enclose[s] the letter" from Howells for Martha to read. In addition to stating that "Similar Cases" brings him "unfailing joy" any time he reads it, Howells indicates that he is following her other works because her thoughts are "*dreadfully* true." While proud of Howells's validation, she is also "pleased...to find the man thinks well of Nationalism in spite of its 'flabby apostle' (!)." Joanne Karpinski considers the "flabby apostle" to be Edward Bellamy, and context clues certainly indicate that. But what is not clear is whether the negative characterization of Bellamy, at least when compared to the strength of his ideas, comes from Howells or Gilman. Karpinski holds that Howells's "favorable review" helped popularize Bellamy's novel, but other scholars, such as Elizabeth Stadler, characterize his review as negative; what passages I can find of the review confirm Stadler's opinion.[22] Howells's reference in *Altruria* to Bellamy and his later essays on Bellamy's positive contributions to American presidential politics indicate that whatever qualms Howells had with Bellamy, he admired the latter's contributions both to literature and to social reform. And Gilman's continued commitment to Nationalism suggests that she agreed with Howells. This demonstrates a historical context in which Bellamy's rejection of Spencer's prescriptivism was linked with the concept of socialist reform, which itself was preoccupied with nurturing futures that individual reformers would never live to see, even if those futures were accomplished.

Howells, for that matter, considered Gilman a "prophetess of the new religion" and Gilman recommended that Martha read Howells's *Altruria* in *The Cosmopolitan* because, she

[22] I am currently awaiting access to the review's complete text from microfilm archives.

says approvingly, “there’s socialism for you” (65). Gilman finally mentions Bellamy’s approval in 1925 in a letter to Grace Ellery Channing, another life-long friend. She tells Grace that she was looking for an old article that H. G. Wells, author of *The Future of America*, had asked to see of hers, and while sorting through papers, she came across letters from the 1890s that she had saved for biographical use. Among those, she found various letters complimenting “Similar Cases”; she lists the one from Howells first and calls it “lovely,” then she mentions one from “Uncle Edward Hale” (Edward Everett Hale, of her Beecher family prominence), and, finally Bellamy, whom she lists after a drum-roll-please anticipatory em-dash, and which she emphasizes with an exclamation point. Gilman, who advocated education as the primary way in which humans could nurture the future of the human species, valued the intellectual relationships that she fostered over her lifetime. The first attestation of “nurture” in English as a noun in the fourteenth century (the verb form would come a century later) refers to “education” or “training,” but the *Oxford English Dictionary* considers that usage to be “now rare” (even during Gilman’s era, as the entries suggest), although not “obsolete.” Gilman would argue that instead of going “back to nature,” as the Romantics of the early nineteenth century would have it, Americans ought to go “back to *nurture*” in its earliest form and revive the meaning that emphasizes intellectual growth.

The role of children’s education in futurity, particularly at this period, became a symbol for the relationship between the nation and its citizens. Many economists had already discussed this metaphor in terms of paternalism, usually by criticizing the idea that governments should act on behalf of individuals as though the government knows their best interests. Paternalism was also associated with possession: a father’s ownership of his children, in fact, is one of the central ways that legal systems explain the ability to make decisions about their lives that do not take

into account the child's own agency.[23] In *The New Nation*, Bellamy writes that after Nationalism is established, "children will be cherished as precious jewels, inestimable pledges of the divine love to men. Though mother and father forsake them, the nation will take them up." In *Looking Backward*, "the period of youth is sacred for education" (31), parents and teachers together as part of the "educational system" (32), but the nation, having dissolved individual selfishness, "guarantees the nurture, education, and comfortable maintenance of every citizen from the cradle to the grave" (43). Because of the child-parent/citizen-nation metaphor, access to free educational nurture is available to adults in Bellamy's future Boston. This seems important to West, who complains about the cost of higher education in the late nineteenth century being "terribly expensive," a criticism today's readers also have, and which underscores the fact that Bellamy's utopia went unrealized (105). Education must be a driving force toward utopia because of the "interest in the coming generation of having educated parents" (108). Education is key to nurturing society, leading it through sociocultural evolution with cooperation rather than competition.

Gilman wrote an entire book on the role of the child in futurity. In *Concerning Children* (1909), she asserts that the "rearing of children is the most important work" in society and she questions the proprietarian model of paternalism through a conversation about the success of "rearing" being measured by whether the child "minds" what the parent commands. "In this great educational process," she claims, "obedience, as a main factor, has a bad effect on the growing mind" (37). A child is a "human creature" and although "[h]e is temporarily a child," he is "far more permanently a man; and it is the man we are training" (37). Here, Gilman implies a concern regarding the "agential cut," in which Barad sought to provide a "contingent resolution

[23] See Grossburg for more on the role of proprietary law in the formation of the "family" and the delineation between "child" and "adult" in the United States.

of the ontological inseparability" between bodies of matter (348). From this Gilman concludes that "the work of 'parenthood' is not only to guard and nourish the young, but to develope [sic] the qualities needed in the mature" (37). Although to "guard" can imply possession through its historical use to mean "keep," both "keep" and "care," when used in the context of nurture, are less possessive than they appear at first glance. To *guard* or *keep* something, a person must *give care* to it, even if they are a care*taker* of it. The earliest attestations of "care" involve "concern," "regard" and "serious mental attention" given to something. In fact, in *Women & Economics*, Gilman makes this connection explicit when she says that the "care of the child" is "more accurately described as education" (183-4). This is a material form of learning: in fact, we now often refer to such forms of education as "hands-on."

Moreover, when Gilman uses the word "nourish," she not only refers to nutritional sustenance, but she also evokes education. *Nourish* descends from the same etymological root as *nurture*, and its earliest iteration, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* considers "now archaic and poetic," refers to "bring[ing] up" or "rear[ing]" something. "Nourriture," a now "poetic and rare" word, was used to mean "nourish," "provide sustenance," and "upbringing," which further highlights the overlap between these terms and their relationship to education. So, to "nourish," in the context of this passage, fits into the sense of both *nurture* and *nourish* as "education." Jeanne Connell has applied Gilman's theories to the field of education by noting that Gilman's commitment to "Edutopia" — an ideal society created by and sustained by education — is central to her utopian perspectives. Connell argues that Gilman's beliefs about community are important to educators today "because of her emphasis on the role education plays in social reform" (28). Indeed, in *Herland*, a Herlander explains that "education is our highest art" and that it is responsible for their ability to have evolved into an ideal society over the course of two

thousand years (83). In fact, playing — both in the sense of engaging in fun and in the sense of acting things out through drama — is her most preferred method of education.

Negotiating Gender in Utopian Reform

While establishing the historical and literary contexts of 1880-2020, I have mentioned Jones & Merchant's *Unveiling a Parallel*, but have not yet probed deeply into the novel. That's because, although Jones & Merchant's contribution to literary history is important, and even though they participated in newspaper publishing at the period, they did not have many connections to the aforementioned authors and public figures. Much of this is due to the fact that neither Jones nor Merchant deviated as much as Gilman did from nineteenth century norms regarding the "family" and the "home." Gilman was a divorcée whose second husband gave her far more independence than was typical at the time, and she sent her daughter to live with her first husband and his second wife (who happened to be Gilman's close friend).[24] This allowed her to traverse the country and spend time disseminating her ideas. Jones & Merchant's reformist views in *Unveiling a Parallel*, however, are just as ambitious as Gilman's, even as they relate to the "family" and the "home." They engage directly with the conversations of their time by depicting not one, but two possible utopias that contrast with nineteenth century society. Writing jointly in Iowa, they first published their novel under the pseudonym "Two Women of the West."

Unveiling a Parallel explores how equality might differ if the standards spread equally are based on feminine qualities rather than masculine ones. A male narrator travels to Mars and first encounters Paleveria, where he is hosted by an astronomer named Severnius who lives with his sister, Elodia. The use of a male narrator by women (co-)authors to explore the concept of

[24] As I discuss in Chapter 5, people to this day criticize such arrangements to be a form "outsourcing motherhood," no matter the perceived benefits for the child.

equality was both common and useful at the time. In fact, Gilman's *Herland* is narrated by a man and the story unfolds from three male visitors' perspectives. Moreover, the guidance of Severnius alongside Elodia mirrors Bellamy's use of Dr. Leete and Edith in *Looking Backward* to acclimate the narrator to the utopian culture. Paleveria, the narrator finds out, has full equality for women; but he notices that he resents many of Elodia's behaviors (e.g., getting drunk, "vaporizing," having an illegitimate daughter whom she does not raise, purchasing the services of male prostitutes, etc.). Repeatedly, Severnius probes the narrator to recognize that if any one of these behaviors were performed by men, it would not appall him, which the narrator reluctantly admits. Indeed, while the men have a smoking car on a Palevarian train, the women have a "vaping" car, the latter of which the narrator considers odious until Severnius points out the double standard. The unmarried Elodia is well-regarded in Paleveria. She is a school board administrator, a banker, and the head of an organization that eliminated poverty. Paleveria has thus made the traits associated with the "male sphere" in nineteenth century America the standard for its equality between men and women.

On the other side of Mars, maternalism, not paternalism, guides the socialist egalitarian way of life. The latter part of the novel takes the narrator to Caskia, a place that Severnius considers far superior to his own country of Paleveria. Severnius, then, views Caskia the way Americans would have viewed Bellamy's future Boston. The narrator is hosted by Calypso and his wife Clytia, where he falls in love with their daughter Ariadne, who, despite being an heiress, teaches in "one of the city schools" (129). In the Caskian utopia, readers soon recognize that equality has taken the traits associated with the "female sphere" in the nineteenth century and has used *those* traits as the standard for equality. The result is a far more promising utopia that seeks to harmonize the "Three Natures" of "mind," "body," and "spirit" (127). Nurturing is an

honorable obligation for both men and women, and in Caskia it encompasses all generations and crosses "blood" boundaries for kinship. Caskians design their neighborhoods to facilitate the "clustering together of [extended] families, in order that the young might always be near at hand to support, and protect, and to smooth the pathway of the old" (148). These "extraordinarily just people repay to the helplessness of age, the tenderness and care, the loving sympathy, which they themselves received in the helplessness of infancy." This is a concept reminiscent of Haraway's call to "make kin, not babies," in which she posits "multi-child, multi-generational households" to transition from capitalist families to more sustainable forms of "kinnovation," she ponders the merits of making common "adoption practices for and by the elderly" ("Anthropocene"). I discuss this concept in more detail in Chapter 5.

When the narrator is offended that Elodia has left Severnius and him at home to go to her club "for recreation," Severnius criticizes Earth's views about individual liberty. Every soul must be "absolutely free," he argues, and "in its relations to other souls," the soul "shall not be coerced by any other" soul (64). Notably, this is the only Caskian virtue that Elodia agrees with. The "coercion," rather than simply the guidance, of other "souls" is a key distinction between liberal-human nurture and posthuman nurture. Severnius goes on to explain that "[t]hese souls, or spheres, are extremely sensitive; and they may, and do, exert a tremendous influence, one upon another,—but without violence" (64). He likens this to "stars suspended in space" that nobody has the "right to disturb the poise and equilibrium" of. His comments recall Shannon Bell's critique of transhumanism, which she believes merely "import[s]" liberal-human values to the enhancement of the human, something inherently exploitative. Posthumanism, she asserts, has a "stronger critical edge" because it "develop[s] and enact[s] new understandings of the self and others," "agency," and "intimacy" (qtd in Zaretsky). Liberal-human scientism usually amounts to

"control" because the "desire to contain the unknown" is an "attempt to dominate." When creatures become "companion species," as Haraway calls for, nurturing can become more about "influence, one upon another...without violence," as Severnius puts it, and less about "control" and "dominat[ion]," as Bell describes it. Agency is mutual and not simply an act performed by one entity upon another entity.

While Bellamy identifies the main problem with society as economic greed and Gilman links economic greed with sex (as in gender), Jones & Merchant identify sex (as in lust) as another source of social suffering. Therefore, married couples in Caskia "have their respective apartments; they think such separateness is absolutely essential to the perfect development of the individual" (59). This arrangement also fosters the "fine sentiment and mutual respect which are almost certain to be lost in the lawlessness of undue familiarity." For example, the marriage between Calypso and Clytia's is "the finest thing [Severnius] ever saw" because they are "lovers on the highest plane." They do not have the "animal passion" that Severnius (and the Caskians) believe is the source of "untold crimes and unnumbered miseries." Both men and women, Severnius points out, have "sacrificed kingdoms" and "bartered their souls for it" both on Earth and in Paleveria. In contrast to Bellamy's critique of nineteenth century American culture, Jones & Merchant, through Severnius's praise of the Caskians, claim that these "untold crimes" and "miseries" are greater problems than even "the greed of Wealth." Severnius is embarrassed by the "evils" that Paleveria has, prostitution in particular, but he points out that "the good people here, the great majority...are doing their best" to "abolish" places of sex work like "Cupid's Gardens." However, they are not seeking to abolish it with legislation, but rather, "more through education" using preachers and teachers. But Severnius believes that the Caskians have the only solution: "elevating and purifying the marriage relation" (84).

Possibly Paleveria's only example of different standards for men and women has to do with being the object, rather than the subject, in the act of prostitution. This also indicates potential dangers for queer Paleverians if they were to exist. While pointing out that both men and women can solicit services from "professional lovers" in "Cupid's Gardens," the discussion between Severnius and the narrator reveals a Paleverian double standard regarding those professional lovers who are men (80). Male prostitutes, in fact, are treated with disdain the way women sex workers in nineteenth century America were. Many "promising youths are decoyed into" these places, Severnius says. Young girls are too, but Severnius "sometimes" finds it more "deplorable" when men are: a "tender mother would wish that her daughter had never been born, if she should take up with such a life," but an honorable father would rather see his son gibbeted than to find him inside that railing" (80). Although homosexuality is never discussed in *Unveiling a Parallel*, this passage overlaps quite a bit with contemporary views regarding the limits of queer sociocultural evolution. Male prostitutes cannot have a future in Paleveria because they cannot produce children within a household. And because such a failure in men is considered worse in Palevarian society — to the point that they should, in theory, suffer a painful execution rather than not be born at all — the reader can assume that the difference between women prostitutes and male prostitutes in Palevaria has more to do with men becoming perceived as an exploited body (object) rather than the exploiter of bodies (subject). This is the same rationale that has caused societies throughout Earth's history to regard men who are the insertive partner in homosexual intercourse with less condemnation than men who are the receptive partner in the same act.

In fact, the "standing" of "these men" outside Cupid's Gardens is "about the same that a leper would have," and they are "despised by the very women" who pay for their sexual services

(“the instruments of their sensual delights”). When they begin their time as prostitutes, “these fellows” are “mostly mere boys” who are debauched by “woman’s honeyed words” into “entanglements” (81). Notably, there is a path to redemption for prostitutes, which Severnius illustrates with examples; but when he does so, he switches back to feminine pronouns and never mentions a path to redemption for male prostitutes (82). Although he never explicitly states that male prostitutes cannot “recover[] caste by a course of penitence,” his shift back to she/her/hers just after their discussion of male prostitutes, and his failure ever to return to he/him/his in the discussion, certainly implies that redemption for male sex workers is not possible in Paleveria as it is for women sex workers.

Like Bellamy and Gilman, Jones & Merchant embrace Darwin’s appeals to sympathy and reject Spencer’s appeals to ruthlessness. Caskians emphasize harmony across humans, nonhuman species, and the physical environment to the point that neither possession nor individualism works within the framework of their society. Labor is only performed with love, for example. Fides, the gardener, “loves Calypso” and Clytia refers to the two of them as “soul friends” (125). What the narrator calls “house servants” do not find their work “mean” or “distasteful,” because it cannot be as long as “you love those for whom you labor” (124-5). When the narrator becomes “more familiar” with his Caskian hosts and their extended family, he finds “the same relations existed all round; mutual pleasure, mutual sympathy, mutual helpfulness” (125). The domestic help is chosen for their specialized skills, which means that teachers are “carefully chosen, and as carefully instructed” and they are placed “for our mutual benefit” (125). The education of children by specialized teachers plays a key role in steering evolution in Caskia toward what both the narrator and Severnius eventually regard as the highest form of humanity. But the “transition from the human to the divine,” as Caskians call it, continues forever — their

evolution will continue to perfect their species through the continued, careful implementation of education that values what Darwin called "mutual love and sympathy" (136).

The symbol of the tree, as we have seen in Bergson and Ward, features prominently in Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant's utopian writings. But in the context of posthuman nurture, the metaphor becomes far more material than figurative. Nationalism, in *Looking Backward*, has made the nation not just an "association of men" politically, but "a family, a vital union, a common life, a mighty heaven-touching tree whose leaves are its people, fed from its veins, and feeding it in turn" (123). Trees are also used as a way for Dr. Leete to explain how twentieth century Americans had eliminated crime. The desire (for the rich) and need (for the poor) of money was the "taproot of a vast poison growth," and once it was eliminated by nationalism, Dr. Leete says to West, "we cut this root, and the poison tree that overshadowed your society withered, like Jonah's gourd, in a day" (97). Any crimes that are committed now stem from "atavism," a biological process whereby ancestral traits reappear (such as a human tail), which reform Darwinists at the time applied to cultural traits when considering crime in the context of sociocultural evolution.

Jones & Merchant use arboreal images to illustrate the evolution of values. Paleverians take great pride in their trees, cherishing them more than a "fine residence" or "ancient furniture and cracked china" (32).[25] They have acquired this status because "people sit out under their trees a great deal, and the shade of them has protected the heads of many generations." Through their connection to the past, and to Paleverians' own ancestors, trees "have become hallowed through sacred memories and traditions" that involve "tree doctors whose business it is to ward off disease, heal wounded or broken boughs, and exterminate destructive insects." When Elodia

[25] As I discuss in Chapter 4, the children in Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible* (2020) protect trees and plants, but they disregard seemingly precious objects such as a "china statuette" (11).

explains why unwed mothers are not ostracized in Paleveria as they are in America, she mentions that a "tree bears fruit after its kind; so does a code of morals. Gentleness and forgiveness breed repentance and reformation, and harshness begets defiance" (104). She wishes more people had the "spirit of a Bernhardt": she probably means Sarah Bernhardt, the famous late nineteenth century French stage actor, who continued to build her career while raising an illegitimate son (and was herself the illegitimate daughter of a courtesan). Bernhardt's success was *in spite of* the double standards at the time, which the narrator hints at by contrasting the "spirit of Bernhardt" with the "magnanimity of a Franklin," presumably referring to the myth of Franklin's many illegitimate children. It's not clear how Elodia knows who Sarah Bernhardt is, however, since even though Marsians are aware of Earth's existence, they have never visited there or communicated with its inhabitants, at least not until the narrator arrives. Nevertheless, while discussing the social norms about unwed parenting, she uses tree imagery to define the evolution of morality. For Jones & Merchant, trees provide a way to illustrate how time progressively influences what humans hold dear, and that influence has lasting effects on future generations as well. Moreover, Paleverians care for their trees the way they care for each other, even hiring doctors who specialize in tree health just as they hire doctors who specialize in human health, which demonstrates that their nurturing is not confined only to humans.

The women in Gilman's *Herland* spend much of their lives in trees, making them, I suppose, semi-arboreal in the way that amphibians are semi-aquatic. As a result, the novel is littered with references to trees. But when Gilman uses trees as similes, the comparisons underscore her emphasis on reform nurture. For example, the narrator notices the Herlanders "deliberat[ly] replanting" an entire section of forest with various species of trees, which, to them was "common sense, like a man's plowing up an inferior lawn and reseeding it" (79). The

nurture involved here is mutual: they nurture the trees, and the trees, in turn, nurture them. (However, their determination that certain trees are "inferior" just through "common sense" shows that while Herlanders may decenter the human more than Gilman's contemporaries did, they nevertheless center the human more than today's posthuman scholars would hope.) Through careful selection, they ensured that they had forests entirely of trees that bear "edible fruit," after experimenting to ensure the various types would produce "a profuse crop of nutritious seeds." They did so because "they had early decided" that trees were the most beneficial food for humans and for the environment, and this decision provides an interesting metaphor for Gilman's view of sexual selection. Gilman believes, as she states in *Women & Economics*, that because "the females select" from among the males, they are able to use *sexual selection*, which typically develops sexual characteristics, to steer the process of *natural selection*, which develops the entire species. Deploying artificial selection to plants and animals is not itself an example of sexual selection, but because this is a society of women selecting the future of a species, it reminds readers of the role women play in nurturing futurity. Nine hundred years before in Herland, a particular tree did not bear any edible fruit, and thus could easily have been dug up among others deemed inferior, but the Herlanders had taken "especial pride" in it, finding it "so beautiful that they wished to keep it." Almost a millennium later, that same "lovely graceful tree" still displayed its aesthetic qualities and now it also bears fruit. If Spencer had written the book, the tree would have had no chance, but it's worth noting that aesthetic benefits make this act of reform nurturing not altogether altruistic. Moreover, it is certainly possessive, given that they took care of it for nine centuries "to keep it," and the fact that it eventually bears edible fruit demonstrates that there is a distinction between mutuality and altruism.

Other tree metaphors demonstrate Gilman's reform Darwinism at work. The relationship between Van, the narrator, and Ellador, provides an example of the way Gilman believed romantic connections between men and women should operate. Van admits that he never thought of Ellador "'in that way,' as the girls have it," but that their "friendship grew like a tree" as they spent time together adventuring and playing games (90). Eventually, this tree fostered the growth of "high comradeship" (90). Van is Gilman's middle ground between Terry's chauvinism and Jeff's idolization: he did not come to Herland with "Turkish-harem intentions" like Terry, nor did he arrive as a "woman-worshipper" like Jeff. Instead, he "just liked [Ellador] as a friend" before, "like a tree," their relationship became one of mutual respect and affinity. Another arboreal image appears as the narrator explains how Herlanders had "faced the problems of education and so solved them that their children grew up as naturally as young trees," learning "continuously but unconsciously—never knowing they were being educated" (95). If, as Gilman writes in *Women & Economics*, "we did not like the fruit, we might better change the tree," utopias provide readers opportunities to hypothesize how we can change the tree to get better fruit.

Another plant, the rosebush, provides some of the more poignant metaphors for reform nurturing in these texts.[26] In the future of *Looking Backward*, West, Dr. Leete, and Edith "attend" church at home in 2000. This actually *was* possible to do in the real 2000 with televised sermons, but COVID-era readers, who have witnessed churches across the nation operate remotely, have a better understanding of its near-ubiquity in Bellamy's utopia. A renowned preacher sorrowfully explains the backwardness of the late nineteenth century's social Darwinism through the parable of a rosebush representing humankind. He asks his "congregants" to imagine that humanity of

[26] Incidentally, gardeners can — and often do — train rosebushes to grow as trees, which seems appropriate for a discussion involving intentional care.

the “olden time” was a “rosebush planted in a swamp,” nourished with “bog-water, breathing miasmatic fogs” among “poison dews” (140). “Generations of gardeners” tried to nurture the bush, but all it produced was an occasional paltry bloom with a “worm at the heart.” Most people concluded that the rosebush was just a “noxious shrub, fit only to be uprooted and burned,” but the gardeners argued that the bush did in fact, “belong to the rose family,” but merely had some “taint” causing sickness. Some people claimed that “the stock was good enough, that the trouble was in the bog, and that under more favorable conditions” it could thrive; but since they lacked the expertise that gardeners had, they were disregarded as “mere theorists and day dreamers,” like Bellamy and Gilman often were. And even if the rose *could* thrive elsewhere, it is better “discipline” for it to struggle in unfavorable conditions — the rare feeble flowers it produces would indicate “more moral effort.” So, “vermin” and “mildew” overcame the hard work of the gardeners for years before they finally agreed to transplant the “rosebush of humanity” in “sweet, warm, dry earth, where the sun bathed it, the stars wooed it, and the south wind caressed it.” The worms and mold, of course, disappeared and the “most beautiful red roses” blossomed as a result. Those who advocated killing the plant for “unfitness” and those who advocated forcing the plant to struggle when the option to improve conditions was readily available are both guilty of prescriptively concluding a Spencerian *ought* where all that existed was a descriptive Darwinian *is*. Reform nurturers saw that descriptive *is* and harnessed it into a more promising *could be*.

In *Unveiling a Parallel*, a different religious figure uses a different rosebush as a metaphor to describe the process of perfecting humanity. On Mars in Caskia, “The Master” visits Calypso and Clytia’s guest from Earth at their home. Being the “teacher of the highest rank” in a country where teaching is the “highest and most honorable” profession, the “Father” is a spiritual

leader who has integrated the "three natures" of "mind," "body," and "soul" the most fully among living Caskians (137, 130). He arrives at the same time as a large weather event that Ariadne calls a "storm-king," a tempest that she has enthusiastically been anticipating, hoping it will be "fine,"; this perhaps stresses his status as "spiritual royalty" (131, 143). While discussing human progress with the narrator, The Master argues that the Divine hopes that humanity will intentionally nurture its evolution toward improvement. To illustrate what he means, he tells the narrator to simply "look at those roses!" (151). "God planted the species," he says, "a crude and simple plant, and turned it over to man to do what he might with it;" similarly, "he placed man himself here" to "perfect himself if he would." Perfecting the human species is a choice that humans can make, and it is an option that the Divine has purposely provided. Thus, intentionally nurturing evolution fulfils divine intentions.

In these examples, we see a preoccupation in the writings of Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant with reframing how readers should apply the concept of "struggle" to evolution. It also reinforces the "is" vs. "ought," descriptive vs. prescriptive tensions between Darwin and Spencer. A cryptic handwritten note in Gilman's archives from an unknown date contains several indications of how she categorized these approaches. Several words are illegible, but among them are "the essential social parasite," "[illegible adjective] struggle for existence," "parable," "agriculture," "cow," "ox," and "the art of making people." On the left margin, she has written a set of words arranged somewhat like a table, which indicates that she is making analogies between them. They are, in order from top to bottom, paired with the word parallel to it: "fight" and "work"; "struggle" and "growth"; "effort *against*" and "effort *for*" (emphasis hers); and, finally, "man" and "woman." Extrapolating from this table, we can place some of the figures we've discussed. Spencer's view of evolution would correspond with "fight," "struggle," "effort

against," and "man." Her view of evolution, and Darwin's, she would argue, corresponds with "work," "growth," "effort *for*," and "woman." The repeated taunt from "Similar Cases" that ancient animals hoping for change would "have to change [their] nature" appears also as a straw man for social Darwinists in Bellamy and Jones & Merchant. Severnius refers to assumptions about a "change in [women's] nature," contrasting it with a "complete Human nature," while Dr. Leete tells West that the transformations into utopian Nationalism do not require a "change in human nature" (47, 107; 46). If Spencer offers the art of eliminating weaker people and continuing with whoever remains, then reform nurture offers the "art of making people," as Gilman jotted down, through active care for others that allows for evolutionary and social change.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused primarily on the positive attributes of various utopias written in the late long nineteenth century. But as Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby point out in *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*, designing futures can have negative consequences if we do not solicit the input of marginalized groups. To be sure, we cannot overlook the fact that Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant also do their fair share of excluding. In fact, both Bellamy and Gilman have faced criticisms for their nascent eugenics, which, although classified as "positive eugenics" (encouraging the reproduction of desired qualities) and "noncoercive" (not involving sterilization), is nevertheless a form of white supremacy that must be regarded as such. Both authors have also been criticized for their complicated histories regarding the status of Black Americans. And none of them comes close to representing a future for the displaced Native Americans whose existence on the continent goes unimagined in their works. Any references to indigenous communities in these texts, for

example, are used to contrast primordial ways of life with what they consider to be more "civilized" and "developed" cultures.

Moreover, the futures imagined by Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant do not (and cannot) include any member of the LGBTQ community. Gay men and women have no role to play in *Herland*, *Looking Backward*, or *Unveiling a Parallel*, and these authors' discussions of binary gender, although subversive at the time, nevertheless preclude the existence of trans and genderqueer people. Even moments that open up possibilities for us to consider queerness in their utopias end up with either violence or erasure. For example, Gilman considers how polymaternal families might work without men, which provides some space to suppose romantic relationships between women; but Herlanders reproduce parthenogenetically and reject relations of "lust," so even if there were space for queer romance, there is no space for queer sexuality. Gilman's polymaternalism is also a far cry from Sophie Lewis's use of the term in *Full Surrogacy Now* to advocate for "queer polymaternalism." It also doesn't help matters that the only love story Gilman provides in her depiction of an all-woman society is the heterosexual one between Van and Ellador. And as we know from *Unveiling a Parallel*'s depiction of Cupid's Gardens, male sex workers exist only for women to employ, and Jones & Merchant indicate that even this form of deviant heterosexuality is dangerously emasculating.

Nineteenth century readers first thought that Palevaria was the model society Jones & Merchant sought to depict. It wasn't. Caskia was the utopia, and it provided a glimpse into the promise of transcending boundaries between male and female, human and nonhuman, material and spiritual. In the next chapter, I attempt to fill in some of the oversights made by repronormative white writers of the *fin-de-siecle*. Chapter 3 will focus on other future-oriented novels of this period that offer perspectives of the future that challenge nineteenth century norms

regarding race, queerness, and the boundary between the human and nonhuman. By exploring the perspectives and representations of marginalized identities, we will be able to see how authors of the time attempted to deconstruct the "Vitruvian Man" — the concept of the liberal "Human" that became synonymous with being white, male, heterosexual, and of European descent.

CHAPTER THREE

CROSSING THE VITRUVIAN LINE: SUBALTERN FUTURITY AND KINSHIP IN THE LATE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

In the previous chapter, I focused on visions of the future written by white American authors. As a white male author, Bellamy fell easily within the boundaries that demarcate the Vitruvian Man. Gilman and Jones & Merchant, however, crossed the Vitruvian boundary by virtue of their gender, which contributed to their disenfranchisement, exclusion from the public sphere, and socio-legal relationships to owning (or being) property. As white women, however, Gilman and Jones & Merchant had access to utopian futurities not accessible to people who were not part of America's hegemonic or dominant culture. But marginalized Americans *were* telling their stories, placing themselves into the narrative of America's past, present, and future. In Lin-Manuel Miranda's 2015 musical *Hamilton*, several characters pose in an oft-repeated refrain: "Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?" In this song, Eliza Schuyler declares, "I put myself back in the narrative," reasserting agency over her story and how she hopes that history will be told to future generations. Gilman and Jones & Merchant put white women "back" into the utopian narrative of the late nineteenth century. While they take important steps toward deconstructing the "Vitruvian Man," however, they often offer the reverse side of the same Cartesian coin, which, as I mentioned in the Introduction chapter, Braidotti warns today's posthumanists not to do. This means that their futures do not easily apply to Native American women, African American women, or persons with disabilities, and thus these groups became

excluded from their utopian visions. Moreover, although Bellamy makes a few attempts to address the issue of ableism by emphasizing that labor expectations in his utopia applied to "able-bodied" people, he does not go far enough into how persons with disabilities would (or could) integrate into his utopia, and he does not define what, exactly "able" means in his Boston of 2000 AD.[27]

Because futurity looks different from the perspective of those who are minoritized, marginalized, excluded, or separated from Euro-American institutions, this chapter seeks to examine what I will call "subaltern futures" from the late long nineteenth century. Borrowing the term "subaltern" from Antonio Gramsci, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that although "the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy and ideology of the west, this concealed Subject pretends it has 'no geo-political determinations'" (66). Critics that are the "most radical" suppose that intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's Other; but, she points out, the "much-publicized critique of the sovereign-subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject." I use the term "subaltern futures" deliberately and carefully: I seek to emphasize the voices of people "with limited or no access to cultural imperialism" (qtd in de Kock), while also seeking to avoid committing the "epistemic violence" that Spivak cautions can result from members of a dominant culture applying "hegemonic discourse" to "subalternity." Therefore, I should note from the outset of this chapter that the only identity discussed in this chapter that I can presume to "tell from below" is that of a Euro-American cisgender gay man (one who has lived in late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries). So, in this chapter, what I argue is the first *openly* gay

[27] At least twice in *Looking Backward*, Dr. Leete uses the term "able-bodied" when suggesting who is expected to perform certain labor; the term is offered by Bellamy and not by me. Bellamy does not have his character explain what conditions would excuse people from labor, which leaves his definition of "able-bodied" unclear.

American novel receives my primary attention, and I draw thematic connections to contemporaneous texts written by BIPOC authors.

Imre: A Memorandum, written by Edward Iranaeus Prime-Stevenson, under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne in 1906, offers a queer perspective of American speculative futurities. He offers this perspective through the voice of an expatriate narrator who struggles to reconcile his homosexuality with his ability to participate in a future that involves happiness rather than what he and the readers are meant to believe will involve inevitable tragedy. Of course, many groups during this period attempt to challenge the Vitruvian Man and, in so doing, they navigate futurity through alternative visions of kin-making. They nurture futures within a growing recognition of the Vitruvian exclusion, which allows their voices to illustrate how groups outside dominant power structures adapt to being left out of liberal-human conceptions of social progress. Other examples of this trend include Frances E. W. Harper's 1892 novel *Iola Leroy; or Shadows Uplifted*, which envisions Reconstruction as a possibility to achieve a "new commonwealth of freedom"; Lillian Jones Horace's 1916 "back-to-Africa" novel, *Five Generations Hence;* S. Alice Callahan's 1891 novel, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*, which provides (as its first publisher claims) the perspective of Native Americans "by the pen of one of their own people…the Indians' side of the Indian question" (2). In addition to nurturing futures and "chosen family" structures, the characters in these novels nurture *each other* (through illness, injury, infancy, or mentorship) in ways that depict a posthuman nurturing ethics where the nurtured and nurturer are viewed as participating in a *mutual* exchange rather than through what Spivak calls the "epistemic violence" of subject-object otherization.

Vitruvian Exclusions

Prime-Stevenson's *Imre* is the earliest known American novel to depict *open* homosexuality. While *Joseph and His Friend* may, in fact, be considered the "first gay novel," as Robert Austen claims, this assertion, in my view, is unsatisfying because the novel frames the bond between Joseph and his "friend," Phillip, through a deep friendship connection and it never makes explicit that their relationship is romantic or sexual. Whether it is viewed as homoromantic, homosexual, or neither thus depends largely on a reader's interpretation. Moreover, as Rod Ridinger points out, intimate "male-male friendships" were not only common at the time, but they were also being explored by other writers during this period in American literature. Prime-Stevenson's *Imre*, however, leaves its homosexuality unambiguous and — perhaps more importantly — *Imre* is American's first gay novel with a positive queer future. While examining *Imre* to explore the ways in which Vitruvian boundaries influence subaltern futurities, I will contextualize Prime-Stevenson's novel with other marginalized voices from the period that offer us more alternatives to Vitruvian-exclusive utopias. Together, these texts illustrate for readers the oppressiveness of using the "Vitruvian Man" as a prism through which we determine what is human, and in turn, what futures are possible.

In the Second Industrial Revolution, Prime-Stevenson, Harper, Horace, and Callahan anticipate the deconstruction of the Vitruvian Man that today's posthumanism more explicitly rejects. Examining their works, which are contemporaneous with those discussed in Chapter 2, illustrates the various ways that authors in the late nineteenth century challenged their era's dominant views of what is — and what is not — "human." These authors demonstrate how estrangement and the ways oppressed individuals adapt to estrangement influence their reform politics and their relationships to time and place. As I will show in this chapter, the torment of the closet (and its paradoxical kin-making possibilities) was not an experience unique to gay

Americans. Given that "the closet" and "coming out of the closet" were terms not yet used by gay Americans during this period, it works well as a metaphor for the ways in which Black and indigenous people, especially women, were often forced into secret or separate spaces. The important distinction between BIPOC and queer adaptations to Vitruvian exclusion in these novels, however, is that queer people find it more difficult to discover their "kin" (their "kind," as a noun, or even "kind" as an adjective) because they have no innate biogenetic connection to other queer people. After all, most LGBTQ people are born into families that have no other LGBTQ people around them, so they must find other queer "de-Vitruvianized" people and nurture kinships with them ("chosen family"). This is especially difficult when others of one's "kind" are also forced into the closet, and it makes the search for one's "kind" full of the risk of violence.

As I discuss in Chapter 2, Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant do not integrate queer identities adequately into their visions of the future, despite the fact that, as I discuss in more detail below, such identities had existed for centuries. This was not necessarily a failure of their intent, nor was it outside their cultural norms. The erasure does, however, demonstrate that queer identity in the late long nineteenth century involved a uniquely complex navigation of Vitruvian borders. If society sought to exclude nondisabled white gay men, it needed justification to do so, which meant society had to 1) call into question one or more of the attributes of white, nondisabled gay men that would have, despite their homosexuality, placed them inside Vitruvian ideal (race, gender, or ability), and 2) simultaneously, and paradoxically, project the notion that homosexuality was *not* a "real" identity to begin with. The former effort made way for the denial of human (i.e., white male) "rights" of gay men, while the latter effort ensured that homosexual men had no role, function, or place in society — not even as an oppressed group. Whereas

women, Black Americans, Native Americans, the disabled, and many other marginalized communities were (and continue to be) oppressed based on Vitruvian exclusion, their oppression involved coercion of defined social roles already agreed upon by the hegemonic culture, with specific relationships to those who had access to society's power structures. This makes queer identities useful for interrogating the late long nineteenth century's multifaceted and intersectional gatekeeping of what constitutes the Human. Race, gender, sexuality, and disability inevitably overlap when deconstructing the Vitruvian ideal.

Moreover, homosexuality was the subject of much public scrutiny in the United States and Britain throughout the nineteenth century, which suggests that authors at the turn of the century were quite likely to have been aware of these identities. This makes their exclusion even more instructive about the ways in which gay relationships were viewed in American literary culture. While the word "homosexual" was not coined until 1869, and was not used in English until 1892, the notion that homosexual identity is a modern concept is far from accurate, as I will discuss below. And it's not new in America, either. Openly queer relationships, "protomarriages" even, have existed in English-speaking America for five centuries; homosexual conduct appears in the legal code as early as 1610, just three years after the Jamestown settlement (Cleaves; Kaplan). The phrase "crime against nature" is first used in English legal code in 1814 and then makes traction on both sides of the Atlantic's legal systems after *On the Origin of Species*, when both Darwinian natural science and religion could be (mis)used to justify queer oppression. *Calamus*, Walt Whitman's set of homoerotic poems, was published in 1860, and in 1870, Bayard Taylor published *Joseph and His Friend: A Story of Pennsylvania*, which Robert Austen has referred to as America's "first gay novel" (9). Throughout the long nineteenth century, governments across continental Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa steadily decriminalized

or legalized homosexual conduct. But during the same period, the United States and Great Britain doubled down on their centuries-long legal fixation with queer relations. In the late long nineteenth century, Anglo-American culture faced a queer reckoning that reached a fever pitch with the 1895 Oscar Wilde trial in London and the 1903 Ariston Raids in New York City.

Although not a utopia per se, *Imre*'s utopian impulse stems from the fact that, even a century later, "sad endings" for gay relationships remain so common in literary and film culture that "happy endings" for gay relationships continue to be considered subversive in 2021. Moreover, the narrator specifically uses the word "utopia" to refer to futures that allow for open homosexuality (50). *Imre* neither codes its homoromance through deep friendship bonds nor excludes the homoromance from access to the future, which makes it one of the earliest examples of a queer utopia. And the narrator takes pains to reassure the readers that he offers authentic voices – that he and Imre are not only telling their story, but also that he is a reliable narrator. The "record" of their time, says Oswald to the reader, "from Imre and from me," is "faithfully" and "literally" provided for the reader (4). Referred to by the narrator as both an autobiography and a memorandum, the narrative structure provides a "chapter out of [the narrator's] life," and it is presented to the reader as a long letter written to Prime-Stevenson's pseudonym (3). Thus, the author, Prime-Stevenson, is also the reader. Regarding Oswald's effort to put Imre and himself back into the "actual narrative," he assures us that "the dialogue is kept, word for word, faithfully as it passed, in all the more significant passages" and the "correspondence is literally translated" (4). Notably, he harbors "hope" that readers may be "sympathetic" in their "judgement" (4-5). By hoping for "sympathy," he implies a desire to be held to the standards of reform Darwinism, which embraced Darwin's recognition of sympathy's

role in evolution, and not to the standards of Spencer's social Darwinism, which would have found no place for him in the evolutionary future of the human species.

Harper, Callahan, and Horace also seek to put themselves back into the narrative of the late long nineteenth century through utopian impulses that appeal to sympathy. For example, Harper's titular Iola, despite her "present pain," keeps her eye on "a brighter future for the race with which she was identified," and the author's note following the text expresses Harper's hope that the book will "inspire the children of those upon whose brows God has poured the chrism of that new era" (208, 251). Dr. Gresham, whose advocacy for equality conflicts with his hope that Iola will hide her biracial status, hopes that "the millennium" — an era in which he hopes white Americans will finally "[d]eal justly" with Black Americans, even the "weakest of them" — cannot come soon enough" (215).[28] Another character mentions that "the Indian belongs to an old race and looks gloomily back to the past" while "the negro belongs to a young race and look hopefully towards the future" (224). Callahan, in *Wynema*, might agree to the idea that Native Americans are an "old race" and that they look to the past, but even though her novel depicts indigenous suffering, it is full of utopian efforts. It begins with an author's note that hopes for "speedily issu[ing] into existence an era of good feeling and just dealing toward us and our more oppressed brothers" (3). (Notice the mirroring of Horace's "deal justly" with Callahan's "just dealing.") The climax of the novel is set during the Lakota Ghost Dance, which was a version of the Ghost Dance that was most associated with millenarism (Rahal 171). And despite the tragedies that occur during the climax, Callahan's novel ends with a "glance into the future" wherein "Caucasian and American" families ("American" here, notably refers to the people she

[28] Although it's possible that he is referring to a religious view of the millennium here, I very much doubt this because in the same conversation he refers to "the great mistake of the nineteenth century." In this context, "millennium" seems would refer to *next* century, the twentieth century, the first one of a new millennium after 2000.

had previously called “Indians”) live together in harmony (134-5). Horace’s *Five Generations Hence* is considered the “earliest known utopian novel by an African American” (Boswell, A. 193). Miss Noble, the main character, a Black woman author herself, ponders whether she “dare[s] to address the public” by writing a book to “begin the weaving” of a utopian “destiny” (51). Her ability to do this is attributed to “a deep and tender sympathy for suffering,” which causes her heart to consistently “pulsate[] with sympathy” over the fact that “unequal suffering for life and recognition” — an artificially unfair evolutionary struggle, to put it another way — exists in the world (21).

Estrangements and Adaptations

Various forms of estrangement prompt various forms of adaptation. In turn, these adaptation efforts shape subaltern futures into ones distinct from those offered by members of the dominant culture. In *Imre: A Memorandum*, for example, homosexual identity prompts estrangements between people, social groups and classes, and it has profound impacts on how queer writers perceive “belonging” in time and place. The narrator, Oswald, an English expatriate living in Hungary, whose name readers discover seemingly by accident eighty-six pages into the novel, struggles to adapt to his deep love for Imre, “a young Hungarian officer” that he meets over iced coffee at a café in the “cheerful Hungarian city of Szent-Istvánhely.” The late discovery of the narrator’s name corresponds to the late acceptance of his own sexual orientation, and his subsequent “coming out” to Imre. A few important issues regarding place arise within the first few pages of the book’s first chapter. First, “Szent-Istvánhely” is not a city in Hungary; the best I can tell is that the name stems from the name of a hill in Budapest (and a trail leading to that hill) with very similar spelling, Szent István-Hegy. Frequently throughout the novel, Prime-Stevenson employs the nineteenth century convention of blanking out place names,

which Karen Kossie-Chernyshev explains, in the context of Horace's *Five Generation Hence*, "lent verisimilitude to fiction…by giving the appearance of protecting identities that were in fact just fictional." For example, Imre's full name is censored throughout with an ellipsis ("Imre von N…."), they have supper at "the Hotel I.---" (29), Imre is a lieutenant in the "A--- Infantry Regiment" (10) and the two men "plan to go out to Z…. for the end of the afternoon" (81). In fact, in Oswald's preface, he does not even give the readers the year, signing it with the date "19—" (5). This gives the text both a timeliness (by following a convention specific to the era) and a timelessness (by allowing for the date to be at any moment until the year 2000). Kossie-Chernyshev also notes the possibility that this nineteenth century literary convention "encourage[s] readers to personalize the story, to suggest a kind of universality, or to conceal the identity of places and people" (96, note 5). Given the fact that *Imre* is organized into three chapters named "Masks," "Masks And – A Face," and "Faces – Hearts – Souls," the elisions seem to have more to do with conveying the coerced secrecy that results from adapting to oppressive estrangement.

Place – and the ability to belong in a place – has further implications in *Imre*, and those implications intersect with the ability to belong temporally. Prime-Stevenson was an American gay man living in Italy, which he considered safer for homosexual men than the United States. His narrator, Oswald, is an English gay man living in Hungary, which he, too, considers safer than living in England as a self-identified "homosexual," "Dionian," "similisexual," or "Uranian." As I mentioned earlier, the United States and Britain were associated with criminalizing homosexuality far more than Europe and Latin America at the time. In fact, Oswald considers Imre "fortunate[]" to have "not been born and brought up in an Anglo-Saxon civilization; where is still met, at every side, so dense a blending of popular ignorances; of

century-old and century-blind religious and ethical misconceptions" (187). "[O]ther lands and races," he notes, "seem educative and kindly" even when they are "hesitant in their social toleration or legal protection of the Uranian" (188). Despite his "fortune" of being raised outside "British or Yankee social hypocrisy," Imre nevertheless "had early put on the Mask" until he could be taught that "he was not unique in Austria-Hungary, in Europe, or the world" (187) as a person who is homosexual "from birth" (133, 181). Thus, for Prime-Stevenson and his narrator, their futures are only possible *outside* traditional American (and British) utopian visions.

Subalternity in its most original context — postcolonial theory — appears in *Imre*, and its proximity to issues of queer identity reinforces the feeling of non-belonging experienced by people whose identities struggle to find their place in society. To be sure, Prime-Stevenson's novel predates postcolonial theory just as it predates posthuman theory, but both critiques of power and dehumanization are nascent in his text. Oswald, at this point unnamed in the novel, refers to his homosexual identity as "a psychic fact not yet mutually explained" (37). The best he can do to explain it, at least until he develops his thoughts more fully, is "that kindly seeing to know better and better the Other, as a being not yet fully outlined, as one whom we would understand even from the farthest-away time when neither friend suspected the other's existence" (37). The use of the word "Other" — and its capitalization, in particular — summons the notion of an identity excluded from the dominant culture. And even though "the Other" had been in use since Hegel contrasted it with the "Self," we have reason to place it specifically within the discourse of postcolonial theory. For example, Oswald soon describes Imre's "Homeric beauty" as "the Oriental quality, ever in the Magyar; now to be admired by us, now disliked, according to the application of the traits'" (49). The narrator spends paragraphs discussing the implications of Imre being Hungarian and what effects this has on Imre's

relationship to religion, government, and human emotion. Edward Said critiques the West's "orientalist gaze" toward "Eastern" cultures in *Orientalism* (1978), so Oswald's gazing at Imre's body, and framing his description of Imre within the context of "The Orient" reinforces the subalternity of Oswald's relationship toward Imre. While Oswald may be an "Other" himself, he is also estranged from Imre due to his "being not yet fully outlined" (37). Further complicating a sense of belonging as a Vitruvian Man, Oswald asks Imre whether "the God that made mankind" had "made it not only male or female, but also as We are," and then decides he did (140). However, Oswald is forced to navigate his role within a "third space," so to speak: neither male, nor female, but a "vague, special sex" (133) — a "Sub-Sex" or "Super-Sex" depending on who is gazing at them as an Other (135).

Mask4Mask / Masc4Masc

In *Imre*, both Oswald and Imre create their own exclusions in an effort to "reclaim" privileges denied to those who are deemed to have violated Vitruvian boundaries. This phenomenon, in which gay men internalize homophobia and misogyny, remains common today. In fact, today's LGBTQ community has made concerted efforts to push back against what R. W. Cornell calls "hegemonic masculinity," which is most often seen on dating apps as "masc4masc" or "no femmes." Swede White notes that this often takes the form of the Madonna/whore complex, in which "gay men can be just as sexist against effeminate men as straight men are against women." After the COVID-19 pandemic began, a public conflict played out over social media, which earned the title "Gays Over Covid," in which gay men who were following public safety protocols shamed gay men who continued to participate in casual sex. From this context grew a new term, "mask4mask," in which gay men who claimed to be following the Center for Disease Control's guidelines, including the use of face coverings, adapted a term they knew most

gay men would be familiar with (either by being harmed by *masc4masc*'s exclusionary implications or by having used the term themselves online). This phenomenon is particularly interesting given Prime-Stevenson's frequent use of the mask metaphor in *Imre*, alongside his gay characters' frequent denigration of homosexuals who act, in their view, "womanish" (74). In *Imre*, we find an association with masculinity *as a mask* that resonates with the linguistic links made by today's "mask4mask"/"masc4masc" meme in online gay culture.

Self-hatred, which prompts members of an oppressed group to "gatekeep" within their own community, often manifests in phrases like "I'm not that kind of (insert group here)." In *Wynema*, we find this among Native Americans, and in *Iola Leroy* and *Five Generations Hence*, we find this among Black Americans; in all three cases, the distinctions are made either through biogenetic racial mixing or through differences in education. In *Imre*, self-hatred involves "otherizing" certain groups of homosexuals, "slut-shaming" them, demonizing sex work, and implicitly excluding or dehumanizing the entire trans community. Imre had "grown to have a horror of similisexual types, of all contacts with them," but, as the narrator points out, "they could not be torn entirely out of his life. Most Uranists know why!" (189). This caused him to wear a "mask each and every instant; resolving to make it his natural face," which was a "struggle" that was doomed to fail (191). This mask involved "playing a part" (40) that was as masculine as possible through the "cultivation of his repute as a Lothorio who was nothing if not sentimental and absorbed" in women (192). He associates his success in the Hungarian military with his success establishing himself as *the opposite* of feminine. In fact, when Imre declares that he is "sick of pretending to like it," he is referring to the military and not to relations with women; but through his association of the military as part of his "full show" of manliness, readers know that, through his mask, he is telling Oswald that he is "sick of pretending" that he

does not harbor the "alchemy" of "homosexual love" (92, 192, 191). He yearns to find kin — what LGBTQ folks today refer to as "chosen family" — but they are hidden.

Oswald identifies a problem with the "closet" as we now call it: if gay men keep wearing their masks, how are they to find each other? Imre, Oswald repeatedly reminds us, "played his unwelcome part well and manly" (40). If he continues this charade, he would always be "seeking, despairing," thus never "recognizing" the possibility of a lover (146). For closeted men, "life may not bring us face to face," even if destiny meant for two homosexual men to be together. The "eternal social Mask for the homosexual" requires that gay men resolve themselves to deep, platonic friendships — "pleasant friendships...like a kindly apathy" (146). Scholars who attribute the "first gay American novel" status to *Joseph and His Friend* instead of *Imre* are recognizing this phenomenon of coercing homosexual relationships into "pleasant friendships," but at the same time, they diminish the importance of *Imre's* refusal to continue wearing the mask, and by the end, show his "face," "heart," and "soul." Being *openly* gay is a defiance against the Vitruvian exclusions, and it requires posthuman nurture because it requires a rejection of "The Family," a concept steeped in liberal Humanism, and an embrace of what Haraway refers to as "oddkin."

The creation of unique Vitruvian boundaries specific to the homosexual community requires Oswald and Imre to negotiate between masculinity and femininity, between what constitutes "man" and what constitutes "woman." When Oswald describes Imre's body, he finds himself having to insert disclaimers about whether the qualities he is describing would force Imre onto the other side of his reclaimed Vitruvian line. First calling him a "vaquero," Oswald marvels at Imre's "symmetry" and "graceful, elastic frame" (43). He goes on to say that it was not until Imre was "nude, and one could trace the ripple of muscle and sinew under the fine,

hairless skin" that a person could understand the "machinery of such strength" (43). His features are "delicate," but Oswald is quick to note that they are "without womanishness." Interestingly, Imre is a "beautiful" man, but not a "pretty" man. Oswald is drawn to Imre's gracefulness, fineness, hairlessness, delicacy, and beauty, but he always finds it necessary to counterbalance these qualities with masculine attributes, or with explanations for why those attributes should not be considered feminine. In fact, his "boyish youth" is mixed with "maturity," meaning that "not only the women" of the city would lust after him, but also, implicitly, the city's men. These negotiations between masculinity and femininity become even more important when, later in the novel, Imre asks Oswald whether he "observe[d] anything particularly womanish — abnormal — about" himself, explicitly linking femininity to abnormality (75). Oswald reassures Imre, and then the reader, that Imre is not *that kind of gay*: "my friend was no sort of an Uranistic example at all" (77). Instead, in a move we often see today among men who have sex with men but do not identify as gay, Oswald claims that Imre is just a straight man ("a complete Dionian") who has a "sensitive and complex" nature (77).

Toward the end of the novel, when Oswald nurses Imre back to health after a severe illness, Prime-Stevenson begins to reconcile certain aspects of "womanishness," particularly as they relate to nurture, in his two homosexual characters. Imre suddenly recognizes that, unlike Oswald, he is "more feminine in impulse" and asks Oswald to help him "make myself over" to undo that "weakness" (199-200). After spending the majority of the text denigrating women (and men who he believes act feminine), Oswald insists that Imre should "not speak so of woman," and lists "womanly" attributes that he finds important: nursing, mothering, homemaking, praying, and nurturing the weak. "Sexually," he says, "we may not value her. We may not need her, as do those Others. But think of the joy that they find in her...from which we are shut out!"

Here, the capitalized "Other" reappears, as Oswald makes gay men the Subject of social discourse, and straight people the otherized Objects. He manages this by carefully selecting which feminine qualities are acceptable, and they conveniently happen to be the ones Imre considers himself to have. It makes sense, then, that he would find a way to ensure that masculine homosexuals are at the top of his own social hierarchy. In a "bitter paradox," homosexuals like him have always been "too much *men!* So super-male, so utterly unreceptive of what is not manly, so aloof from any feminine essences, that we cannot tolerate woman at all as a sexual factor" (114). Today's gay male community, it should be noted, continues to struggle with a tendency to disparage women's bodies in an effort to assert their sexual identity.

Still, however, women and "feminine" homosexuals remain dehumanized in the text. When Imre asks Oswald whether he has ever encountered a homosexual in his circle of friends, he first says "sort of man" before switching to "*person*" in italics. Clearly, a homosexual man is not, ipso facto, a man, which means he is not, ipso facto, inside the Vitruvian ideal of the Human. Referring to what today's LGTBQ community would call "femme" individuals, Oswald tells Imre that "those, *those*, terrif[y] me!" The use of the word "those" sets Oswald and Imre apart from the rest of gay men, which they refer to as "weaklings and rubbish of humanity" (115-116). "Those" homosexuals are "patently depraved, noxious, flaccid, gross, womanish beings" who are "perverted and imperfect in moral nature and even in their bodily tissues" (116). This recalls Weheliye's critique of Foucault: if homosexuality is socially constructed, how, then, could Oswald come to the conclusion that something within peoples' bodily tissues made them *distinct from* other homosexual men? There is an implication here that the identity is not only innate, but material. This dehumanization extends to "male-prostitutes of the boulevards," "effeminate artists" and the "white-haired satyrs of clubs and latrines." He even deploys a classic

of homophobic rhetoric by claiming that such men are "cynical debauchers of little boys" and the "pederastic perverters of clean-minded lads" (116-7). His rhetoric falls into transphobia when he laments that people think of "the homosexual as if he were an — hermaphrodite!" (113.) In fact, a researcher that Oswald once visited claimed that homosexuality could be cured as long as the "mind was manlike," and although Oswald ends up rejecting the notion that it can be (or should be) cured, he remains committed to the idea that manliness is a key dividing line between homosexuals like him, and the "other" ones (123). "We have always been too much men," he says, which reads as an effort to reclaim the masculinity that society had stolen from them in an effort to exclude them from the privileges afforded by the Vitruvian ideal (114). Instead of not being man *enough* to be considered exemplars of the Vitruvian Man, they are *so* masculine ("the extreme of the male) that they are above, or outside of, that construction created by "Normalists" (114, 118).

Correcting the Record

Prime-Stevenson's narrator seeks to remind the reader that, historically speaking, queerness is not new. But its history, and the relationship many queer people have with time, have proved troublesome to the historiography of queerness. In fact, Oswald tells us that centuries of literary texts and legal records show that "tens of thousands of men, in all epochs, of noblest natures," such as poets, philosophers, and soldiers, had "been such as myself in this mystic sex-disorganization" (115). Nevertheless, many have claimed, even very recently, that although homosexual *behaviors* are as old as human history, homosexuality *as an identity* is a modern creation. But Rictor Norton's *Myth of the Modern Homosexual* (1998) "demolishes the social constructionist view" of homosexual identity (188), while Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) calls for a combination of "essentialist/separatist" and "integrative"/ "social

constructivist" views (88). Sedgwick makes it clear, however, that she pays deference to the "essentialist" conception (13). John Boswell would similarly categorize the camps as "realists"/"essentialists" and "nominalists"/"social constructivists," respectively (18), but, like Sedgwick, he lends his sympathies more to the "realists," even as he notes that most scholars admit that a combination of the two approaches might occasionally be necessary. David M. Halperin's *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* reveals that he now considers his own prior scholarship's assumption of a modern invention of the "homosexual orientation" to be flawed, particularly in its application of Foucault. Prime-Stevenson, in *Imre*, argues for a long history of homosexual identity, and locates the suppression of homosexual identity to a temporary historical phase created by "narrow, modern, Jewish-Christian ethics of today" (114).

Foucault's 1976 *The History of Sexuality* is arguably the most influential text in the movement to consider homosexuality (and *all* aspects of sexual identity, for that matter), as socially constructed. At the same time, however, Foucault implicitly anticipates the Vitruvian exclusion: the "nineteenth century homosexual," he argues, once just a "temporary aberration," "was now a species." He, Foucault continues (the exclusive pronoun for "homosexual" is deliberate, for reasons I will discuss later) "became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology" (42). The use of the term "childhood" is important here, because it implies a dependence that justifies a subject's control over homosexuals as objects, which continues to this day with forced gay conversion therapy, which remains legal in thirty states in the U.S. and in all its territories.[29] In fact, Foucault declares 1870 to be the "birth of homosexuality," when Carl Westphal supposedly discovered (or created) it.

[29] Washington, D.C., which is neither a state nor a territory, joins twenty U.S. states in banning the practice.

"[H]omosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized" by Westphal, Foucault writes, which I consider hubristically similar to the idea that Europeans discovered America, which existed before the discovery and before the name "America" was applied to it. Foucault's claims, while useful in that they identify an effort to dehumanize queer individuals, placing the queer "species" on the other side of a Vitruvian border, repeat a version of the same mistake that Weheliye has pointed out in *Habeus Viscus* regarding Foucault's oversight of the impact that the materiality of race, gender, and sexuality has on their construction.

As *Imre*'s narrator points out, one cannot "discover" something that already exists. Describing the day he first came upon a book that offered a lengthy history of "homosexualism, of Uranianism," which contained "researches by German physicians," Oswald noticed that it "described myself, my secret, unrestful self, with an unsparing exactness" (122). Here, Oswald makes clear that his identity *preceded* his awareness that anyone else on Earth "knew of men like myself" (123). The terminology and theory that could have constructed his identity were not available to him when he first concludes that he is, by virtue of "birth," a certain *kind* of person. Lady Gaga's song "Born this Way" was embraced by the queer community roughly one century later in 2011 for celebrating an innate identity that someone should embrace even if they cannot name it (notably, the song's lyrics hint at, but never specifically state, that "this way" ought necessarily apply to LGBTQ identities). Her song would popularize for today's LGBTQ folks the vague language that Imre must use to describe a homosexual identity that precedes established terminology:

> Was he [Imre] an Uranian? Or was he sexually entirely normal and Dionian Or, a blend of the two types, a Dionian-Uranian? Or what,…[sic] or what not? For that something of a special sexual attitude, hidden, instinctive, was maintained by him, no matter what

might be the outward conduct of his life – this I could not help believing, at least at times.

Uranian? Similisexual? Homosexual? Dionian? Profound and often all too oppressive, even terrible, can be the significance of those cold psychic-sexual terms to the man who….[sic] *"knows." To the man who knows!"* (66-7, emphasis in original)

By this point in the novel, Oswald has access to an array of possible labels for his identity, but by the end of this passage, he resorts to the one he had been most familiar with: a vague reference to something that one *knows* but cannot put into words. Oswald resorts to his pre-label(ed), pre-name(d) recognition of belonging to a group just by virtue of the fact that he "knows" this identity, and that others "know" what he "knows," but cannot precisely label. His identity, then, cannot s*olely* have been formed by social construction. After he "lay bare [his] mysterious nature" to further experts, he is relieved to discover that it is "exceedingly common" (124). But because the United States and Britain spent much of the nineteenth century targeting laws specifically to punish men who have sexual or romantic relationships with men, he must not only wear a mask, but also close the "open door of [his] intimacy" while in public to keep secret his "invisible nature" (28, 13). He longs for gay men to reclaim gay history, cataloguing instances of "exceptional" historical figures known to have been what he now can label as "homosexual" (117).

Harper and Callahan demonstrate other forms of the closet that have to do with racialized oppression. In Callahan's *Wynema*, debate over how to respond to the General Allotment Act of 1887 shows that reservations are a form of a "closet" for Native Americans in the novel. "Indians" are promised that if they will just "return to the reservation," they will "have all the liberty [their] treaty allows" (108). This is reminiscent of Oswald and Karvaly's psychiatrists' recommendations that if they will just get married (to a woman), they can live their lives in

greater freedom from their inner homosexuality. But, of course, as we know from policies like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which existed from 1993 until its repeal in 2010, hiding homosexuality from all others is not only difficult to do, but even if one is "successful" in doing so, one's homosexuality – and the torment of the closet – remain. This is reinforced by another comment about Native American reservations in *Wynema*: "have not the white people pushed us farther and farther away, until now we are in this little corner of the world?" (74). In Harper's novel, Iola Leroy must live "in the closet," so to speak, about her status as a former slave, because she was raised as white because she was pale enough to pass as white. Finally, however, she "comes out" as biracial: "Nothing shall tempt me to deny it. The best blood in my veins is African blood, and I am not ashamed of it" (200). Reminiscent of the use of "pride" to refer to LGBTQ openness, and in the spirit of Lady Gaga's aforementioned "Born this Way" anthem, Iola will no longer live "in the closet" about her race, because it was far too difficult to deal with the torment of secrecy throughout the novel.

In *Imre*, before Oswald "comes out," one way that he adapts to his estrangement is to reframe the idea of hierarchy, even when he cannot restructure the actual systems of oppression that surround him. For example, he flips the idea of "normality" around, insinuating that gay men belong to an "elite" class of men, who temporarily have allowed "Normalists" ("those other men") to "vitiate" them (118). He calls for his people to cease allowing themselves to be "judged by our commoner mass" (118). Homosexuals, Oswald claims, belong to "a sexual aristocracy of the male," a "mystic and hellenic [sic] Brotherhood," a type of "super-virile man" constituting a "race with hearts never to be kindled by any woman" (6). This race is "elite with passion," who have "strange fires" in their hearts that burn more "ardently and purely" than heterosexual men's hearts are able. "Homosexualism is a symphony running through a marvelous range of psychic

keys," and those who are a member of that orchestra, to continue the metaphor, must "look[] down with pity and contempt on the millions of men wandering in the valleys of the sexual commonplace" (6). This application of a socio-economic hierarchy in which "Normalists" are inferior because they are "common" and homosexuals are superior because they are "elite" and thus not subject to pity, recalls Gilman's reframing of Spencerian social Darwinism discussed in Chapter 2. She argues that men were, in fact, not superior to women by virtue of nature, and that early phases of evolution actually suggested that the female was the superior version of the human species.

Not even the use of the word "queer" to refer to homosexuality – whether pejoratively or nonpejoratively – is new, either, and this fact adds new layers of meaning to the frequent use of words related to estrangement in *Imre*. Prime-Stevenson's narrator uses the words "queer" and "strange" throughout *Imre* to reinforce the estrangement Oswald and Imre suffer from, but in at least two instances, the word "queer" is used explicitly to refer to homosexual identity. While Imre recounts to Oswald his attempt to resist romantic and sexual urges for a previous male lover, he notes that the lover "had other rather acceptable qualities" so he "didn't allow myself to be too much stirred up by…. [ellipses in original] that remarkably queer" quality (73). "Queer" is used to refer to personally deviant (rather than socially deviant) sexuality as well. For example, Imre notes that he has never managed to experience "intimacies" with a woman the way he can with a man; when he has tried, they are "merely semblances" of what he experiences with a man. He continues by saying, "[q]ueer experiences I've tumbled into with *them* [women] too!", after which he says, "[y]ou know," and Oswald confirms that he, in fact, *does know* exactly what Imre means (193). This use of "queer" is vastly different from the dozens of other uses of "queer" in the book because it specifically references sexual acts that the speaker feels estranged from. In

other words, while Prime-Stevenson uses "queer" throughout the novel in coded ways, he makes it clear at least twice that "queer" as a reference to sexuality is *not* simply code in his text.

"Gay marriage" is not a historically novel concept, either. *Imre* reinforces this fact repeatedly as the narrator yearns for temporal and evolutionary correction to what is perceived as a century-old Anglo-American mistake regarding homosexuality. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito may think that "same-sex marriage is newer than cell phones or the Internet," but if this were true, then several Roman emperors who officially married men would need to be excised from history. Oswald has an "eternal vague yearning" for society to return to what he believes was the "natural" state in which homosexuality was not condemned by American and British culture for many centuries prior. In *Iola Leroy*, Harper similarly identifies mistakes in the "Anglo-Saxon regard for the marriage relation," which contributes to the paradox of racists "consort[ing]" with "negroes" to the point that white children "nestle in [negroes'] bosoms," while at the same time, racists "would scorn to share [their] social life with them" (214). Miscegenation, then, must happen in the closet; Iola Leroy must pretend that she is entirely white in order for her children to be considered legitimate. The nineteenth century, Oswald points out, is a "misunderstood phase of humanity," an evolutionary blip similar to Gilman's belief that the female sex was superior throughout human evolution until made weaker, temporarily, by man (135). Prime-Stevenson later refers to homosexuals as a "kind of *logically* essential link, an in-between step," which confirms that he considers gay people to hold a vital evolutionary function that has been interrupted by Anglo-American legal oppression. This interruption is marred by what Oswald calls "the false social ethics of our epoch" (4). Evolutionary *correction*, and not necessarily evolutionary *reinvention*, could allow for gay Americans and biracial Americans to live openly and still participate in kin-making.

Happy Gay Futures and "What Never Could Be"

Queer time, and its connection to impermanence, is best described through an analogy regarding Aristotelian and Ovidian plot theories. In Sarah Ruhl's essay "On Ovid," she contrasts the Aristotelian plot arc — which builds up to a single climax, then quickly winds down — with that of Ovid — in which there are a series of transformations with several climaxes. She draws comparisons between these plot arcs and the differences between the male and female orgasm (to which she attributes the popularity of Aristotelian narrative in a male-dominated society). For the purposes of my discussion, the argument about orgasms is irrelevant; what is useful here is the illustration of how time moves differently for queer people. Whereas straight people move through time in a more Aristotelian structure, which Elizabeth Freeman refers to as "chrononormativity" and Jack Halberstam refers to as "straight time," queer people experience their life events as a series of transformations and climaxes. For example, Halberstam's "straight time" refers to the social timelines in which people live, become adults, get married, have children, care for grandchildren, and then die. Queer people, on the other hand, become accustomed to relationships that are temporary; it is far less common for queer people to follow "straight time" because of their historic lack of access to the marriage institution, the likelihood of their partner being closeted, or the likelihood of their partner being separated from them either due to social pressure or, in the late twentieth century, succumbing to AIDS. In fact, it is due to the widespread toll of the AIDS crisis on the queer community that today's queer young adults lack access to mentors from previous generations of queer activism.

As I discuss in Chapter 2, Lee Edelman's *No Future* argues that the queer community should "accept[] and even embrac[e]" the "ascription of negativity" that society has placed on the relationship that queer people have with futurity (4). He writes that "the death drive names

what the queer, in the order of the social, is called forth to figure: the negativity opposed to every form of social viability" (9). He writes that queer people are "future-negating" due to their inability to participate in the "cultural fantasy" created by "reproductive futurism" and the figure of "The Child." On the other hand, Jose Esteban Munoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* argues that queerness has always been associated with futurity. In contrast to Edelman, Munoz's future is a potential utopia for queer people. Munoz criticizes what he calls the "antirelational approach" to queer futurity, associated with Edelman, which seeks inward rather than outward to the social, preventing a utopian queer community of the future. Elizabeth Freeman, in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, contributes to the ongoing discussion of queer temporalities by emphasizing the positive interpretations (bodily pleasures) associated with queer temporalities rather than the negative ones (trauma, loss, repression). Freeman "min[es] the present for signs of undetonated energy from past revolutions" (ix). She coins "erotohistoriography" to refer to using the body as a "tool to effect, figure, or perform" a present encounter with, or way of understanding the past; in this way, the past is always in the present. Perhaps this is why Oswald would describe himself an "anachronism" when he laments that "to most people today," he is considered "a thing against all civilization," even though he knows that, in the context of gay history, he is just an "incomprehensible incident in God's human creation" (111).

Throughout *Imre*, Oswald struggles to come to terms with what his homosexuality means for his ability to make kin or achieve a future that Edelman would deny exists as a possibility. Although Oswald's "utopian" future with Imre does not include having children (it doesn't exclude it, either — the issue simply never comes up), the fact that Oswald imagines various possible queer futures and ends up deciding that a utopian one is possible places him

more in line with Munoz and Freeman than with Edelman. At the same time, his attempt throughout the novel to uncover how to fit queerness into his own future demonstrates that he recognizes the problems that Edelman identifies regarding queer time. Coding his relationship with Imre through a close, intimate bond is not enough: his kinship with Imre is *material*, *corporeal,* and *physical*. He uses the term "boyfriend" twice in the novel (108, 186), and asserts that his "adoration" of Imre is different because it involves a "physical yearning" with an "appeal of bodily beauty" (108). Summoning Weheliye's critique of Foucault, Oswald recognizes the "viscous" nature of his identity as a homosexual but cannot seem to figure out what that means for his own potential futures.

In fact, Oswald's declaration in the final paragraph of the novel that he had managed to fulfil his "vain dream" of happiness with Imre contains a paradox that demonstrates why "utopia" literally means "no place" (110). By embracing, in his words, "what is real for us," the pair had managed to accomplish "what never could be" (205). And to be sure, the reader remains unclear at the end of the novel whether Imre and Oswald will merely live without the mask in their private relationship or whether they will live without the mask *everywhere*. After all, both men had resisted, throughout the story, revealing their romantic and sexual interest for the other due to the masks they both wore. But these masks not only protect them from the possibility of "gay panic" from other homosexual men (which happens for both Imre and Oswald, regarding their feelings for the other, at different parts of the story), but those masks also protect them from oppression from the dominant culture. This is a key distinction forgotten by many people who discuss the closet: there isn't only one closet. While someone may be closeted to family and colleagues, that same person may be out of the closet to friends. In other words, there are many closets, many masks; and the only masks we know for sure that Imre and Oswald shed at the end

of the novel are those worn to disguise themselves from *each other*. We do not know if their future of happiness together is held secret from the rest of Szent-Istvánhely or whether they will embrace a gay future out in the open. We also cannot exclude either possibility, though, particularly given how often Oswald and Imre both detail the suffering caused by hiding their homosexuality from the world, and how often both characters emphasize that Europe is safer than America for gay men.

Oswald and Imre struggle to grapple with the fact that society forces them to code their relationship through friendship in order to avoid the tragedy of losing their loved one. This denies the kinmaking and nurturing that they attempt to accomplish with each other. "Our friendship," Imre cautions Oswald, "must be friendship as the world of today accepts friendship! Yes — as the world of *our* day does" (102). Not only does this quote remind readers that homosexuality is not new, just newly oppressed, but it also signals that Imre and Oswald envision that the world of a future day, as opposed to *their* ("our") day, will accept their love as it really is. I would argue that the future they envisioned grew to fruition in the fin-de-siecle that so many of Prime-Stevenson's contemporaries linked with their own when contemplating reform. The masks, however, mean that they lack access to "uranistic" "forefathers" from which to learn these things, unless they reach back into history books written by "dionian" men. To redeploy Spivak, the "dionians" cannot speak for the subalternity of the "uranians," which leaves Oswald and Imre feeling temporally lost. Still, despite their Edelman-esque hesitance to imagine that love "between two manly souls" was a "realizable unity," they end up deciding that it is "no mere ideal" and instead "a possible crown of existence, a glory of life" (97).

As the men attempt to nurture their love and create a kinship relation beyond friendship, they are consistently aware that the odds are stacked against a happy ending to their story. In

fact, Oswald says as much when he assumes that their relationship can "never transform itself into the bitter and burning mystery of Uranistic Love,---the fittest names for which so often should be written Torment, Shame, and Despair!" (78). The closet, to Oswald, is torment. Imre says something similar when he tells Oswald that his "sentimental and sexual" sufferings are based on "mere imagination" that homosexual futures exist. "[Y]ou will never realize it in any way," Imre asserts, urging Oswald to dismiss the idea as "nonsense" (124). When he says "realize" in this passage, he doesn't mean to *recognize* or to *ascertain*, but instead to *make it real,* or see it *materialize*. In another moment when Imre's military role acts as a metaphor for his "mask" covering his sexuality, he echoes sentiments of queer impermanence voiced by many LGBTQ people today. Referring to military deployments, he complains that he has "grown so trained...to having every sort of personal plan and pleasure, great or small, simply blown to the winds on half-an-hour's notice" (87). Perhaps this is why Imre will later assert, when he feels he might lose Oswald, that they must "stay together," that they "cannot change...not in death, not in anything" (152). Kinmaking bonds ought to be stronger than friendship bonds; Oswald and Imre want "to be *loved*, not merely liked," so they seek "eternal kinship" (201). They want this kinship to be, as Haraway calls for, "enduring" ("Making Kin"). But because the severing of kinship causes trauma, and they feel they should expect impermanence, they live in constant anxiety that they will be separated.

Prime-Stevenson knows that we, as readers, also expect this separation. Accordingly, he repeatedly teases the lovers' supposedly inevitable separation, leaving readers with the same anxiety the characters experience. When Oswald knows that he has "fallen in love," he goes through two days of being "irresistibly oppressed with the idea that some disagreeable thing was coming" his way (81-2). Imre consoles him, and he decides that the feeling means nothing. Soon

after, however, Oswald receives a letter summoning him to London within four days, which seems to confirm that his anxiety was prophetic. Soon, the English Channel will physically separate the couple, so they spend four days making the most of their remaining time together, which only makes them fall more deeply in love. By the end of the chapter, as they are saying their final goodbye, Oswald receives a telegram stating that the "situation changed" and that his return to London is "unnecessary" (155). Our lovers are relieved that the kinship they've nurtured can continue, and the narrator feels like he is climbing "steps to the stars" (156). On the next page, however, the first of the final chapter, Oswald awakens to a note that Imre's military company has been called "out to the camp," but that it will be "only a few days absence" (157). Oswald seems not to notice the potential for permanent separation here, but readers familiar with contemporary literary conventions would recognize this as setting up a tragic loss. Over the course of Imre's absence, the two exchange letters — notably, Oswald tells us, using the "second person of intimate Magyar address the 'thou' and 'thee'" (160).

Imre does, however, return. But when he does, he instantly becomes ill, and Oswald works to nurture him to health while ensuring that Imre "rest." At this point, then throughout the remainder of the novel, the theme of "rest" becomes amplified until it ultimately becomes the final word of the novel, capitalized punctuated with an exclamation mark. This has ties to nurturing in the context of subaltern futurity because, like the rosebush of humanity in Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, "struggle" is not necessarily good for growth, as Spencerian Darwinists would have us believe. In fact, in each of the ten instances in which Prime-Stevenson uses a form of the word term "struggle" in *Imre*, it is in the context of Oswald or Imre struggling to adapt to the oppression ("torment") they experience while trying to suppress their sexuality. Oswald describes his first evening with Imre as a "kindly prophecy as to the future of the intimacy, the

trust, the decreed progression toward them, even through our--reserves" (28). Imre eventually tells Oswald that Oswald is the only person who has managed to "bring me rest," while Oswald refers to their happy ending as "com[ing]...to our rest" (176, 205). But their prospect for a happy ending is repeatedly threatened by the author throughout the novel, leaving readers to assume that they will never find a "rest" from their struggle.

Imre's illness upon his return not only provides readers with a newfound anxiety that he could die before the lovers could create a future together, but it also evokes for readers of *both* fin-de-siècles the notion of an epidemic that will destroy gay families. Imre's story of a previous male lover ends in a tragedy that mirrors the experiences of queer people during the AIDS crisis. He had "found [his] ideal," and to his surprise, the man loved him back. But after a "few months together, [the lover] all at once became ill during an epidemic in the town, was taken home and died," and Imre never saw him again, not even on his deathbed (109). This echoes the experience of countless gay men during the AIDS crisis who lost their loved ones due to a different epidemic, and who could not be with their partners in the hospital rooms when they died because they were not considered "family." Many families during the COVID-19 pandemic have also experienced this separation in death, but the *cause* of epidemic-related separation is, of course, the most important element when considering the connections between Imre's illness and the possibility of him having a happy ending with Oswald.

To understand how humans are affected in different ways by the same communicable disease, we must, somewhat counterintuitively, decenter the human and embrace a posthuman nurturing ethics. It was Vitruvian exclusion in the 1980s, for example, that allowed for so many gay men to die silent deaths: they were not seen as worthy of public health interventions because of their queerness. Ronald Reagan's press secretary laughed, for example, when he was asked in

1982 whether the administration was tracking the spread of AIDS (Fitzimmons). His Health and Human Services secretary promised two years later that a vaccine would be available by 1986, which, of course, did not happen. We never came close until vaccine technologies used to combat COVID-19, which was not a "gay plague," were developed in only a matter of months from the outbreak, and Moderna decided to trial two new approaches to an HIV vaccine (Highleyman). And even COVID-19 vaccines themselves are less available to queer communities and BIPOC folks. UNAIDS, for example, finds that among those living with HIV today, the "vast majority are denied access to COVID-19 vaccines" due to "policy and programmatic actions that divide rather than include" ("Press Release"). The disparate racial impact of that pandemic demonstrated what the CDC calls "injustice and inequity" in public health responses ("Health Equity"). Vitruvian boundaries continue to harm queer and BIPOC people disproportionately, which calls for a human infrastructure that embraces a posthuman nurturing ethics.

The Family: Love, Marriage, Children, and Separation

Prime-Stevenson complicates fin-de-siecle constructions of "The Family" by insinuating that the "The Family" itself is harmed by forcing homosexual men to wear the "mask of masc," so to speak. In many ways, *Imre* critiques what Gilman had identified as the "sexuo-economic relation," rejecting it like Gilman, but in a distinct way. Early in Imre's relationship with Oswald, he suggests that he finds "woman...a necessity" (57). A researcher tells Oswald that there was only "one step" that can "cure" homosexuality in a man whose "mind was manlike in all else and the body firm and normal": "to marry immediately" (123). A different researcher, wiser than Oswald's, tells Imre that his "inborn homosexualism...will not be dissipated by wedlock; but perhaps only intensifie[d], and is surer to darken irretrievably the nuptial future of

husband and wife" (184). "Return[ing] to any woman," according to Oswald, would be a "lie of the body and the spirit," which would cause a "growing wretchedness...for two human beings, not for one" if they are childless (126). Worse, even, if they had children, this darkened future would "visit itself on their children after them," which directly threatens the figure of The Child that underpins the repronormative futurity of "The Family" (185). In this way, forcing gay men to wear the "mask/masc" is a threat to future generations. There are material implications for the future that are involved in coercing "straight" repronormativity.

Perhaps for this reason, Prime-Stevenson brings up the subject of gay marriage in *Imre*. Although he is aware that society will not yet accept it, the fact that he discusses the concept at all in the novel provides another interesting link between the turn of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth century. Oswald breaks a "marriage-engagement" with a woman within a week after meeting a previous male lover — one he was doomed to lose (133). He "knew that no marriage, of any kind yet tolerated in our era" could "banish" what he "was born": "a complete human being, of firm, physical and mental health" (133). Notice how important it is to Oswald that he assert his place within Vitruvian borders: he is human, white, male, and non-disabled. Moreover, the modifier "of any kind yet tolerated in our era" suggests, particularly with the word "yet," that he anticipates a future in which there *is* a kind of marriage that will be tolerated eventually. In a novel that preoccupies itself with navigating gay futures, Prime-Stevenson anticipates the marriage equality movement from a century into his future. Moreover, by the end of the decades following the turn of the twentieth century, both the United States and Great Britain had legalized gay marriage, which is important given Prime-Stevenson's specific critique of Anglo-American social and legal attitudes toward homosexuality. (As Oswald might have predicted, many European and Latin American countries preceded the United States and

Great Britain in this legalization effort.)

Anglo-American legal systems specifically targeted gay men, although the oppression that lesbian women experienced should not go overlooked. In fact, throughout *Imre*, lesbianism is largely ignored, which, taken alongside the internalized misogyny of the novel, is surely frustrating to today's readers. However, the one time it is mentioned (as "the similisexual woman"), it is linguistically and contextually presented as comparable to "the simisexual man." I argue that the focus on male-male sex acts in Anglo-American law in the nineteenth century reflects the sexism inherent in Vitruvian exclusion. Because women were already outside the Vitruvian boundaries regardless of their sexual orientation, they were, regrettably, already considered property in Anglo-American law when it came to their reproductivity. In other words, lesbian sexual relations were less of a threat to "The Family" and to "repronormativity" because even if they identified as lesbians, they could, by virtue of their gender, be more easily coerced into marriage and motherhood anyway. The privileges held by white gay men had meant that something higher — the government — would need to coerce them into marriage and fatherhood.[30]

Imre describes his previous love, Karvaly, whom he loses when Karvaly marries a woman, as a born nurturer. Despite his social standing, he would talk to peasants, who "took to him at once"; he loved children and "was a born animal-friend" (53). "In fact," Imre continues, "there appeared to be a regular understanding" between Karvaly and "beasts little and big." Children are a minor detail in Imre's list of things Karvaly nurtures by instinct, which means that Karvaly's participation in "The Family" was not necessary in order for him to carry out those instincts. In Callahan's *Wynema* two decades prior, we are offered an alternative when a young

[30] For more on the role of the United States government in codifying "The Family," see Grossberg.

bachelor expresses an intense desire to raise one of the three "Indian" babies ("papooses") that survived the Massacre at Wounded Knee (127-8). A young boy loves the three babies "to death," and "wants to nurse and play with them all the time" (128). Although the other characters are surprised by the bachelor's desire to raise a child on his own, and although Callahan herself resolves the problem by marrying him to a woman before he eventually becomes the baby's "foster-father" (134), the term "foster mother" is never used to refer to his wife. The depiction of a young single man and a young boy with instincts to care for infants demonstrates that Karvaly's nurturing instincts were not unique during the late long nineteenth century.[31]

In *Five Generations Hence*, unmarried women are seen as future-negating in ways similar to how queerness is viewed as future-negating. Miss Noble focuses her efforts on authoring her book, seeking time away from work to write it instead of focusing on marriage or family. In fact, before she began drafting it, her mentor, Miss Saunders would "commend [her] compositions" and was certain that when she was teaching Miss Noble, she was teaching "an embryo author" (47). In this way, mentorship is a form of parenthood, and intellectual production is a form of reproduction that can act as an alternative to repronormativity. But, to Mrs. Westley, this means that she has "no future" (*a la* Edelman) "aside from her friends and her work" (71). She even uses rhetoric similar to that of the psychological "experts" consulted by Oswald and Imre by claiming that women's struggles could be resolved through "The Family": "If women would only marry and have babies, so many of their trials would end" (62). But Miss Noble's book *is* her baby, which she nurtures like an infant who had been born from her own womb:

[31] As I discuss in Chapter 4, Jack and Shel are two young boys in Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible*, who are associated with a desire to nurture more than any other characters in the book, regardless of gender or age.

> How gently she wrapped the typewritten pages, almost caressingly, yet with the kind of awe with which a young mother fondles her first-born, feeling deeply the mystery of motherhood. Was not this her first-born? the beloved child of her intellect? Did it not represent the secrets of her inmost soul laid bare to the world? (68).

Horace manages to find alternatives to "The Family" for Black women in the post-Reconstruction south. As babies are born to other women in her orbit, her friend visiting Africa writes to her that she need not worry because "educated women like yourself will rear" "sons and daughters" who can "found a nation here" in Africa. She encourages Miss Noble to "continue to write" her book because "the seed of your first book is sown, and it will grow" to allow for the nurture of a utopian future for Black Americans in Africa.

Conclusion: Where is Utopia?

The location of subaltern futures at the turn of the nineteenth century reflects writers' sense of belonging in the United States. Prime-Stevenson places his characters in Europe, specifically continental Europe, given the oppression that he feels from both the American and British culture. Harper, in *Iola Leroy*, notes a similar impact that the "Anglo-Saxon regard for the marriage relation" has had on African American families in the Reconstruction South. Her futurity, which, like the texts discussed in Chapter 2, frequently cite "two thousand years (206) and the "millennium" (215). It takes place in the United States, but she emphasizes that it would be easier if it took place in Europe, specifically France, which she sees as more tolerant (119, 246). Some characters in Harper's novel call for a future in Liberia, but they decide that the (physical) climate of the United States is more promising, so they seek to remain and create egalitarian communities in America (227). For Horace, in *Five Generations Hence*, Africa is used throughout the novel to provide a contrast with black opportunities in the United States, in

what M. Giulia Fabi refers to as "the oppositional function that Africa serves within the utopian economy" of Horace's imagining (165). In fact, Horace provides a version of Bellamy's "rosebush of humanity" metaphor when she writes that "as a flower transplanted in other soil will thrive best when returned to soil to which it is indigenous, so the Negro, once here [in Africa], will feel a spirit of manliness and patriotism that he has never known before" (91). But for Callahan in *Wynema*, the utopia *must* be on the American continent because the goal of Native American futurity in her novel is to stop white westward expansion and maintain what remains of indigenous land. For this reason, it is notable that, while Prime-Stevenson, Harper, and Horace use the convention of redacted place names, all place names in Callahan's text are unredacted — and real. Callahan's utopia involves keeping what she knows is slipping away, while Prime-Stevenson's involves "realizing," or *making real* what currently does not exist.

Oswald becomes certain of a subaltern future that he may never see, and that may not occur throughout the globe at one time. His "Search" (capitalized mid-sentence) ended once he found Imre, but he leaves unspoken what this "Search" was for (150). He knows, however, that after meeting Imre, an unspecified "dream" became "this reality of" Imre." He becomes "certain...of that coming time, however far away, now, when no man shall ever meet any intelligent civilization's disrespect simply *because* he is simisexual, Uranian!" (150). Oswald does not have to be "silent" anymore about the "Friendship which is Love, the Love which is Friendship," and in fact, he can dispense with the word "Friendship" entirely by the end of the novel, which had devalued the *materiality* of his kinship with Imre. A bell in the distance strikes, which "keyed to that haunting, divine, prophetic triad, Life--Love--Death!" Embracing "love" without qualifying it as friendship, Oswald manages to find a chronology that works within his identity: first, live; then, love; then, as the final word of his novel emphasizes, "Rest!" Here,

"rest" involves no longer having to struggle within the torment of the closet, but it also suggests *that which comes after* – the "rest of it," that is, the utopian future he had tried throughout the novel to articulate.[32] While his future does not rely on the figure of "The Child," it is not a negating force on society. Moreover, it embraces the notion of nurturing kinships that fall outside Vitruvian boundaries.

In the next chapter, although I switch my focus to texts of the Digital Revolution (1980-2020), I occasionally look back on these texts due to the temporal links between the decades bookending 2000 and the decades bookending 1900. I will discuss the ways in which individuals grapple with the advent of new technologies at the same time that major changes disrupt the traditional concept of "The Family." While interrogating the power dynamics involved in modern kinmaking — such as the primal wound, transracial adoption, donor-conception, separation trauma, and family reunification — in the context of the turn of the twentieth century, I will revisit these late long nineteenth-century subaltern futurities to demonstrate how they anticipated the ethical implications of kinmaking a century into their future.

[32] It also involves the sense of the word "rest" that means to put something in its place (as in, to rest an item somewhere); but because his vision is utopian, it is, by definition, "no place."

CHAPTER FOUR

UTOPIAS INTERRUPTED: LYDIA MILLET'S *A CHILDREN'S BIBLE* AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSTHUMAN AND POST-HUMAN NURTURING ETHICS

As the first two chapters explored, Bellamy, Gilman, Jones & Merchant, and Horace each deploy their own version of a "rosebush of humanity" to call for society to take a more active nurturing approach toward the *conditions* of the present to allow for improved conditions of future generations. Reform Darwinists and other future-oriented authors of the late long nineteenth century identified serious concerns with capitalism's impact on both society and the environment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; but these writers still believed in the possibility of futures where people had embraced the more sympathetic iterations of Darwinian evolution to create socialist paradises. This "future history" is what Kim Stanley Robinson refers to as the "Great Trench": it's far easier to imagine a utopia, he claims, than it is to imagine the process of how we as a society actually get to one (6).

If society fails to transplant the rosebush of humanity into more favorable environmental conditions — that is, if society fails to recognize the impact that the environment has on humans *and* the fact that humans, in turn, impact the conditions of that environment — then we cannot accomplish the utopias offered at the turn of the twentieth century. While writers during the late long nineteenth century imagined utopias achieved by nurturing humankind toward a more egalitarian evolutionary future, writers during the turn of the twentieth century imagine dystopias that reflect the failure of generations between them to accomplish that task. In this chapter, I show how writers today are increasingly experimenting with various futures that focus on

children's perspectives of climate catastrophe. Lydia Millet's 2020 cli-fi ("climate fiction") novel, *A Children's Bible*, provides an exemplary literary response to the sense that the utopias of a century ago are becoming increasingly implausible, if not already impossible. Moreover, this novel, and others participating in this emerging trend, interrogate how upcoming generations must engage with posthuman theoretical frameworks when devising ethics of nurturing futurity that renegotiate what "utopias" can realistically entail. By the end of this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that posthuman futurities allow us to blur the distinctions between dystopia and utopia in excitingly new ways.

What Happens if We Never Transplant the Rosebush?

When Adam Sternbergh discussed the late twentieth century's lack of utopian novels in 2014, he considered us already to have reached "Peak Dystopia." Lois Lowry, who popularized the genre for young adults with her 1993 novel *The Giver* — a novel quickly incorporated into public school curricula throughout the United States — now considers dystopias so common that they are "passé." Jill Lepore, however, still regards our era to be the "Golden Age for Dystopias" (at least as late as 2017, that is), calling the corpus "our new literature of radical pessimism." A dystopia, as Diane Johnson explains it, depicts a society, "usually of the future, that has arrived at the destination we're all headed for if we don't change now." The most effective dystopian fiction, she claims, "convince[s] us of things that are all too possible in the society we live in, if we hadn't spotted them for ourselves" (Johnson). In fact, Lepore lists "sleeping through the warning signs" as a key problem that dystopian literature attempts to interrogate as a genre.

Like utopias, dystopias engage heavily with the temporal. "Sleeping through," as Lepre puts it, involves the passing of time that leads to new futures when one awakens. Julian West, the protagonist of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, "travels" to the utopian Boston of A.D. 2000 by

waking up after a long slumber, not by traveling through dimensions. Lepore further claims that before "utopias and dystopias became imagined futures, they were imagined pasts, or imagined places, like the Garden of Eden." Thus, as Chapters 2 and 3 have discussed, writers who imagine the future often use metaphors evoking a paradisian garden, in which gardeners nurture the future by creating favorable environmental conditions. "A utopia is a paradise," Lepore claims, while "a dystopia [is] a paradise lost," which means that the garden itself is in a temporal, not necessarily physical location. Being "no place," a utopia is an impossibility; being a "paradise lost," a dystopia is the actual realization of that impossibility. But what could make us lose the garden if there are, in fact, gardeners tending the garden? And what happens when the gardeners are *part of* the garden, as human nurturers of the human species must be? And whose responsibility is it to step up and be the gardeners, anyway?

The answer to these questions are particularly important to the youngest members of the human species, a fact that cli-fi ("climate fiction") writers today must grapple with. This is perhaps best exemplified by Greta Thunberg's "how dare you" speech to the 2019 United Nations Climate Action Summit, which sought to highlight the intergenerational responsibilities inherent in climate justice. As discussed in the Introduction, the term *Capitalocene* represents an attempt to locate a more precise cause for humankind's impact on the geological record than the term *Anthropocene* implies. Given the fact that the human species (represented by the male "Anthropos" in *Anthropocene*) did not, from the beginning, have this impact on the geological record, many find it more accurate to attribute *humans-engaging-in-systems-of-capitalism* with these geological impacts. The Capitalocene locates the cause of the threat to modern people's garden more specifically, but other helpful alternatives exist. For example, the *Plantationocene* specifically highlights the combination of colonialism, capitalism, and race, while the

Chthulucene provides a more future-oriented term for our present time in which "critters" learn to "stay with the trouble" that already exists on the planet (*Staying* 12). One important similarity among these terms, however, is that even though the beginnings of these periods are heavily debated, scholars tend to agree that the nineteenth century represented an important turning point for those periods (if not the beginning of them). Writers today who envision the future must grapple with the reality that, at some point, we reached a planetary point of no return, and the previous utopias are no longer possible.

The shift from utopian literary dominance during 1880-1920 to dystopian literary dominance during 1980-2020 reveals much about the temporal link between the literary imaginations of these two time periods. Of course, some writers penned dystopias during 1880-1920 just as some penned utopias during 1980-2020. But many of the late long nineteenth century's dystopias were direct responses to their more successful utopian counterparts, anti-Bellamy novels in particular, which became their own subgenre of dystopia. Meanwhile, most of the utopian fiction of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries operates within a dystopian framework (e.g., the plot relies on a contrast between a utopian and dystopian society or nation). Emily Temple suggests that readers of the Digital Revolution would, perhaps ironically, be more "depress[ed] by utopias than dystopias" because utopias would remind today's readers of what they had failed (and were continuing to fail) to accomplish.

Today's readers also have a century's worth of sociopolitical history and climate data from which to base their assumption that it's too late to accomplish the late nineteenth century's utopian goals. Utopian fiction, Temple asserts, "seems like it would just be depressing, something we can imagine but not touch, like a mirage in the desert." Because we have lived past the moment that late long nineteenth century writers imagined, today's writers have new

problems of futurity to grapple with. A new emergent genre of dystopia focuses specifically on how children must "live with foreshortened expectations of their future," to borrow a phrase used by Rebekah Sheldon to describe the teenagers in Octavia Butler's 1987 dystopian short story, "The Evening and the Morning and the Night" (47). Millet, however, rejects the application of the category "dystopia" to *A Children's Bible*, despite the fact that most critics consider the novel to be a dystopia due to its depiction of an apocalypse resulting from an anthropogenic climate crisis. She rejects this idea because it depicts *current* environmental conditions, and might only have been considered the "future" ten years ago. But Sheldon had noticed four years prior that a "[c]rop of recent books and articles" were surfacing that "begin from the presumption that the future is now" (52). The category of "dystopia," then, does not necessarily have to imply that the events are not happening today. But I argue that whether or not we categorize Millet's novel as a dystopia, *A Children's Bible* offers a way to re-imagine what constitutes the optimism of a utopia or the pessimism of a dystopia. *Must* a post-climate-catastrophe novel be a dystopia? Or is it possible to imagine posthuman futurity as a utopia?

Reinforcing the link I have discussed between the turn of the twentieth century and the turn of the millennium, Millet's novel begins in a "Great House" that the narrator repeatedly reminds the reader was built by robber barons during the late nineteenth century (1, 3, 12, 67, 90, 139). Twelve children, ranging in age from nine to seventeen, accompany their well-educated, upper-middle-class parents who all pitch in financially to rent a large house on a lake as a "last hurrah" reunion. Evie, a teenager who takes on the nurturing of her nine-year-old brother, Jack, in the absence of parental care (an absence that started well before the novel begins, it seems), narrates the story, which is told entirely from the children's perspective. "The parents," as the adults are called in the novel, are irresponsible, careless, and have entirely given

up trying to nurture the Earth. While on this summer vacation, a hurricane hits the "Great House." It turns out that this particular hurricane — which came far earlier than the first hurricane of the season should have come — was the straw that broke the climatic camel's back, so to speak. The storm sparks a chain of severe weather events, which end up disrupting any remaining environmental equilibrium. The utopian possibilities associated with the Second Industrial Revolution, symbolized in the novel by the Great House and its artifacts, had been upended by the harsher realities brought upon by the Capitalocene. There were, after all, no jet packs for commuters in the decades before and after 2000, but there were plenty of disappearing ecosystems, mass extinctions, and increasingly severe weather patterns. Millet's novel, however, serves as an example of an emergent form of futurity that focuses on how children must adapt to the consequences they inherit from previous generations.

Parent-Child Metaphors and the Inheritance of Guilt

Millet illustrates for readers a failure of what Haraway calls "care across generations" ("Making Kin"). The parents in *A Children's Bible* are "artsy and educated types, but they [aren't] impoverished, or else they couldn't have afforded the buy-in" to the "Great House" (14). When the children use the term "the parents," they refer specifically to the group of adults at the Great House, who presumably all have reproduced, either "naturally" or through in-vitro fertilization (IVF), or who have adopted children to raise. "The parents" does not necessarily refer to whether or not the adults actually have children, and it does not refer to their status as people who *do parenting*. By extension, "the parents" also refers to what this group of parents collectively symbolizes to the children: a generation of people who did not act as adequate stewards for the next generation's well-being. We discover later, in fact, that many of "the parents" do not have any children of their own from any of the aforementioned methods of

family-making; but even after this is discovered, the children still refer to them as parents/mothers/fathers because they still consider them to fall within the category of "the parents." Thus, when I refer to the children's parents as "*the* parents," I am referring to something distinct from when I say "*their* parents." After all, as Evie admits, the children fight throughout the novel to "hid[e] their parentage" (5) from the other children, anyhow, which means that for most of the novel, the reader doesn't know which children "belong" to which parents.

The parents' socioeconomic status — educational and financial stability, but no amassed wealth or systemic power comparable to venture capitalists — becomes important to the children's interpretation of the parents' role in bringing about the end of the world. The parents take away the children's cell phones, placing them in a safe, and put the children in an "analog prison," prompting the children to come up with ways to entertain themselves that do not rely on digital technology (17). One attempt at passing the time is absconding from the lake, traveling down a river to the ocean to camp near the beach. There they encounter children with far wealthier and more powerful parents who are spending their summer (and presumably their entire lives) on a yacht that protects them from looming climate catastrophes. Evie and the other children refer to these youths as the "yacht kids" and their parents as the "yacht parents" (or "VCs," for "venture capitalists").

The scientific warnings that the parents have been hearing (and ignoring) for decades end up playing out in real time: floods, plagues, mass extinctions, and the creation of climate refugees through displacement. The children's resentment of their parents at the beginning of the novel stems from their recognition that the parents don't take the "right" issues seriously enough. In the children's view, the parents talk about "nothing" at dinner, aiming their conversation "like

a dull grey beam," with content "so boring that it filled [the children] with frustration" (4). "Didn't they know," Evie asks the reader, that "there were urgent subjects? Questions that needed to be asked?" Evie never mentions in this scene what the "more urgent subjects are," but once the storm comes — and especially by the end of the novel, when it is clear there's no "returning" to the status quo ante — the children collectively make clear to the parents that the more urgent subjects involved capitalist exploitation of the planet, and what risks it posed for future generations. David chastises the parents at the end of the novel: "You gave up the world"; Low agrees: "You let them turn it all to shit" (193). When the parents respond, condescendingly, that they "hate to break it to [them], but we don't have that much power," Jen doesn't buy it: "Yeah. That's what they all said" (194). Instead, the parents did "exactly" what they wanted, hoping that scientists or great thinkers would figure it out for them.

This resentment turns to pure disgust when the children recognize that their parents have prevented them from nurturing any possible futures of hope. As the children struggle to survive the climate apocalypse on their own — with the help of some childless adults that act as allegories to Biblical stories of salvation (Noah, Moses, and Jesus, to name a few) — they must redefine what a utopia means in order to imagine a utopia at all. For example, when the children and parents eventually make it to the mansion on high ground that they struggle to get to during the flood, Jack, who continues to descend into disillusionment over the destruction of the Earth's plants and animals, is told they've reached the "promised land" (200). This offends him. As Jack explains, "we already *had* the promised land." Evie expresses some guilt over the environmental injustice of finding refuge in a mansion, saying that they, now are "the other half," and Jen tries to assuage her guilt by clarifying that it's "at least for now." Jack interjects that "[i]t's all for now," which demonstrates that he no longer believes that the nurturing of utopia, at least from a

human perspective, can be accomplished over the course of a time period as long as a century. This sets him apart from writers at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Bellamy, who envisioned such changes before the millennium. The children's redefinition of futurity, then, involves an embrace of posthumanist theory that also requires "letting go" of prior versions of utopia that assumed that the liberal Human subject would enjoy those imagined futures. While the "relationship between children and futurity" can be traced to an origin in the "long nineteenth century," the figure of the child today is "fitted to capture" the "emergent energies of posthumanity" (Sheldon 3, 21).

But even though *A Children's Bible* ponders various futures, it is not set in the future. It is set right now: the children long for their phones so that they can check Instagram and Snapchat, they mention parents' Tinder dates, and they reference hurricanes occurring earlier in the Atlantic hurricane season than they "ought" to. This latter attribute of "right now" — a change in severe weather patterns — was actually part of *history*, not just the present, by the time Millet wrote *A Children's Bible*. In fact, May 2021 gave the Atlantic Hurricane season its "seventh consecutive year, dating to 2015, in which a 'named' storm has formed in the Atlantic basin" before the June 1 official start of the season (Berger). Moreover, as readers follow the children as they struggle to adapt to the catastrophic effects of climate change, climate refugees in real life are uprooted by those same effects every day around the globe. With each year's hurricane season starting earlier and the number of extreme storms increasing each year, the mid-Atlantic region in which the book is set could, in real life, suffer the same fate as its fictional counterpart at any moment. Perhaps this is why, in an interview with Amanda Stern, Millet claimed that although a "decade ago, or maybe a little bit more, this book would have been called dystopian, [it] lands in the world at a time when it's actually current." As Catherine

Holmes puts it, in *A Children's Bible,* the "apocalypse is now" and is the result of "a great carelessness," in which the parents have "abdicat[ed]" their responsibility to nurture the earth and its ecosystems in a way that considers the transcorporeality and enmeshment of matter.[33] The resentment between the parents and the children in *A Children's Bible* stems not from the parents' specific contributions to the destruction of what the children consider to have been a "garden," but rather from the parents' refusal, over the course of their lifetimes, to radically resist capitalist abuse. Through this inaction, the parents enabled the "VCs" (that is, "venture capitalists," as the children call them) to become the people that "ate the planet," as David says the "yacht parents," and their ilk, did (32, 54). By linking venture capitalism with environmental destruction, the children highlight the convergence of economic and environmental justice in posthuman nurture. Neither their parents' passivity nor the actions of socioeconomic powers improve their conditions, so they must reimagine what a utopia can look like in the shadow of late capitalism.

Millet's novel offers an alternative to dystopian responses to our collective recognition that utopias, at least as imagined in the late nineteenth century, are no longer possible. In *A Children's Bible*, Millet renegotiates the meaning of "utopia" to allow for utopian futures in which the human is decentered, and in which stories about the relationship between material bodies do not rely entirely on humans as subjects. In this way, she embraces Haraway's idea of "staying with the trouble" and distinguishing "futurism" from "ongoingness," the latter of which has "continuities, discontinuities, and surprises" (*Glossary*, 81). The children discover that they must become what Haraway calls "chthonic ones," who, in the *Chthulucene*, live in a "kind of time-place for learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a

[33] See Alaimo and Morton as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 2.

damaged earth" (11). By adapting "utopia" to the new environmental conditions unforeseen by late nineteenth century writers, Millet also recalls Anna Tsing's examination of the matsutake mushroom, which thrives in anthropogenically disturbed areas, particularly as a result of deforestation. The resilience of the so-called "mushroom at the end of the world" and its continued value in the face of capitalist destruction gives Tsing a more optimistic view of survival and environmental renewal in the Capitalocene. Because it is one that relies on the decentering of human subjectivity, a posthuman ethics of nurturing the environment is necessary for "ongoingness" today (including the nurturing of other humans within that environment, since humans *are* part of the ecosystems they observe).

The children who act as *A Children's Bible*'s main characters offer several approaches to posthuman nurturing that could, if necessary, also work as a post-Human nurturing. In other words, they offer approaches to nurturing that decenter the human enough to apply in a world in which humans do not survive climate change, but that nevertheless continue to value humans as material bodies inextricably enmeshed with the environment while they are still here. Having been published during the final year of the 1980-2020 timeframe I examine in connection with 1880-1920, *A Children's Bible* demonstrates a number of things about posthuman nurturing ethics and the relationship between temporality and utopian possibility. While so many novels of the late long nineteenth century imagine futures in the decades just before and after the year 2000, as I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, writers today repeatedly "look backwards," as Bellamy put it, to the time period one century prior. Millet's novel is an example of this tendency, given her repeated use of nineteenth century symbols, as is her characters' twenty-first century conclusion that the utopias imagined in the late nineteenth century are no longer possible. Moreover, Millet's characters assume that if utopias are possible, they must be entirely

reimagined in a way that decenters the liberal Human notion of subject-object dualism. This would render their utopia unrecognizable to the socialist utopian reformers of the late nineteenth century. Finally, *A Children's Bible* demonstrates the application of posthuman nurturing ethics in an era of climate doom, offering possibilities for how to nurture optimistic futures despite humanity's inability to accomplish the utopias that *fin-de-siecle* writers imagined we would currently be enjoying.

Utopias Interrupted and Reimagined

In *Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx argues that American literatures of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are marked by the literary and political trope of the "interrupted idyll" in which a pastoral, rural America is disrupted by industrial technology. The titular "machine" in the garden that Marx uses to symbolize this utopian interruption comes from the industrialization of the nineteenth century: Henry David Thoreau describes hearing a locomotive's "shriek" ("whistle") during his time in Walden Pond, while Nathaniel Hawthorne's notes for *Sleepy Hollow* discuss experiencing euphoria in nature until a train's whistle breaks him out of that euphoria. The First Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century had a lasting impact on American literature, and Marx describes the experience of that era as the "machine's sudden entrance onto the landscape" within a single generation (343). It introduced technological possibilities that permeated the imaginations of reformers during the Second Industrial Revolution; but as we have begun to notice, the trajectory that capitalism took after the Second Industrial Revolution seems to have precluded those imagined possibilities. As Marx describes it, "the aspirations once represented by the symbol of an ideal landscape have not, and probably cannot, be embodied." In fact, Evie tells readers that she and "most" of the children were already "coming to grips with the end of the world" before the events of the novel. "The

familiar world, anyway," Evie clarifies (27). That second sentence — Evie's reinforcement of the fact that the *familiar* world was ending, even if the material world itself was not (and would not) — is particularly important when we consider the ways in which the children reinvent futures that include posthuman values that decenter humans.

In fact, one of the games the children play to cope with their boredom — and with their status as children at the end of the world — engages with object-oriented ontology. As Evie puts it, the children had respect for the house, but not for the parents or any of the objects inside it — unless the objects are plants, that is. For the children, the Great House itself seems to be an extension of the environment around it ("our castle and our keep"), but it's what's currently inside the house that they find objectionable. So, unsatisfied with its "furnishings," they "opt[] to destroy" them. Whoever has the most "points" at the end of the week gets to choose a target: "[w]hat object would it be?" (11). One option is a "china statuette of a rosy-cheeked boy in knee breeches, holding a basket of apples and smiling"; another choice is "a pink and green sampler embroidered with a dandelion" and a trite motivational quote; another option is a "plump duck decoy with a puffed-out chest and creepy blank eyes" (11). But, Evie emphasizes, "the house itself, though, we'd never have harmed," and even the pyromaniac Rafe "limit[s] his arson" to places that will keep the house out of harm's reach. The Great House and the treehouses are the only human-constructed entities that Evie tells us the children value and protect, which suggests that, to the children, they represent the concept of home more than they represent technology or human ingenuity. By extension, the children's emphasis on their respect for the natural world, the Great House, and the treehouse — but disregard of any objects they associate with threatening the sanctity of the natural environment — underscores, conversely, the disrespect they consider their parents and the generations before them, to have shown for the Earth. The

parents focused more on the objects on earth (in the materialist, not new materialist, sense) than they did about the earth itself. The children are the opposite: they respect the home, but not necessarily the things inside it. The "Great House" seems to function as a symbol for the Earth, and the children's respect for the former is a response to what they wish they'd seen generations before them show for the latter.

The parents believe in the socialist utopias offered by writers during the late nineteenth century, but they consider them to have been rendered impossible by late capitalism. So, the parents give up on nurturing utopian futures because they can no longer envision them within the technological and economic frameworks of the late nineteenth century. In this way, late capitalism itself becomes a hyperobject, as Timothy Morton describes it, that acts as a new "machine in the garden," transforming the consciousness of the twentieth century the way that the First Industrial Revolution had transformed the consciousness of the nineteenth century by the time the Second Industrial Revolution occurred. In fact, Morton includes climate change itself as an example of a hyperobject, which becomes not just an assemblage of objects but rather an "entity of vast temporal and spatial dimensions" (2). As the children prepare for the storm as it comes in, "some fathers beside the fireplace talking in stoned voices about utopia" while "[t]ime ran together in the dark" (66-67). By this point in the novel, it has already been established that the parents do not believe in *anything*, so their talk of a socialist utopia here has the presumption that utopia is no longer possible. In fact, one of the stoned fathers says that "[i]t would have saved us." Another father agrees, saying that a "worker's paradise" would have saved them if "anything could," while another father points out that "[c]apitalism had been the nail in the coffin" (67).

If the capitalism that the parents refer to (which is more precisely called late capitalism, a precision underscored by the focus on the yacht parents' status as "VCs") was the nail in the coffin, then the socialist utopian impulses of the late nineteenth century represented the last chance to accomplish such a goal. The fathers, notably, do not say that a "worker's paradise" *could* save them. Rather, it is no longer possible, so it *cannot* save them. Perhaps more devastating, the parents use a more definitive version of the past conditional (*would have*), implying that it was not only possible (*could have*), but that it was certain to have happened ("would") if people had acted differently after the turn of the previous century. Of course, this is a way for the parents to shift blame away from their own complicity; nevertheless, it underscores the parents' belief in a socialist utopia as a possibility dependent on temporality.

Unlike the parents, the children can (and arguably must) envision the future; but they cannot envision a future that includes them as liberal-Cartesian human subjects. In fact, the "story of the future" that Evie tells Jack as a bedtime story is the one about "the polar bears and the penguins" — "and us" (43). Evie talks early in the novel about the way that Caesar's "dying breath was, statistically speaking, in every breath we took" — the "same with Lincoln. Or our grandparents" (36). This comforts her because it allows her to be here "forever," "free" and "part of the timeless" in which the "sky and the ocean would also be" her. When Evie muses about "[m]olecules exchanging and mingling, on and on" and about "[p]articles that had once been others and now moved through us," we get our first glimpses of Evie's consciousness of something close to what Stacy Alaimo has called transcorporeality. Expanding on Karen Barad's concepts of "intra-actions" and entanglements," Alaimo emphasizes that because "trans" means "movement across," the movement across bodies in "transcorporeality" (which includes humans, animals, ecosystems, chemicals, etc.) provides a "mobile space" that requires us to take ethical

and political positions on environmental justice and environmental health. She refers to this as a "posthuman environmental ethics," which, for Evie and the other children, requires a posthuman nurturing ethics.

But this version of an object-oriented futurity also brings her sadness because the molecules that her body will leave behind in the material world "wouldn't remember" Jack, who is the only person she truly cares for. At this point, Evie struggles with Cartesian mind-body dualism because she does not assume that her own consciousness will exist even though the matter that makes up her body will. Here, she seems to engage implicitly with Gilbert Ryle's critique of Cartesian mind-body-dualism, in which, "with deliberate abusiveness," Ryle labels such dualism the "ghost in the machine," a concept that Arthur Koestler explains through the material evolution of the human brain.[34] Explicit allusions to the "ghost in the machine" appear only in the final paragraphs of the novel, but it's important to note how early the concept surfaces in the children's responses to the material world. Moreover, Evie's sadness and Jack's anxiety reflect Claire Colebrook's "experiment" with human extinction in *Death of the Posthuman*. Colebrook writes that just "at the moment of its own loss, the human animal becomes aware of what makes it human — meaning, empathy, art, morality — but can only recognize those capacities that distinguish humanity at the moment that they are threatened with extinction." She calls for us to re-think what it means to "read" the world: we should, instead, explore "[w]hat happens if one thinks of the vision of no one, of the human world without humans that is still there to be seen" (28). Colebrooke's ideas help us understand why, by the end

[34] Incidentally, Ryle uses the term "assemblage" when discussing his chapter entitled "Descartes' Myth." When preparing his readers to reject the "dogma of the Ghost in the Machine" that he considered too prevalent among contemporary philosophers, he says of Cartesian mind-body dualism that he "hopes to prove that it is entirely false, and false not in detail but in principle. It is not merely an assemblage of particular mistakes. It is one big mistake and a mistake of a special kind." While the term "assemblage" here is distinct from the ways "assemblage" is used in today's posthuman theoretical discourse, its use decades prior in the context of challenging Cartesian dualism is worth noting.

of the novel, Evie's sadness and Jack's anxieties finally become forms of hope: the "comets and the stars will be our eyes," Evie reassures Jack, as will the clouds, the moon, the dirt, the rocks, the water, and the wind. "We call that hope, you see," Evie declares, in the final sentence of the novel.

Jack does not embrace this view of a post-Human posthumanism as quickly as Evie does, although his views of nurturing are, throughout the novel, decidedly posthuman. Throughout the novel, he is preoccupied with science so intensely that he reads an illustrated Bible given to him by the "peasant mother" (so called because her attire reminds Evie of a Medieval painting of a peasant woman) through the lens of empirical science. When he is questioned about his obsession with *The Children's Bible*, he says that the Old and New Testaments were merely "codes" with "symbols" to be interpreted. "God's a code word," he claims, and even though people say "God" in the Bible, what they mean is "nature" (87). Later, he begins to decode the rest of the Christian Trinity: "Jesus" is code for "science" (the process of "knowing stuff," as he puts it), while the "Holy Ghost" represents the process of "making stuff" (142). But he remains unsure how to "decode" the Holy Ghost's function of "making stuff" the way he was able to determine that "God = Nature" and "Jesus = Science" (142). Science and religion become almost indistinguishable when he says that "for science to save us … we have to believe in it. And the same with Jesus. If you believe in Jesus, he can save you." Moreover, as "Jesus is a branch of God," so "[s]cience comes from nature" and is "a branch of it." If people believe that science is true, then they "can act" and they'll "be saved" (143). "Heaven's part of the code," he also asserts: like the earth, the climate, and the animals, all it means is "a good place for us all to live." To "prove" his decoding," Jack points out that the things Jesus is known for in the Bible are things science allows us to do: science allows us to heal the sick, make blind people see,

"turn[] hardly any food into lots" (as the children had to do with grain in order to survive their displacement), and walk on water (by freezing ice, building bridges, or creating hovercrafts).[35] But he also learns from his Children's Bible that, as he tells it, "after they left that beautiful garden, they got in a really big flood" (44). In other words, the human species as represented by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden takes paradise for granted, so the human species as represented by Noah and his family experience a storm of judgement. Jack thus takes the symbol of Noah to mean, through code, that humans are responsible (and response-*able*, as Haraway would add) to nonhuman creatures who suffer from the consequences of human behaviors.

Jack does not realize until Evie tells him that he has already implicitly decoded the one outstanding Biblical symbol in his notebook's codex (the Holy Ghost). And the reason he had not yet cracked the code is that he had been assuming science held primacy over art, which gave him an analytical blind spot. When Evie helps him decode "making stuff," readers get their first explicit allusion to the "ghost in the machine," and, along with that, one final rejection of Cartesian dualism. Jack's anxiety over posthuman futures reaches a boiling point when he demands that Evie tell him what "happens after the end" — "after the chaos time," which wasn't included in the Bible he was given, since *Revelations* was apparently too scary for children. This, despite that fact that, as Jack puts it, "*all* books should have a real ending" (223). Evie tells Jack that after the end, the world will involve "slowness," "new kinds of animals" evolving, and "creatures com[ing] and liv[ing] here, like we did." Returning to her use, albeit unwittingly, of transcorporeality, intra-activity, and enmeshment, Evie says that "all the old beautiful things will still be in the air" as molecules, "[i]nvisible but there…[a]n expectation that sort of hovers. Even

[35] Notice that all of these things are nurturing acts, with the exception of walking on water. But in Jack's conception, building bridges is an example of walking on water, which I view as a nurturing act because it establishes and facilitates connections where separations previously existed. Humans are not the only species that builds bridges, and they are certainly not the only species that use them.

when we're all gone" (223). Jack's reaction to Evie's view of material continuity recalls Colebrook's description of humans-near-extinction. Colebrook says that humans currently live in an "era or epoch that has begun to sense, if not have a sense of, a world without bodies" (28). Jack becomes "agitated" over the notion that "we won't be there to see" the creatures Evie mentions, which Colebrook describes as the assumption "that reading and readability should take syntactical forms" for humans to experience and make sense of. Evie manages to assuage his concerns by using rhetoric that is similar to Colebrook's theory of post-extinction meaning-making and Serenella Iovino's theory of storied matter to emphasize that material bodies that exist after us "will be our eyes" even if they are not human bodies.

Although at first Jack rejects this idea because it's "not science," Evie reminds him that it is art, and "it still comes from what they used to call God," which he had already written down in his notebook when he was decoding the Bible (224). "[Y]ou solved it," Evie says to Jack: "Jesus was science. Knowing stuff...And the Holy Ghost was all the things that people make. You remember? Your diagram said *making stuff*." She concludes that "art is the Holy Ghost. Maybe art is the ghost in the machine." So, both science and art come from nature in Jack's decoding, just as both Jesus and the Holy Ghost come from God in his illustrated Bible. This marks the only moment in the novel that Jack is content with a future that does not involve going "back to the garden" or building utopias imagined by generations before him. "Art is the ghost," Jack ultimately agrees, even if that art is "viewed or "read" by nonhuman matter. Here, Jack plays out Cary Wolfe's call for posthumanists to "refuse[] to locate meaning in the realm of either the human or, for that matter, the biological," but he continues to value the meanings that humans create while they exist on the planet (xxvi). Even though the phrase "ghost in the machine" was

originally used by Riley and Koestler to critique problems associated with Cartesian mind-body dualism, *A Children's Bible* offers the phrase as the *resolution* to those problems.

Generational Stewardship in a Posthuman Framework

Wolfe also explains that the *posthuman* is not "after the human" (which would be *post-human*) but instead "after humanism," or more precisely, a "decentering of the human." This means that "posthuman*ist*" comes both "before and after humanism" in a realization that humanism was a "historical moment" (Wolfe xv). But in *A Children's Bible,* futurity must be both posthuman and post-human because decentering humans (as a species) becomes the only way that the children can reconcile the present realities faced by humans (as fellow human objects). These harsh realities are the scientific inevitabilities that their parents ignored and they came about due to the failures, as the children see it, of several generations before theirs (not just their parents') to enact the futures imagined at the end of the previous century. The parents, it should be noted, are primarily Millennials and Generation Xers (with at least one Baby Boomer in the mix), while the children are mostly Generation Z (including Evie); two (Jack and Shel) are arguably from the newest generation tentatively called Alpha. From the Lost Generation through the Millennial Generation, the children feel betrayed by the generations that came after the Second Industrial Revolution. In a posthuman nurturing ethics, everyone is a parent in some way, even if they do not have children, because they are a member of a generation that starts out as a metaphorical child of the one(s) before and ends up a parent of the one(s) after.

We know that the children locate the late nineteenth century as the temporal "fork in the road," so to speak, toward utopia because, as I mentioned earlier, Evie frequently reaches for this time period when trying to make sense of her current experience at the "end of the world," as she describes the here and now (27). In fact, aside from Biblical allusions, the nineteenth century is

Evie's go-to time period for narrative imagery, with the exception of one use of the medieval period, a painting which, as I mentioned earlier, lent the "peasant mother" her nickname. This summons Wolfe's reminder to consider posthumanism to be both before *and* after humanism, which would include the medieval period and, presumably, today, when the "peasant mother" gives Jack the illustrated children's Bible. For that matter, it would also include the periods of the Old and New Testaments. So, while Jack develops a posthuman nurturing ethics in response to a code written *before* humanism, gifted to him by a woman framed through imagery from *before* humanism, Evie develops a posthuman nurturing ethics in response to two periods *after* humanism that, in conversation with each other, represent punctured utopian dreams. The late nineteenth century helps Evie illustrate her sense of disillusionment and helps her explain why the children must abandon the Cartesian "Human" in their visions of futurity.

An example of multiple nineteenth century symbols intersecting at once occurs when Evie becomes captivated by a painting of a "humble" bear in the woods in the Great House (65). Time begins to "r[u]n together in the dark," a flood engulfs the Great House, and the fathers lament capitalism's destruction of nineteenth century reformers' utopian dreams (65). In prior summers, when Evie had seen this painting, she had "assumed he was a bear of the past" and that "robber barons" of the nineteenth century "might have shot him and used him for a rug." But now, in the midst of a climatic apocalypse, she "could see him as a bear of the future, when men had disappeared from the hills and fields, their old paths overgrown" (67-8). Her tone here is optimistic, however, because this restores the environment to one in which the bear thrives in areas where plants are undisturbed. In Evie's utopia, which she intends to nurture into futurity if she can, "the bears and wolves were masters again" (68). In the sentence following Evie's first mention that the robber barons built the Great House, she calls the parents who rent that house

each year “those so-called figures of authority” (4). By likening the parents to the robber barons (by referring to them alongside each other), she identifies the worst capitalist impulses of the late nineteenth century — those that Bellamy, Gilman, and Jones & Merchant had warned against — with the eventual result of those impulses. In other words, the “so-called figures of authority” over the globe’s natural resources were a threat to the bear at the time of the robber barons and a threat to Evie’s generation during the “end of the world,” as she describes the here and now (27). By making the bears and wolves “masters again,” Evie also implicitly asserts that the parents will need to relinquish control not just of the children, but *to* the children, with the former generation now deferring to the latter’s visions of futurity.

Other examples of Evie’s temporal negotiations with the parents occur when the parents are physically distant from the children. After the children “liberate” their phones from the safe (and battery packs, of course), they leave the Great House, hoping to make it to a mansion on high ground owned by one of the children’s family members. The parents, who stayed behind, become stuck at the Great House, quarantined due to a virus originating from increased insect populations that resulted from the numerous storms. Although storm-related damage prevents the children from reaching the mansion, a Moses figure named Burl leads them in a van across water barriers to a farm house with a vegetable garden, a grain silo, and a barn. When Evie accidentally ingests a toxic mold that had grown on some of the grain in the silo, the fungus gives her hallucinations in which the boundaries between time and space become blurred, as do the boundaries between generations. She looks out into the distance and sees some other teenagers who have returned with supplies from the Great House:

> Behind them, hazy, I thought I could see the absent parents when I squinted. The night blurred. Or maybe just the shapes of them, their effigies. Or no, it wasn't them, I realized--was it?
>
> It was them and not them, maybe the ones they'd never been. I could almost see [them] standing in the garden,...feet planted between the rows. They stood without moving, their faces glowing with some shine a long time gone. A time before I lived. Their arms hung at their sides…
>
> They'd been carried along on their hopes, held up by the chance of a windfall. But instead of a windfall there was only time passing. And all they ever were was themselves… What people wanted to be, but never could, traveled along beside them. Company. (139-40)

Evie conflates her parents, currently in quarantine far away, with foliage "planted" in the garden that, at this point in the novel, represents the children's best hope for survival, particularly after the contamination of the silo's grain supply. But the parents are not actually there to help her, Jack, or the other children survive the "end of the world" because, as David explains later, the parents had been "living in a fantasy" (178). That fantasy had involved hanging their hopes on futures that required a real-life *deus ex machina*, waiting passively for the action of external forces. After all, a "windfall" is by definition not expected, and "chance" implies possibility, but not necessarily effort. A *deus ex machina*, which literally means "god out of a machine," brings us back to the "ghost in the machine" reference, which Jack (with an assist from Evie) has identified as the Holy Ghost. And a reference to "machine" here reinforces the parents' problematic reliance on techno-optimism to resign from their responsibilities to the earth.

A *deus ex machina* saves the children from violent survivalists who attack the farm house in which they find harbor after the flood (182), and this highlights the parents' own "denial of reality" despite their belief in climate science (27). The owner of the farm house, an unambiguous symbol for an absent but ever-watching God, literally descends from the sky in a helicopter with a SWAT team to save the children (here, she is a god from a literal machine). "The owner" also saves the handful of childless adults who have been taking care of the children since they journeyed away from the flood at the Great House. But the children's fierce fight for the survival of humans, animals, and plants before being "saved," juxtaposed against the lackadaisical attitude of the parents during the same crises, illustrates that the children did not merely leave their fates to a "god from a machine." They had skin in the game. And the children may not have needed the *deus ex machina*: at the very moment that the owner descends in her helicopter, the children have already begun unfolding a plan devised by Terry — against the advice of the parents — that might have saved them had the helicopter never arrived (176-9). The parents, on the other hand, had no "Plan B" other than the fact that they had the "law" on their side, which again shifts responsibility to others.

As Sternberg writes, "the job of envisioning a perfect future has shifted" since the late nineteenth century "from novelists, poets, and filmmakers to a parade of endlessly optimistic gilded-age tech evangelists." The parents have done something similar: they *do* believe in climate science, but they cling to historians' reminders that "there'd been dark ages before" and that if people just waited it out, enlightenment would happen again, along with a "wide array of Apple devices" (27). Politicians similarly claimed that "human ingenuity" had gotten us into the mess and could get us out of it. Because the parents merely allowed time to "pass" but "all they ever were was themselves," they abdicated their responsibility to fight the abuses of late

capitalism, even with the odds stacked against them. As Evie puts it toward the end of the novel, "we reviled them and all they'd failed to stand up for and against" even though "we'd come to rely on their consistency" (221).

While the children's disillusionment stems from the parents' inaction, the parents' inaction stems from their own disillusionment. Evie's description of her parents in the aforementioned garden hallucination reinforces the parents' defeatism regarding the impact of socioeconomic forces on conditions of the future. The issues that the parents hoped would solve themselves (a *techie ex machina*?) were of far greater urgency to the children, who, as the author puts it, "are understandably very angry and disgusted by the failure of political will and social will and energy to have taken more rational action" (qtd in Kellogg). "The future," Millet goes on to say, "has not been guarded, has not been kept safe by those who are in charge." The parents show up as plants in a garden, fully rooted ("feet planted") with their "faces glowing" with "shine" from a "time before [Evie] lived." Such an image, particularly if the parents are "effigies," as Evie posits, represents the parents going "back to the garden" transcorporeally, even if not spiritually or literally, as Jack calls for in response to his climate anxiety. By leaving the children in this way, the "absent parents" can only offer the versions of themselves that "they'd never been." What the parents "wanted to be" could never be if they left it entirely to the "chance of a windfall," so the parents' "[c]ompany" traveling "along beside them" is the version of Generation X and Millennials who actually *had* fiercely resisted the capitalist environmental exploitation.

As Robinson writes in "Remarks on Utopia in the Age of Climate Change," utopia is "no longer a nice idea, but rather a survival necessity." Instead of a "minor literary problem," utopia is a "survival strategy" of a posthuman world in which we are presented with an either/or: "a

moment of utopia or catastrophe" — "there is no middle ground [and] mediocrity will not succeed" (10). By the end of the novel, when the children reunite with their parents and finally reach the mansion, the parents slowly "regress[]" before "disappearing in plain sight" (220). Because the parents chose the "mediocrity" of a "middle ground" where they believed scientists' warnings but expected others to solve the problem, the parents are precluded from a utopia of a sustainable future (one with or without humans). As Robinson reminds readers, we can always imagine a future utopia, but it's actually *history* that we can't seem to imagine: that is, the future history, or how we get to utopia and bridge what he calls "the Great Trench." Burl, an adult who is not a parent, but is instead both childless and working-class (and thus free from the environmental guilt of upper-middle-class people who continue repronormative family-making) is the person who helps the children cross their own "trench," acting out Moses's parting of the Red Sea.

Posthuman Nurturing Ethics During the End of the World

Jack and Shel, Jack's friend and the only other child his age, are "cuspers" between Generation Z and Generation Alpha, and their status as "cuspers" holds implications for how readers interpret the two youngest children's nurturing ethics. For example, their attitudes toward the nonhuman world take the act of decentering humankind one step further than their older siblings are willing to go. Despite not respecting the parents, the children as a group "respect[] the lake and stream and most of all the ocean," and they even respect the "clouds and the earth," despite the fact that inside "hidden burrows and sharp grass a swarm of wasps might rise, an infestation of stinging ants, or suddenly blueberries" (12). But the children also mock Jack and Shel for their protection of plants and animals, thinking that the younger boys take this respect too far. At the beach, when the children draw straws from dune grass on who will have to go on a

supply run to the Great House, they "didn't pull [the grass] out" because the younger boys "warned us not to hurt the plants," so they instead snip it "neatly with a pen-knife" (35). Here, Jack acts in line with Matthew Hall's call for an ethics that "recogni[zes]...plants as autonomous, perceptive, intelligent beings" which must "filter" into human dealings with the plant world. Jack knows that, as Michael Marder puts it, humans cannot meet the plants "as such," but he still attempts to "brush upon the edges of their being...to grow past the fictitious shells of *our* identity and *our* existential ontology." Evie treats Jack differently than any of the older children treat their younger siblings. She supports Jack's posthuman values, even when they are inconvenient to her; but even she becomes annoyed when she finds out that, during the stormy flood, Jack and Shel have brought a beehive inside, which began swarming in the basement (61). In response to Evie's exasperation — "you brought a *beehive* in?" — Jack explains, with earnest matter-of-factness, that "one raindrop can *kill* a bee" (61). Thus, throughout the story, Jack and Shel's distinct form of posthuman nurturing sets them apart from the other children, which often causes conflicts that drive the plot forward. In fact, Jack and Shel's difference in age from the other children illustrates a possible spectrum of posthuman nurturing ethics, with object-oriented ontology being the direction, but not necessarily the destination, that future generations might feel compelled to take us.

While Evie provides readers with examples of how we might approach caring for other humans (as fellow material objects) in a posthuman nurturing ethics, Jack demonstrates these ethics in the care for plants, animals, and the environment. Not only does Evie fill in the role of Jack's nurturer in the absence of their parents' parenting, it is Evie's noncontrolling, sympathetic relationship with Jack that allows him to take bold action inspired by his illustrated Bible to nurture the nonhuman environment. Instead of controlling Jack directly, asserting ownership

over him and dictating specific actions from him, Evie creates environments in which Jack can thrive and grow as safely as possible. In this way, Evie, like the gardeners of Bellamy's "rosebush of humanity," ensures that Jack lives in the most favorable conditions for his own growth (taking care), while still protecting him from danger (giving care).

As posthumanism decenters the human, posthuman nurture decenters the nurturer; this decentering shifts the focus in the agential relationship to the nurtured. In *A Children's Bible*, this means that the nurturing relationship between Evie and Jack focuses not just on Jack's needs, but also Jack's agency. In turn, this allows Jack to offer a similar form of nurture to plants and animals that he would otherwise not be able to offer. Control over other objects — human or nonhuman — is about the *nurturer*, not the nurtured: the power dynamic involved here benefits the nurturer, and even if it occasionally benefits the nurtured, those benefits are coincidences inside a dynamic formed by and for the nurturer's perspective. Evie's approach to nurturing Jack does not involve ownership of Jack (as we see from their parents) or demonstrations of superiority over Jack (as we see with their peers' older-younger sibling dynamics). For example, the only times Evie uses possessive language with Jack is to express an appreciation for things he does on his own. Evie tells him the frightening "story of the future" — the one about the polar bears, penguins, "and us" that his parents and teachers were too afraid to tell him — and "later," Jack "wipe[s] his eyes and square[s] his thin little shoulders" (43). "*My* Jack was a brave boy," she tells the readers, in response to his reaction to the story of their doom (emphasis added). Later, during the children's refuge in a barn, as they overcome the trauma of Sukey's mother dying after giving birth to Sukey's baby sister, Jack "passe[s] out" quickly after Evie reads to him. Evie sits beside him "listening to him breathe," and tells the reader, "*[m]y* boy was even more exhausted than I was" (118, emphasis added). She continues to marvel at her brother's

ability to overcome situations that his parents and teachers never prepared him for because they did not trust him with the truth. Evie's view of parenting ("Children grow up. Children leave.") suggests that she considers possessive control over the nurtured to be disadvantageous to their ability to thrive. While she uses possessive language regarding the nurtured in both of these examples, the context implies that Evie is impressed with Jack's own intrinsic traits and is not trying to take credit for or dictate change to those traits.

The only other example of Evie using a possessive pronoun with Jack involves a moment when Jack illustrates for readers the difficulties involved in trying to nurture while keeping one's focus on the agency of the nurtured. What brings the children outside the crumbling Great House into the "Ark" of treehouses populated by a collection of various animals in cages is Jack and Shel's refusal to leave their responsibility and response-ability to the animals. They refuse to leave the Ark without the animals because, as they put it, the "animals need protection" (88). The effects of the storm's "toxic soup," which sent towns full of "oil," "sewage," dead "bodies" of all species, "pesticides," "fertilizers[,] and drain cleaner" meant that animals left in the storm were unlikely to survive (72). Jack and Shel bring an owl into Burl's van, headed toward the mansion, which Evie discovers has a broken wing dressed with gauze by the two boys. Unlike the other animals, Evie does not know how they will be able to feed this one (which reminds readers that nurture for one entity often involves death of others) and she "want[s] to believe" the owl "forg[ives]" her for being unable to feed him during the drive (78). Jack, for that matter, *does* believe that his nurturing protection has saved the owl. At the barn, Jack and Shel come to share the news that after taking the bandage off, "[h]e flies!" (103). "Fast healing" is what Evie first thinks; but then, what strikes her next is that "maybe the bandage had actually been the culprit" (103). They were, after all, just "little kids" and not veterinarians. It is possible, then, that in this

case, his own needs as a nurturer — to alleviate his environmental anxieties by protecting animals that are clearly in danger — became the focus of his nurture. But Evie won't share this more likely interpretation with Jack: "I didn't say it. Of course not. Jack was *my* boy" (103, emphasis added). Again, in our final example of Evie's use of possessive pronouns with Jack, the example actually shows a deep respect for Jack's empathy, which, despite being incorrectly deployed in the case of the owl's wing, Evie wants Jack to embrace and feel comfortable improving over time. While the other older siblings would have jumped on the chance to ridicule their younger siblings for this, Evie responds, "that's amazing!" After all, the owl by this point is both fed and flying, and aside from the owl, Jack has successfully saved many others animals' lives. Nevertheless, this moment illustrates some of the problems inherent in applying agential realism to the act of nurturing: often, we must actively protect the nurtured, and there *will be* problems when trying to identify when the focus has shifted from the nurtured to the nurturer.

Evie makes the right decision letting this lesson in nurturing ethics go unspoken, because it is clear throughout the novel that Jack's nurturing of animals and plants comes without personal benefit. And at least he tried: indeed, it is the parents' lack of *trying* to protect the planet from the effects of late capitalism that the children find most harmful. Moreover, Jack does not view the animals as pets because he is happy for them to be free and separated from him as long as he can be sure of their well-being. Evie and the other children had tried unsuccessfully to convince the boys to release the animals into the woods near the farm house once the effects of the storms were less acute. One of the "angels" (four Trail Angels encountered by the children and Burl when they get to the barn) is finally able to convince the boys to release them. When Evie asks how he was able to convince them, he implies that it was easy: "I just showed them the animals were suffering" (123). Unaware that Evie was already informed about the animals'

release, Jack comes to Evie, "solemn," telling her that because the "storm passed" and "there's no plague here," their duty to the animals was done and they could be "free" (124). Jack is willing to give up his life for the animals. He almost sacrifices himself to save a goat from the gunfire of the men who invade the barn, which Evie knew would happen the moment she found out that the goats were threatened. Looking "back at the fallen goat," Evie sees what she "feared most": Jack running from his hiding spot, dropping "to his knees beside the goat," "crying over" her as she took her dying breaths. Again, Evie restrains, even once she manages to get him back to safety: "I never raised my voice to Jack, but that time I came close" (155). When another goat's life is threatened while attempting to appease the hungry invaders, Jack reaches his empathic limit, insisting that it's "not [the goats'] *fault*," that the children (or perhaps people in general) must "*save* them," not "sacrifice them," and that if any object must be sacrificed, he'd rather sacrifice himself" (162). Instead of yelling at Jack or attempting to suggest that his views regarding the value of his life over that of (scape)goats is unreasonable, Evie simply reasons that the "soldiers don't want to...eat little boys" and would instead prefer to eat goats.

Jack's care for nonhuman entities complement's Evie's care for Jack, and both of their nurturing ethics reflect Millet's view of environmentalism. Explaining to Stern why she doesn't call her novel an environmental novel, Millet says that

> I've just never liked the word environment or environmental. It sounds so wonky and it's so, it's so bloodless, you know. Really, we're talking about life support…And even that is sort of clinical sounding, isn't it? Like a series of machines hooked up to, to a morbid patient or something like that. But really, we're talking about that which sustains our lives and, and upon which we're entirely dependent. And that's what we mean when we talk about the environment, really. And so, still, I don't really like the ring of

> *environmental fiction*. Like I think of myself as writing general literary fiction. And I think that these are general matters. These subjects are general, of general interest, you know.

When Evie takes Jack away from the other kids at the beach so that he can look for periwinkles, he ends up "by a tide pool for hours, searching for fish and other small creatures" (36). Although readers might initially assume that Jack is looking for creatures with the intention to catch them for fun, Evie tells readers that Jack "carefully replaced each rock he moved, worried that he might hurt a crab" (36). Later in the novel, Jack actually *would* catch fish — and many other animals — to offer them a form of life support when he takes on his Noah role during the floods. This flips the role from the one Millet identifies, in which the environment offers life support to humans. "Without the biodiversity that we have now," Millet says to Stern, "that we co-evolved with over deep time, we really don't have life support — trees and plants and algae make the atmosphere, and we need them." If our life support is threatened, it needs life support of its own, which is a fact Jack senses and that Evie allows him to figure out how to respond to.

Plants' status as life support contributes to why the children are, collectively, so protective of plants throughout the novel. One of the most beloved parts of the Great House was an "ancient willow that shaded the house," which would presumably have been there before the nineteenth century robber barons built the "palatial" retreat (9). When the storm comes (Low insinuates that storms are the only kind of weather left nowadays when he asks "what other kind of weather *is* there?" in response to Dee's question about what kind of weather is on its way), the ancient willow hits its limit. In fact, the ancient willow's demise is part of what brings about the destruction of the Great House: "a branch crashed through the attic window and kept on going," knocking out the power and leaving a "gaping hole" through which "rain slanted" (61). While

the parents “were milling” in response to the commotion, one of the children “crie[s]” out that “It’s the big willow!” (62). Since Evie is our narrator, we would have known if the voice was hers or Jack’s, which means that readers can assume all the children value the willow so much that their emotional reaction to its collapse is *more concerning* to them than the fact that their only remaining protection from the flood — the roof of the Great House — has been breached.

The children have emotional responses to the fate of plants throughout the novel, even the ones who don’t go as far as Jack and Shel in decentering the human from their ontologies. Not long after the children have been taking refuge in the “Ark” of treehouses in which Jack is collecting animals for protection, they find that even these trees cannot save them forever. This, despite the fact that this “treehouse grove” (51), an “elaborate network of well-built structures high up in the forest canopy” with “solid” structures connected by “bridges” that made a “village in the sky” (12), had been there for generations. In fact, when Evie looks at the initials carved into the treehouse plankings, she imagines that they are also connected to the late nineteenth century: “[m]aybe the offspring of the robber barons themselves have carved them — the scions of the emperors of timber or steel or rail, long since ruined into baggy triple-chinned matrons of the Upper East Side” (12). So, imagine the devastation involved when Evie wakes from a dream, thinking “the forest was groaning,” and discovers that this night is “the night the trees fell” (78). They collapsed “one after another, dominoes” until they were a “blurred pile on the ground” (79). Unable to tell the difference between the “true lake” that existed before the storm and the “poison lake” that exists in most areas around them, they take temporary solace in the fact that their own trees, “firmly anchored by the village in the canopy--older and on higher ground” still “stood strong” (79). These same trees provide a source of stability for the children when nothing else does because, at the edge of the woods, Jack and Shel tie their canoes to one of those trees

while wearing life jackets over beekeeping suits, struggling to transport a beehive from the forest to safer ground until the storm subsides (68-9). And one of the only moments that we see pure anger from Evie is when the soldiers who invade the farm house "messily" run their truck through the vegetable garden, right over the best tomato plants" (149). "When I saw that, my face felt hot," she says, and it doesn't seem from the context of this quote that Evie's main source of anger is the fact that the garden is a possible source of future food. Rather, her anger stems from the clear disregard for the plants they have been tending with care and respect at a time when plants throughout their known world (the mid-Atlantic region) are threatened by poisonous storms.

Sukey's care for her newborn sister, to whom she becomes the primary caregiver, represents the first time *after* the "end of the world" for someone to put posthuman nurturing ethics into practice. Unfortunately however, it also involves what would surely constitute post-traumatic stress, which complicates how we can view Sukey's actions when her baby sister is born. Sukey's pregnant mother comes alone (without the other parents) to the farm house where Burl has guided the children. She dies giving birth in the barn, and in the trauma of the loss, Sukey immediately takes up the care for her newborn baby sister. The entire night, Sukey "sat beside her dead mother...holding the baby," "nodding mechanically" (114). At the same time Sukey is processing the trauma of her mother's death, she is also instinctively nurturing her sister and becoming aware of a looming threat to their material closeness. Although Sukey had previously been known as an unlikely candidate to want to nurture a baby, she becomes unable to allow any separation between herself and her newborn sister and, now, she "wouldn't put her down" no matter what people did to try to get her to rest (116). And because Evie makes it clear that Sukey "didn't cry again" after the makeshift funeral for her mother, implying that it was the

moment Sukey found closure for that loss, we can assume that much of her attachment to the baby wasn't entirely in response to the loss of her mother (whom, it should be noted, she did not respect prior to this scene). This intersects posthuman nurturing with issues of adoption ethics, such as the primal wound, family reunification, and kinship parenting, because, as Evie points out, Sukey's mother "wanted to care for her infant. And now she never would" (114).[36] Reinforcing for readers the issue of infant separation from mother, the children must decide "what to do with the mother's body" at the same time Sukey begins to show anxiety that her sister will be separated from her.

Sukey's premonition had been right, because once the parents are reunited with the children, they attempt to take the baby out of her care. At first, they are content with "baby-petting" while Sukey holds her sister. But later, after Sukey has been successfully taking care of her sister for weeks, Sukey tells the children that the parents "tried to confiscate her on the way" to the mansion. Despite the fact that the parents had shown no desire to nurture children throughout the novel, "they said they had to take care of her. That I'm too young for the responsibility" (203). But she knows that she *does* have the response-*ability*. Her response — "no fucking way" — channels the sentiments of many people involved in kinship care (the use of the word *kinship* here to be specific to adoption and foster care law). Although data shows that children in kinship care experience fewer mental and physical health problems, less disruption, and "better well-being" (Winokur et al), former foster youth frequently cite the system's unwillingness to prefer kinship placement as detrimental to their mental health as adults. Moreover, Sukey seems to be aware of the importance of genetic mirroring, despite what Sayers Rudy calls the "'postbiogenetic' normativity of progressive families and enlightened societies re-

[36] See Nancy Newton Verrier's *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child*, which is a text central to rhetoric among adoptees, former foster youth, and first parents about the life-long impact of separation trauma.

inscrib[ing] and reinforc[ing] adoptee subjectivities of anxious belonging." Posthuman nurturing ethics may decenter the human, but it still recognizes the genetic bonds between humans and our responsibility to minimize the trauma of separating them. Reinforcing this interpretation of separation anxiety, the parents, who have spent the entire novel separated from their children seemingly unconcerned, suddenly "didn't want to risk a separation" in the end, requiring the children to travel in the same cars. In this example of the science fiction trope in which parents must die in order for the children to take over, Sukey steps in upon her mother's tragic death, and fights to remain the primary caregiver to ensure that the baby will continue to have connections with biogenetic kin in addition to postbiogenetic kin.

Repronormativity at the End of the World

Much of *A Children's Bible* challenges repronormativity. The children seem only to trust adults who have not had children. They immediately trust Burl, for example, which makes sense because they were aware he was childless when they first met him. The "peasant mother," who is the only one of the parents who ever showed any concern for the children, who is set apart from the other parents, and whom the children slowly begin to trust, turns out to be childless. The four Trail Angels who arrive at the barn when Sukey's mother dies giving birth are all childless, and the children respect them enough to allow them to teach them subjects in a makeshift version of a school. As Evie puts it, "We liked the angels. They hadn't brought us into the world — they hadn't brought anyone into it — and in that fact we felt a bond. In that fact we were equals" (147). Clearly, the children consider having children during late capitalism to be an act of questionable morality. Millet would agree with Haraway's warning that a policy of "mak[ing] kin, not babies" should not be coercive (which would not only backfire, and which would also be eugenic not to mention ecofascist), but rather should become a new "cultural expectation" that

replaces traditional reproductive expectations of pro-natalism associated with nationalism and "racial purity projects" ("Making Kin"). Millet says to Stern that her fiction should be "compelling to any of us who cares to continue to live and I think that is a majority of us, really, at any given time, who prefer to continue to live and who wish also any children they have to, for example, continue to live." Here, Millet allows for the possibility of both having children *and* seeking a more sustainable future where the human is decentered, but that does not necessarily mean that Evie and the children view things the same way. Evie is the primary kin caregiver to Jack while Sukey is the primary kin caregiver to her newborn sister, so even biogenetic caregiving relationships in *A Children's Bible* are nonreproductive (at least in the sense of offspring).

Repronormativity is heavily associated with heteronormativity and patriarchy, which makes Jack and Shel such interesting icons of nurturing. As I mentioned at the end of Chapter 3, S. Alice Callahan's *Wynema* subverts norms regarding masculinity and nurture by having an unmarried bachelor express a strong desire to adopt a baby left parentless after the Massacre at Wounded Knee. Throughout *A Children's Bible*, Jack and Shel, who are not only the youngest but also both boys, are the ones who express such strong emotions toward the welfare of animals and plants. The only other young children close to their age, Kay and Amy, are depicted as somewhat more superficial than the other children, and at one point, Kay "bashe[s] her sister on the head" with a rock. The fact that they are two young girl counterparts to Jack and Shel suggests that Millet also intends readers to question cultural assumptions regarding the future of nurturing and the reinvention of masculinity that might be involved in that future. Indeed, the best adult nurturers in the novel were those who were unrelated to the children, and a majority of those (Burl, Mattie, Luka, and John, but not Darla) were men. Moreover, David is the only child

who has the genetic ability to donate blood to the parents who are ill, which he does despite his disregard for their wellbeing. As Jack notices, when David donates blood to his mother, and he sees the blood going through the tube from his arm to his mother's body, "he's going back to where he came from" (132).[37]

Millet also questions the limitations of the traditional, government-recognized methods of family building. Low is a transracial adoptee with white parents who takes a DNA test to discover that, as he claims, he is a distant relative of Genghis Khan (36). Although he feels no connection to his adoptive parents or his biological parents, he is still interested in his genetic origin, which underscores the importance of adoptees' rights to their genetic information (including their original birth certificates).[38] Kay and Amy, we are told, are "IVF twins" and Evie describes them as "straight up brats" who betray the children by helping the parents (16). Not only are the IVF twins too attached to their parents, but they are violent toward each other. Burl and the Angels, however, act as temporary caregivers to the children, forming more meaningful "family"-like bonds than the children ever had with their own parents (biological or adopted). In a world in which many adoptees and former foster youth advocate for the abolition of both adoption and the foster system,[39] Burl and the Angels' ability and willingness to nurture without permanent or legal control over the children without the children's first parents losing their parental rights is timely.

---

[37] This recalls Sophie Lewis's discussion of microchimerism, the process whereby DNA is "cross-coloniz[ed]" between the gestator and the fetus during pregnancy, illustrating that pregnancy produces two new genetic entities—not just one. For Lewis, by "transforming one another," we all become "responsible" for the "stew that is epigenetics," because, as Haraway puts it, "neither parent is continued in the child" (27).

[38] Legislation is still pending in one state, but as of the time of this writing, adoptees still do not have a legal right to access their original birth certificates.

[39] See the Center for the Study of Social Policy's article, "What Does it Mean to Abolish the Child Welfare System as We Know It?" More on this effort is discussed in Chapter 5.

As I pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3, the number two thousand often appears in writings that imagine the future. When the children ridicule Jack for taking his cues from his illustrated Bible, one of the children exclaims that the "book was written like two thousand years ago...Science wasn't even invented then!" Shel, who uses sign language throughout the novel, speaks "out loud" his one and only time in response to this claim. "You're very ignorant," he says, stunning everyone around because even though they had been told he spoke "on special occasions," they had never heard him do so (144). Shel's defense of Jack's use of the Bible to decode nature in an effort to save the nonhuman victims of planetary destruction stands out because it occurs at a moment when he and Jack are attempting to underscore the connections between two time periods two thousand years apart. Moreover, the Angels are "thru-hikers," who are known for hiking the entire two-thousand-mile Appalachian Trail system. The late nineteenth century focused on the decades surrounding the year 2000 not only because it marked one century in the future, but because it marked the end of a millennium. Then, once that time period came and went, writers began to look back at those envisioned futures. "More than a century ago," Terry tells the children, "empire builders and criminals, famous artists and actors and ass-kissers had floated in their finery beneath the Roosevelt chandelier" (90). "And in the future," he continues "maybe a new generation of partiers would arrive. Much like us, but strangers to us forever, they'd look upon our names and wonder who we'd been." Another child, Rafe, interjects with the possibility that, "after us, there won't be anyone...Maybe we're the last." The oceans are rising, "diseases are migrating," and forests are falling, so a utopia, at least as imagined in the late nineteenth century, is not in the cards for these children. "Before the world wars," Evie notices, people would be able to learn from teachers "full of trust" (136). Given that World War I marks the end of the late long nineteenth century as laid out in Chapter 2, Evie's comments here

link the Second Industrial Revolution again with the children's disillusionment. Back then, she says, children could learn "[s]ecure in the knowledge that an orderly future stretched out ahead of them" (136). Instead, the children live in what Millet calls a "plausible dystopia," or a "soft apocalypse," which are not only genres, but also descriptions of "our actual life now." Now, the children must have faith in nature, hoping that science and the "ghost in the machine" will allow them to integrate into ethical agential relationships.

Conclusion: "We Call That Hope, You See"

Dystopias often receive their generic categorization by virtue of how humans are affected by the societies or conditions depicted in them. If as many humans as possible thrive, we usually call it a utopia; if most humans suffer or go extinct, we usually call it a dystopia. But when we decenter the human, we create new possibilities for how we consider the futures depicted in SF. In this chapter, I have shown that the "apocalypse" does not necessarily have to be considered a dystopia in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, the posthuman condition allows for characters – and us – to consider post-Human futures (as in, futures after humanity as we know it today) in more optimistic ways. Whether we call this a reimagining of utopia, as I have done in this chapter, or a reimagining of dystopia (which I have not done, but which I believe could work just as well), the point is that the pessimism that Sternbergh, Lowry, Lepore, Johnson, Temple, and others identify in dystopias are mostly dependent on centering human subjectivity.

Life forms on Earth have about four billion years before the planet is no longer habitable due to astrological and geological processes (Ward and Brownlee 142). So even if humans went extinct tomorrow due to anthropogenic climate catastrophe, life on Earth would continue to thrive for eons. And they might even find an Earth without humans to be far more "utopian" than one with us here. Moreover, decentering humans does not require consideration of other forms of

"life" as we recognize it. As Evie and Jack conclude at the end of *A Children's Bible*, the "moon," "stars," "comets," "dirt" and all other forms of matter will be our "eyes" long after we are gone, and our materiality as individual humans will become part of those objects (224). Evie "call[s] that hope, you see," not despair.

Evie helps Jack learn to "stay with the trouble" in "response-ability" to other forms of matter that currently exist with them, right now, right here. Of all the forms of nurturing she provides Jack throughout the novel, this is perhaps the most important one she performs. Jack's despair over the future of life on Earth ("we won't be here!") is reconciled once Evie reframes his concerns through a decentering of the human. "New" and "other" creatures will be here, and—just in case we still worry—"all the old things will still be in the air," their molecules unseen, but there, nonetheless (223). Jack, for his part, teaches Evie and the other children the importance of nurturing non-humans by viewing other-than-human life as kin. But even after Generation Z, which Evie belongs to, and after Generation Alpha, which Jack likely belongs to, more human babies will be born, and they, too, will need to learn how to live in response-ability on a planet that quite likely cannot sustain them. So what are the ethics involved in *creating new humans* in the Capitalocene? In my final chapter, I dive more deeply into the ethics of family-making in a posthuman world and I explore how we can reconcile our urgent need to kinnovate with our moral obligation to recognize the importance of biogenetic kinship ties.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESPONSIBILITIES, RESPONSE-ABILITIES, AND THE ETHICS OF MAKING KIN IN JOANNE RAMOS'S *THE FARM*

As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the word "kin" — as with so many other words in the English language — means something distinct depending on the discourse community within which a person uses the word. Although at first this may seem like a statement of the obvious, this is not just case of multiple connotations or code-switching; scholars and professionals in different fields draw very different corporeal boundaries on what constitutes "kin," which amplifies the consequences of the word's divergent meanings. For example, in American law, "kinship" (or "next-of-kin") in the context of families, property, or inheritance (the conceptual intersections here are noteworthy in and of themselves, due to the commodification of human bodies involved) specifically designates a "blood relative." But there's an important disclaimer: the term "blood relative" in federal code specifically *includes* spouses and adopted family members, even though both are almost always not "blood related."[40] In fact, in the final two decades of the nineteenth century, the United States began to codify how to "permanently dissolve[] natural families" in what the state deemed the best interests of the child, so that "[b]y 1900 adoption was widely accepted and the creation of artificial families was routine" (Grossberg 274, 278). Thus, although American law considers "kin" to signify that

[40] I say "almost" because it is not uncommon for blood relatives to adopt their own blood relatives (such as "kinship adoption," which I discuss later, or the adoption of one's stepchild, which is somewhat close). Moreover, blood relatives legally marry more often than social taboos would have us believe ("cousin marriage," for example, is common enough that it is an entire field of legal study). A similar, but clearly distinct, issue arises when adoptees and donor-conceived persons cite anxiety over the possibility of becoming romantically involved with someone with whom they unknowingly share genetic relations.

people are biogenetically related, marriage law and adoption law became able to *override* biogenetics, at least when it comes to the definition of "kinship" and "next-of-kin." Joanne Ramos's 2019 novel *The Farm*, which examines the ethics of gestational surrogacy, allows us to see how "artificial families" — both in the law and in public consciousness — have relied on both biogenetic connections and nonbiogenetic nurturing obligations to further press the boundaries of kinship in American law.

This history of kinship in American law and culture becomes even more important when we engage with posthumanists who are working to challenge the liberal human subject through a rethinking of "kinship" values. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, concepts like "inventive kinning" (Lewis), "radical kinship" (Lane-McKinley and Cetinic), "kinnovation" (Haraway, via Skurnick's "kinnovator"), making "oddkin" (Haraway), reemphasizing "kith" over "kin" (Lewis), embracing "full surrogacy" (Lewis), "feminist kinning" (Firestone), establishing "queer kinship" (Freeman), and recognizing "elastic kinship" (Hartman) are all essential if we plan to consider sustainable and ethical futures in the Anthropocene (or Capitalocene, or Plantationocene, depending on whom one asks). But these "neologisms that attempt to come to terms with the complexities of the human condition" also run the risk of unintentionally silencing the voices of those who suffer the most from laws and cultural norms related to kinship (Braidotti, "Introduction" 1).[41] As adoptees, former foster youth (FFY), and birth parents often remind us, the members of the adoptive "triad" (adoptees, first parents, and adoptive parents) are not equal in power. Rather, adoptive parents have the power, which is buttressed by adoption agencies, family law, and "white saviorist" rhetoric in popular culture. At what point, then, does

[41] In this quote, Braidotti is referring to the various overlapping posthuman concepts from "different traditions" on "multiple axes" that are internally contradictory," but work within an "intellectual hub" of challenging human-centeredness ("Introduction" 1-7).

being creative with kin-making become dismissive of the lived experiences of adoptees, FFY, and first parents who keep telling us, despite very real efforts by the adoption industry and lawmakers to silence their voices, that biogenetic separation — even when it occurs as early as birth — continues to influence their everyday lives? I believe that *The Farm* offers us a wide variety of kinship connections to interrogate in an effort to reconcile the seeming tension between kinnovation, on the one hand, and biogenetic kinship (and separation trauma) on the other. The characters rely on kinship networks that are nonbiogenetic even as they grapple with separation from biogenetic kin, for whom their nonbiogenetic kinship networks often exist to support materially. *The Farm* is a useful prism through which to view the intersections of posthuman discourse and adoption and surrogacy ethics as they relate to nurturing.

Our academic rhetorics of kinnovation must remain sensitive to issues of biogenetic separation so that we do not further marginalize voices already on the margins. Joanne Ramos's novel *The Farm*, published in 2019, provides readers with many opportunities to explore adoption, surrogacy, and assisted reproductive technologies through the lens of kinnovation while remaining sensitive to issues of biogenetic separation. The novel follows the perspectives of four women, each connected in some way to an elite facility — a "gestational retreat" — called Golden Oaks, in which gestational surrogates[42] ("Hosts") for the world's wealthiest intended parents ("Clients") are housed during their pregnancies. Ramos's chapters alternate points of view between Jane Reyes, a Filipina immigrant Host separated from her own baby,

[42] Up to this point, any time I have used the word "surrogacy," it has been in the word's broader sense — that is, the definition that predominated before technological advancements in ART in the 1980s. Technically, gestational surrogacy through ART in the United States is almost always performed by a "gestational carrier," not a "surrogate," because they are not biogenetically related to the babies they carry. Heather Jacobson, in *Labor of Love*, continues to say "surrogate" rather than "carrier," because the people doing this work use the term "surrogate" to refer to themselves. This is also how the gestational carriers refer to themselves and to their work in *The Farm*. To blend clarity with sensitivity to the desires of the surro-mom community, I will use the qualified term *gestational surrogate* when I am referring specifically to having babies for others through ART.

Amalia; Reagan McCarthy, a privileged, educated white Host without children of her own, who is described as the "holy trifecta of Premium Hosts" due to her race, attractiveness and education; Evelyn "Ate" Reyes, Jane's older cousin who acts as a "big sister" to many Filipina women, and whose own adult children — including one with special needs — are still in the Philippines; and Mae Yu, a successful, career-oriented, "model immigrant" who runs Golden Oaks. Race, class, immigration, reproductive futurity, biogenetic separation, nonbiogenetic kinnovation and the search for meaning intersect in *The Farm*, allowing us to explore kin-making ethics intersubjectively and interobjectively.

Codifying Artificial Families in American Law and Culture

Before diving further into *The Farm*, however, a quick overview of "how we got here" legally and socioculturally is important, and that narrative starts in late long nineteenth century family law. In fact, 1881 was a landmark year in American law's transition away from deference to paternal biogenetics toward favoring "good nurture" in the creation of surrogate families. In a Kansas Supreme Court case that year, *Chapsky v. Wood*, future U.S. Supreme Court Justice David J. Brewer allowed a child to stay with her maternal aunt instead of being returned to the biological father. As Michael Grossberg points out, this case helped "clarify the status of surrogate families" at an important moment: "in nineteenth century America, family law became the chief instrument of the republican state for determining the legal responsibilities of family members" (257, 29). Although in the *Chapsky* case the child remained with biogenetic kin, the case legitimized the importance of surrogate family ties. The child had been living with her foster mother/aunt for over five years, and the judge determined that paternal custody rights — the legal preference for most of the nineteenth century — did not override the "obvious fact" that "ties of blood weaken, and ties of companionship strengthen, by lapse of time." Notably, Brewer

did not find that the father was unfit to parent, but, as Grossberg writes, because American courts had recently begun to recognize the "responsibility" to consider the needs of children, "the claims of the surrogate parents had to be given as much consideration as those of the natural ones" (257). So, not only did a nurturing connection override a paternal biogenetic connection, but also the concept of temporality came to be associated with the effectiveness of nurture in family law. An investment of one's time nurturing a child implicitly bestowed caregivers with responsibilities and "response-abilities," as Haraway puts it, to the nurtured.

Also in 1881, *Verser v. Ford* in Arkansas gave preference to a surrogate family over what today's adoptee and former foster youth often call the "first parents."[43] Although also blood-related, the maternal grandparents of a three-year old kept custody of a child whose father and stepmother sought parental rights. The adage that that "possession is nine-tenths of the law" seems to have merged with the relatively new "best interests of the child" standard to allow the court to give greater weight to the "mother's care" given not by the mother, but by the grandmother, who "tenderly guarded" the infant from two days old with "scarcely less than a mother's affection." Again, the court did not claim that the father was an unfit parent, but instead "inexperienced." It also considered the stepmother to have an unknown "sense of duty" compared to the grandmother. As Grossberg points out, with this case, the "scales of justice once again tipped in favor of the surrogate family," even though those with custody were still blood relatives. The court notes that if they had preferred the surrogate family over the father for any

[43] Here I follow the lead of what seems to be the majority opinion of adoptee, former foster youth, and first parent advocates who prefer "first parents" over the terms "natural parents" or "bio-parents." This is necessary only when distinguishing adoptive/foster parents/caregivers from first parents because, as advocates remind us, simply saying "mother," "father," or "parent" to refer to first parents is appropriate, regardless of legal termination of parental rights. (It's important to note that, as the community is not a monolith, some advocates disagree on the term "first parent.") When a court uses "natural parents," I will use that term in quotation marks. When I use the term "biogenetic parent," it is to specifically call attention to the biogenetic connection between parent and offspring, which makes that particular connection different *materially* from non-biogenetic parent-child relationships.

other reasons than the ones it laid out, it would be "intolerably tyrannical as well as Utopian," which reflects a judicial response to growing utopian impulses in the United States at the time, the ways in which reformers framed the nurturing of futurity through children, and the resistance with which the capitalist American government responded to these reformers. If Americans in the decades bookending 1900 redefined family rights and responsibilities away from biogenetic affiliation both legally and culturally, the decades bookending 2000 witnessed an expansion of that kinship even further, aided (or provoked) by many of the technologies speculated one century prior.

Several other court cases during the fin-de-siecle further uplifted the legal and social power of surrogate parents, who could replace specific functions within the "The Family" (e.g., grandparents or aunts stepping in to replace first parents), while still managing to uphold "The Family" itself (which remained, at least in theory, a closed unit with a preference for two parents — surrogate or "natural" — of the opposite sex). In 1878, a California judge wrote, perhaps without intending to set a precedent for cases throughout the 1880s and 1890s, that "the State is interested in having those influences [of home life] surround and impress its future citizens." This equated "surrogate family ties with natural ones," placing faith in "stable home[s]" and encouraged other courts to "leave apparently happy and healthy children where they were," thereby "devalu[ing] the rights of natural parents" (Grossberg 258). In 1888, the Rhode Island Supreme Court used the new doctrine of "established ties" to deny a remarried mother the right to regain custody of her son, leaving the child instead with his paternal uncle. This, the court claimed, did less "violence" to peoples' "affections." The Texas Supreme Court, in 1894, held that the "State" as "protector" of society has an interest in the "proper education and maintenance of the child, to the end that it may become a useful instead of a vicious citizen." The

court used this as to justify leaving a two-year old with her foster parents instead of returning the child to what it acknowledged was *still* the legal preference: "paternal affection."

While these examples demonstrate the impact of the late nineteenth century on today's notions of the private domestic family (Grossberg 6-9), they also demonstrate that the "republican household" created by these efforts represented a "facade of organic unity" (9). Surrogate parenthood, as Sophie Lewis argues in *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*, is the "world's (other) oldest profession" (57). For example, she notes that surrogacy existed long before gestational surrogacy through assisted reproductive technologies (ART). But granting custody rights to surrogate parents did not resolve other problems, particularly those regarding property and inheritance rights, which together became the "most heavily litigated adoption issue" (Grossberg 275). After all, the legal recognition of a guardian's responsibility to care for a child did not extend into adulthood, and each state was still in the process of working out the legal boundary between child and adult. So, as "adoption became more common and less unsettling in the last decades of the nineteenth century," the law had to create "artificial families" (278). As Heather Jacobson notes in *Labor of Love: Gestational Surrogacy and the Work of Making Babies*, laws surrounding gestational surrogacy developed within a "legal adoption framing" regardless of the distinct "discourse of intent" surrounding maternal rights in gestational surrogacy (26). So, viewing surrogacy — both gestational surrogacy through ART and the more expansive definition Lewis calls for — as an adoption issue is essential to understanding how it works socio-politically and economically in the United States. In fact, Lewis notes that the rhetoric around reproductive capitalism often renders "the risks of surrogacy, pregnancy, foster care, extended families, and adoption...indistinguishable" (49).

For decades, however, these laws did not equate adoptees with natural-born children. Instead, adopted children received a "separate legal status" more like that of illegitimate children than that of "natural-born" children (278). If the State viewed the Child as an instrument of republican futurity, then custody obligations that expire upon adulthood were not enough. Permanency of these artificial ties — framed through the interests of the child's stability, but nevertheless serving the State's interests as well — became important to adoption law. Reform legislation, then, allowed surrogate parents to become enduring: "adoption ensured that the change in these children's lives would be permanent" (280). This meant that, among other things, adoptees would inherit their adopted parents' estates as adults without further judicial intervention. In other words, during the late long nineteenth century, Americans were already beginning to redefine legal kinship to expand it beyond "blood relation" and they were emphasizing the importance of enduring obligations in kinship ties. This occurred at the same time that socialist reformers were redefining "The Family" through their literary experiments with American futurity.

Nevertheless, the focus on blood relation remains central to the concept of kinship in the context of family law today. For example, in the foster care system, "kinship placement" involves caregiving by blood relatives; moreover, "kin" are contrasted with "fictive kin," who have "significant interests" in the child, but who are not blood relatives. This means that when social workers discuss kinship in the context of family (re)unification, they have a narrower definition in mind than, for example, Haraway does when she calls for "making kin, not babies" ("Anthropocene"). For the former, "kinship" implies biogenetic relation, but for the latter, "kinship" has no such biogenetic implication.[44] But just as "surrogacy" has existed for centuries

[44] It could include biogenetic kin, however: Haraway agrees that they are "precious" (*Primate Visions* 352).

and has seen its various definitions trade prominence over time, the definitions of "kinship" are not stable ones, either. For example, in Texas family law, "fictive kin" is not a *separate* category from "kin," but is instead included within the *same* category as "kin." In the *Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Handbook*, for example, "kinship care" is defined as an "**umbrella** term used to describe substitute care provided...by relatives **or** fictive kin" (emphases added). A "kinship caregiver," moreover, is defined in Texas as "a relative **or** fictive kin" (emphasis added). This categorical distinction is important because if someone who is neither blood related nor adopted into a family can be considered under the same "umbrella" as "kin" in state law, then "kinship" — even legally speaking — does not necessarily require biogenetic relation.

Keeping Kinnovation Responsive to the Primal Wound

Because reproductive capitalism involves power and oppression, we must also understand issues of power and oppression in the adoptee/FFY community. In their own virtual safe spaces, members of the triad with the least amount of power — that is, adoptees and first parents — emphasize the importance of their biogenetic connections when discussing the life-long trauma that maternal separation involves. At the same time, however, those same voices frequently advocate for redefinitions of kinship that cut against the traditional private "Family." As Emily Matchar writes in "Meet the New Anti-Adoption Movement," adoption has "long been perceived as the win-win way out of a difficult situation. An unwed mother gets rid of the child she's not equipped to care for; an adoptive family gets a much-wanted child." This is an example of what the adoptee rights community calls "unicorns and rainbows" adoption rhetoric, which is both pervasive and bipartisan. But, Matchar continues,

> people are increasingly realizing that the industry is not nearly as well-regulated and ethical as it should be. There are issues of coercion, corruption, and lack of transparency that are only now being fully addressed. The past decade has seen the rise of a broad and loose coalition of activists out to change the way adoption works in America. This coalition makes bedfellows of people who would ordinarily have nothing to do with each other: Mormon and fundamentalist women who feel they were pressured by their churches, progressives who believe adoption is a classist institution that takes the children of the young and poor and gives them to the wealthier and better-educated, and adoptive parents who have had traumatic experiences with corrupt adoption agencies.

Notice, however, that even when Matchar discusses a movement meant to uplift those most affected by adoption's traumatic consequences, she still focuses on the actors with the most power in the equation. For example, she only fleetingly mentions first parents, and even then, she mentions only a small section of them ("Mormon and fundamentalist" birth mothers). Meanwhile, progressives who consider adoption to be classist get higher billing than adoptees themselves (who are not even listed in this "coalition" despite the fact that they are the ones most affected), and when mentioning these progressives, she doesn't mention the inherent racism in adoption that progressives often cite.[45]

Samantha M. Shapiro, on the other hand, does emphasize the voices of adoptees in this movement, but not for the better: she refers to their vocality in her recent coverage of the PV community in *Wired* as efforts from "regretful" adoptees who are "trollers" of prospective adoptive parents. In her coverage, prospective adoptive parents are the victims of disgruntled adoptees. Despite Shapiro's tone policing of oppressed voices, she does at one point

[45] Some of those "progressives" Matchar mentions might be adoptees, but this cannot be assumed.

acknowledge that members of these groups run an "informal counter-messaging campaign to standard adoption narratives, one which incorporates their trauma and the role that poverty plays in adoption." A few examples of so-called "anti-adoption" groups or pages that refocus the narrative on adoptees and first parents are Adoption: Facing Realities, The Bumbling Adoptee, The Angry Adoptee, First Mother Forum, Building Connections in Open Adoption (closed March 2021), TRA: Transracial Adoption Facebook Group, The Wounded Adoptee, Adopted Ball of Hate, Changing the Adoption Narrative, and Concerned United Birth Parents. While some of these groups stand against what they consider unethical and coercive adoption, others stand decidedly against adoption altogether, in all instances. Discussing the research on adoption trauma, Mari Dolfi points out that because "[m]ost of the adoption research is outcome studies focused on the life struggles of birth/first parents and adoptees without the framework of trauma," the majority of what has been written about this trauma comes from "first-hand accounts of relinquishment trauma." This is why a deep understanding of these interconnected networks of online communities, where adoptee voices are both privileged and protected, is important when considering the rhetoric of adoption and "artificial families" as a power struggle.

Adoptees, FFY, and first parents seek refuge in various online communities from what they call the adoption industry's "unicorns and rainbows" rhetoric; these online spaces privilege the voices of those in the triad who do *not* hold power outside these spaces, referring to them as "privileged voices" ("PVs") in those spaces (which emphasizes that they are not privileged voices elsewhere).[46] Adoptive parents ("APs"), hopeful adoptive parents ("HAPs"), and foster

[46] From this point on, I will refer to adoptees, former foster youth, and first parents collectively as "PVs," since that is what most adoption-rights groups do. Not only is this a convenient shorthand, but it also reinforces the shared perception of oppression and suffering caused by the adoption industry and adoption rhetoric. However, it should be noted that some adoptees do not like being "lumped in" with first parents, given the differences in their experiences.

parents ("FPs") are not allowed, by the rules of these forums, to "push back" against the lived experiences of PVs because, as the admins and moderators ("modmins," collectively) put it, APs/FPs and adoption agencies hold the power in all other areas of life.[47] APs and FAPs are welcomed into these spaces in order to get those with power in the triad to understand how best to navigate becoming a more ethical caregiver to someone who has already experienced what Nancy Verrier describes as the "primal wound" of separation at birth. Because of the "primal wound" and the normalization of adoptees' "coming out of the fog" (as they call their process of grappling with separation trauma and shedding so-called "Adoptionland" rhetoric), donor-conceived persons ("DCP," adults who were conceived through ART using donor sperm and/or eggs) have joined this online counter-messaging by creating their own curated groups to share personal experiences that social scientists have not yet captured in published academic studies. Of course, PVs in these forums themselves embrace and participate in new ideas of kinmaking in these forums. In fact, some PVs advocate for the abolishment of adoption altogether, embracing instead more social support for parents and a multiplicity of temporary caregivers — a notion rather similar to Lewis's idea of "full surrogacy" and, for that matter, also similar to Bellamy and Gilman's late nineteenth century utopian positions on social nurturing.

In a novel that interrogates many different themes, one that stands out among the others in *The Farm* is Ramos's depiction of the consequences of capitalism and the commodification of the human body. These consequences are apparent in all characters' perspectives, even those who ostensibly "agree" with capitalism. If 1881 was a watershed year in America's creation of

[47] New members of adoptee/FFY/first family-oriented groups customarily have a two-week "read only" period so new members can learn from these lived experiences in order to *unlearn* the "unicorns and rainbows" rhetoric. Rules protecting PVs are strictly enforced by modmins. New members who are pregnant are allowed to post at any time, however, given the importance of acting quickly to thwart AP or adoption agency coercion or provide financial resources to care for their child.

artificial families that upheld the capitalist "Family" unit during the period of 1880-1920 that I focus on in earlier chapters, then 2019 seems to mirror it, with stunning symmetry, as scholars deconstruct the capitalist "Family" in the twenty-first century. In 2019, while Ramos was publishing *The Farm,* Sophie Lewis was "gestat[ing] the…contents" of *Full Surrogacy Now*, which came out the same year. Saidiya Hartman released *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* in 2019 as well, which focused on the formation of radical black queer kinships outside the bounds of law (focusing, notably, on the years bookending 1900). And the same year, Haraway was further expanding her views on "making kin" in the Capitalocene in an interview with Steve Paulson of the *LA Review of Books*. Of course, these developments did not appear in a vacuum: Lewis's monograph is indebted to many scholars' work from a decade before, particularly Karan Barad and Stacy Alaimo (whose term "transcorporeality" Lewis repeatedly uses even though she never actually cites Alaimo). And Lewis's interrogation of the *work* of making babies owes much to Heather Jacobson's 2016 book *Labor of Love: Gestational Surrogacy and the Work of Making Babies*, which was the first ethnographic study of surrogacy in the United States, and which had examined surrogacy *as work* three years prior.

Enduring Kinship and the Collective Work of Nurture

I mention the interconnectedness of these overlapping explorations of kinship — particularly the *making* of kinship — not only to provide context for discussions of Ramos's novel, but also to reinforce issues related to duty and time. For example, it is no mistake that the court cases I discussed earlier repeatedly deploy such terms as "obligation," "sense of duty" and "responsibility" while seeking to establish "permanence" of kinship ties. This permanence is important to Haraway's own sense of responsibility to nonbiogenetic kin that she has even

sought to expand our notions of adoption to go beyond children to include adult humans and other nonhuman "critters" (from pets to microbes) that are within our own realm of "response-ability." Haraway calls for a "new normal" in which any new baby (which she hopes would be non-coercively "rare") has at least three parents in multigenerational households, and in which "adoption practices for and by the elderly became common" ("Anthropocene" 164). She calls biogenetic kin "precious" ("Making Oddkin"), but emphasizes that "[i]t's not necessarily to be biologically related but in some consequential way to belong in the same category with each other in such a way that has consequences" ("Making Kin"). She continues that kin ought to be "enduring mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can't-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences." Here, she reinforces the importance of permanence (notice the use of "enduring" twice in the sentence) as well as the idea that kinship comes not only with legal rights but with legal responsibilities ("consequences").

In *The Farm*, work — and the money earned from work (if it is considered paid work, a distinction that becomes important in a moment) — are linked to the concept of love and the nurture of both biogenetic and nonbiogenetic kin. And the ways in which Ramos depicts the work-love/money-nurture connections allow us to interrogate the *work* of surrogacy in the Lewisian sense (that is, "full surrogacy," not just gestational surrogacy) while still acknowledging the fact that many people who perform the work of surrogacy feel unable to frame this work *as work* (Jacobson). For example, Mrs. Carter, a rich white Manhattan socialite, regrets the fact that she has employed Ate to care for her baby because, as the narrator tells us (from Ate's perspective), Mrs. Carter "feels guilty, because she thinks love and time are the same" (23). If "time is money," as we are wont to say in capitalist societies, and if "love and time are the same," then by the transitive law, love is also time in this example. But Ate

disagrees with the idea that "love and time are the same," and embraces the idea that Mrs. Carter is demonstrating love for her child by ensuring that he receives the best care. Her reasoning, however, stems more from the fact that, by living and working in America and sending money to her children in the Philippines, who are nurtured by a paid caretaker, Ate herself must care for and nurture her children by proxy by relying on selling her "time" for money to remit. Without that money, earned with her labor and her time, her children would not be cared for.

Still, many characters in *The Farm* claim that it is "unnatural to outsource motherhood," even though it's not entirely clear what constitutes "outsourc[ing]" motherhood (11). In the context of this quote, however, the character was discussing nannies and not gestational surrogates. The character has no qualms with housekeepers, drivers, or other forms of personal help that Lewis would remind us constitutes surrogacy. For example, Lewis writes that "we need ways of counteracting the exclusivity and supremacy of 'biological' parents in children's lives; experiments in communizing family-support infrastructures; lifestyles that discourage competitiveness and multiply nongenetic investments in the well-being of generations" (130). It should be noted that the character who resisted "outsourc[ing] motherhood" changed her mind after only two weeks because her newborn "suffered from colic and cried night and day," and she needed an expert in childrearing to help normalize his sleep (11). As Charlotte Perkins Gilman had advocated a century prior, child care should be communal and carried out by trained specialists, rather than having all childcare duties relegated to individual mothers, whose specialties may or may not cover all the fields of knowledge necessary to effectively care for their children.[48] In this example, Ate became the baby's "specialist" by focusing entirely on

[48] She advocated for this throughout her career in many forums and genres, but the best resource for her views on communal obligations to children — including the specialized work of skilled care workers — is *Concerning Children* (1900).

alleviating his colic and normalizing his sleep schedule, and the baby's mother came to embrace what she previously called an "outsourc[ing] of motherhood."

The ability to "outsource motherhood" or, in the more positive sense, acquire communal care for one's children by specialists, is the domain of the wealthy in *The Farm* and in "real" life. Acquiring assistance for parents without financial means requires government intervention, which is perhaps why "generational investments in human infrastructure," including child care, is part of the current infrastructure legislation negotiations in the Biden administration (CNN). This is what Lewis refers to as "family-support infrastructures" (130) and, although she does not directly say this, it would benefit the future of the State to ensure that its "human infrastructure" helped adults nurture children into healthy adults themselves. Lewis writes that if "revolutionaries want to transform" the familial status quo, "they must act to secure, not policy safeguards against Surrogacy™, but rather, incentives to practice *real* surrogacy, *more* surrogacy: more mutual aid" (130). Part of the problem with achieving this communal form of polymaternalism is that views regarding the care of children are infused with what Lewis calls "capitalist-realist blackmail" that "is highly reminiscent of the nineteenth-century women-led eugenics movement's faith in personal striving, *noblesse oblige*, and god" (70). In fact, Leon, Mae's boss and the CEO of Holloway, the corporation that owns the Golden Oaks "venture," is described by Mae using similar language. He, according to Mae, is "old-school rich," which means that "he believes in the justness of the market and its rewards but also in noblesse oblige" (171). Unlike his fellow "almost-billionaires," Leon actually believes in "government as a necessary palliative to capitalism's harsh edges" as long as it does not "stifle the private sector or the market that animates it." He believes that "people like himself — those winners of capitalism with the generosity of heart and the keenness of vision to discern and help alleviate capitalism's

unwitting but real flaws — are the ones who need to lead." Although Mae doesn't necessarily agree with him on this (for example, he concerns himself with "inequality," while she considers it just a "buzzword" that has "lost its meaning" [230]), Mae nevertheless "admires" Leon for his supposedly altruistic yet still socially-stratifying views on economic justice.

Despite the attempts of reform Darwinists in the late long nineteenth century, the notion of "unfitness" continues to be used to oppress underprivileged people in the twenty-first century. And it splits up biogenetic families daily. As Ricard Hoftstadder points out in *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, social Darwinism permeated the American legal system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to support and justify laissez-faire industrial capitalism. This included not only economic policies, but also family law, which was already entangled with state economic interests. So, Spencerian "survival of the fittest," combined with sympathy for children and an undeniable sense that we at least have duties to *them* despite their physical, mental, and emotional "unfitness" to survive without adult nurturing intervention, meant that parenting by the "fit" (social Darwinist evolutionary sense) became almost synonymous with legal efforts to define one's "fitness to parent." In other words, first parents' financial or physical barriers to providing "good" nurture to their offspring did not merit social intervention to *help them nurture* their children, but it did merit the redistribution of children into homes that could already do so. Instead of providing resources to those with children, the system provided children to those with resources.

Helping adults to parent their own offspring — which, let's recall, has far better outcomes for children[49] — could be categorized as "enabling" people who were "unfit" (in the

[49]Margaret A. Keyes, et al find that the odds of a suicide attempt is "~4 times greater in adoptees compared with nonadoptees" (645). Sarah Trivedi explores the "harm of removal" in studies prior to 2020 (527-530). She notes that "harm of removal" is not actually singular, and that it includes emotional and psychological harms, separation disorders, trauma, grief, confusion, unique harms for "minority children," physical and sexual health problems, and

Spencerian sense). However, facilitating the transfer of their children to childless adults who had financial and physical means, and then assisting in a legal and socio-cultural concealment of the biogenetic truth made more sense to social Darwinist capitalists. And capitalism, for characters in *The Farm*, is not so much up for debate as it is a reality; Jane, Ate, Lisa, and — at least superficially — Reagan reject capitalism, while Mae embraces it, but none of them deny the harshness of its realities. While the elite Clients in *The Farm* — and real-life intended parents (IP) in the United States today[50] — come to the process of ART with financial resources to begin with, most of the surrogates do not. (Unless, however, they are "Premium Hosts" due to their whiteness, education, and attractiveness.) This allows Mae to exploit Jane's "fitness" to parent her own child, Amalia, in an effort to get her to return to Golden Oaks after she fled to visit her daughter, who she thought was life-threateningly ill. When the prospect of the salary and the "delivery bonus" are no longer enough to focus Jane's attention on "Madame Deng's fetus" — the one growing inside her — Mae threatens to report Jane to Child Protective Services. Here, even though Jane has discovered that Amalia is not dying, the prospect of permanent separation between Jane and Amalia resurfaces, this time in an effort to blackmail Jane into going back to her "work" of pregnancy on behalf of others.

The issue of *work vs. love* in the context of surrogacy(ies) provokes many controversial debates among characters in *The Farm*, particularly as it relates to capitalism. *Work vs. love* is also the source of debate among scholars interested specifically in gestational surrogacy and in

long-term mental health problems. Trivedi cites Lauren Shapiro, Rebeca Bonura, and Lynn F. Beller to argue that given the data on the long-term effects of separation, removal from biogenetic parents is likely less traumatic than neglect by those parents. To document that this also applies to newborns, Trivedi cites Kimberly Howard, Anne Martin, Lisa J. Berlin, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn; Anthony J. DeCasper and William P. Fifer; Jeanne Pigeon Turenne, Marjolaine Héon, Marilyn Aita, Joanne Faessler, and Chantal Doddridge; and Jeannette T. Crenshaw.

[50] See Jacobson (Chapter 1) and Lewis (117).

care work in the broader sense. One example of a scholarly debate over work and love is that presented by Lewis in *Full Surrogacy Now.* She positions herself against Jacobson's *Labor of Love*, but in my view, Lewis misunderstands the scope of Jacobson's project. By smoothing over the perceived opposition of their two efforts, however, we can better understand debates among characters in *The Farm*. Lewis characterizes Jacobson's book as "insist[ing] on pregnancy and birth being work for a particular and (to [Lewis's] mind) nonconegnial reason: [Jacobson] thinks work is an inherently good thing" (74). While Lewis's positions on surrogacy depend on viewing surrogacy as work so that we can view gestation as a worker's rights issue, she opposes viewing surrogacy as work in a way that would reinforce the inherent value of work. As much as I value Lewis's scholarship, Jacobson, in my view, never implies that "work is an inherently good thing" in *Labor of Love.* Jacobson's work, in actuality, was a *descriptive* ethnographic study and not a persuasive call for economic or sociopolitical change. In fact, at times, Jacobson even *distances* herself as a researcher from the rhetoric that she notices agencies, gestational surrogates, and surrogates' families deploy. As Jacobson puts it, her book "explore[s] why there is a strong resistance to thinking about and talking about surrogacy as work" and "focus[es] on the work surrogates engage in and how they, and others, understand that labor in a society in which these arrangements have a contentious history." If Jacobson is "insist[ent]" at all that work is "inherently good," as Lewis characterizes Jacobson's position, then it was not in *Labor of Love* that she insisted it because I cannot locate any traces of such an implication in that text.

Such accidental disagreements, so to speak — ones in which different approaches to issues surrounding the work of surrogacy lead to important discussions about the ethics of surrogacy, even among those who might agree on the core elements — abound in *The Farm*. Before Reagan came to Golden Oaks as a "Premium Host," her best friend from college, Macy,

argued with her over the ethics of being a gestational surrogate, even though she supported Reagan when, during college, Reagan donated eggs to a "Buddhist couple" who had advertised in search of a "spiritually open" donor (77). That transaction had allowed her to intern in D.C., because even though her father was wealthy, he wanted to "forge her in his image" and used financial dependence to control her. "Surrogacy—this kind of surrogacy!—is a commodification, a cheapening! Everything sacred—outsourced, packaged, sold to the highest bidder!", Macy exclaims, adding that "letting a rich stranger *use* you" is "putting a price-tag on something *integral*—" (76-7, emphasis and terminal em-dash in original). Here, despite saying "sacred," we must remember that Macy does not have a *religious* objection to ART or to gestational surrogacy as a concept. What alarms her, instead, is the capitalist nature of "this kind" of surrogacy: it is, to Macy, a "hollow" "transaction" (78). But as Reagan tells the reader (but doesn't bother to remind Macy), Macy "spen[ds] her days at the bank making trades, one hollow transaction after the other" (78). Reagan does, however, remind her friend about the many other forms of surrogacy(ies): "live-in nannies, baby nurses, wet nurses...blood donors, kidney donors, bone-marrow donors, sperm donors. Surrogates. Egg donors" (77). Notice, though, that when Reagan discusses *pregnancy as work*, the transaction becomes more objectionable to Macy, who is considered her most open-minded friend. Soon, she begins to focus on framing her surrogacy through a quest for *meaning*, knowing that this is more palatable to others around her. This dynamic is supported by Jacobson's findings that despite the amount of work gestational surrogates perform, "and their dedication to it," any time Jacobson began to "delicately approach the topic of surrogacy as work, [she] met resistance" from surrogates, their families, and surrogacy professionals.

In fact, many of the tactics used in gestational surrogacy markets to "obscur[e] surrogate labor" in Jacobson's research are depicted by Ramos in *The Farm* (86). Selecting "compliant" gestational surrogates for IPs (50-51), establishing "close connections" between surrogates and IPs (160), developing what Jacobson calls "money rules" that "surrogates are socialized to follow," such as discouraging the discussion of compensation at all (180), using the agency as a "middle-man" for reimbursement discussions (189), and the "policing" of surrogates amongst themselves to enforce "proper motivations" (184). All of these tactics are deployed by Golden Oaks throughout *The Farm*'s plot. Mae seeks out compliant Hosts, which often results in the intersection of race and class issues: "What she is low on are non-Black hosts. Really, Mae muses, what she could use are a few more Filipinas — they are popular with Clients, because their English is good and their personalities are mild and service-oriented" (41). As Mae tells us, "[i]ncentivized Hosts are the best Hosts" (46). And part of the reason she believes that Jane would make a good Host is that Mae considers Jane "not the type of person to believe in her own agency" (266). In terms of posthuman nurture, then, Mae does not consider Jane a Subject or even a subject; she is always an object upon whom coercive nurture is performed by Golden Oaks staff on behalf of the wealthy Client, who is the ultimate Subject.

Mae also hopes to establish close bonds between the Hosts (surrogates) and Clients (IPs), so much, in fact, that when she discovers wealth is inversely correlated with empathy (and thus her rich Clients may be less able to bond with Hosts), she comes up with the idea of paying actors to pretend to be "Stand-In" Clients — that is, fake IPs — in the hopes that the (fake) Client will bond with the Host to "build rapport, etc." (242). In this way, she recognizes the impact of empathy, which reform Darwinists would celebrate, but seeks to use it for exploitative purposes on behalf of the most wealthy individuals, which reform Darwinists would have balked

at. The flippancy of the "etc." in Mae's email to her staff about this idea reinforces just how unimportant the Hosts' *real* searches for meaning are to Mae. "It can only help us," Mae says in a strategizing meeting with Coordinators, if a host "feels a connection, even affection for the mother, and therefore the child" (201). When Mae recruits Reagan to become a Host, Mae mentions that delivering a healthy baby would help with any "monetary worries," and Reagan interrupts her to clarify that she would "also love to know that I'm helping someone," as though she was "concerned that she's come across as overly-money-driven" (56). Mae implements a "buddy system" among the Hosts, justifying the policy by saying they can "take care of each other"; and when she wants to get rid of private rooms, she admits that it's not only for profits, but also so that they can keep an eye on each other. In fact, compliance, surrogate-IP bonding, and the policing of rhetoric surrounding financial motivations for surrogacy combine to allow Mae and the Coordinators at Golden Oaks to control Hosts throughout their "incubation period[s]" (46). Throughout their stays at Golden Oaks, Hosts are meticulously nurtured by Golden Oaks staff, but this nurture has more in common with coercive helicopter parenting than it does with posthuman nurturing ethics.

Something that deviates slightly from conventional real-life surrogate-IP matching is that, in *The Farm*, Reagan, Lisa, and other Hosts at Golden Oaks desire altruistic motivations of their *Clients*. This flips the focus of motivations away from the surrogate and onto the IP. As Jacobson points out, another important marketing technique relies on getting gestational surrogates to discuss surrogacy as the "ultimate gift" (44). But for some Hosts, a Client's level of need for this gift is important when it comes to their ability to stay within the rhetoric policed by Golden Oaks. When Reagan mentions that too many people "use surrogates for aesthetic reasons," she says that she does not want a "Client who's using a surrogate out of vanity" (47). Instead, she

wants to "carry a baby for someone who otherwise couldn't have one." But only Premium Hosts, who bring higher profit margins, can get away with expressing this desire. Such a presumption from a "run-of-the-mill applicant" that a Host could have any say in Client matching, would have caused Mae to send them "packing then and there" (47). But Reagan and other Premium Hosts are not the only Hosts with preferences regarding Client motivation; they're just the only ones who can get away with mentioning those preferences to Mae. Jane, for example, says that she "wants to help people…who cannot have babies," although she accidentally lets it slip that she also is interested because she "need[s] a job" (57). (Ate had warned her not to sound economically desperate.) When Reagan tells Lisa, her friend at Golden Oaks and another Premium Host, that "[i]t *is* an incredible thing to give someone life," Lisa reminds Reagan that she cannot know if that is actually the case. "[T]hat's not what all of us are doing here," Lisa responds, adding that "it turns out *my* Client could've carried her babies herself if she wanted to" (71). This is particularly frustrating to Lisa because she had originally been told by the Clients and Coordinators that she was carrying a baby for someone who was either too old to conceive or who was infertile. It is, as Lisa calls it, indicative of the "new narcissism" (72).

The "new narcissism" that Lisa identifies is a theme that continues throughout *The Farm* and it echoes observations that Lewis makes in *Full Surrogacy Now*. As Leon tells Mae when they are considering expanding Golden Oaks and opening a facility on the West Coast, "the wealthy...are obsessed with their offspring in a way earlier generations weren't...The luxury market is moving down the age scale to the newborn and gestational phases" (173). This "new narcissism" is what Lewis refers to as "making babies in the shape of personal mascots, psychic crutches, heirs, scapegoats, and fetishes, not forgetting avatars of binary sex" (116). It recalls the earlier discussion of Reagan's venture capitalist father seeking to "forge" her in his image (and

readers may wonder, as I certainly do, whether giving her the name "Reagan" was part of her father's late capitalist new narcissism). Lisa's Clients for example, have used her as a surrogate three separate times, even getting Golden Oaks to waive the mandatory rest period between pregnancies. And to demonstrate their supposed appreciation, they funded a scholarship in Lisa's honor at Lisa's alma mater — but they "named [the scholarship] after their own boys," which she had carried for them (109). We are left wondering whether the scholarship had anything to do with their appreciation for Lisa, or whether it had to do with the "new narcissism" that Lisa criticizes throughout the novel.

These quests for meaning by surrogates through the motivations of their IPs also illustrate problems in the discourse of gestational surrogacy in general — one that assumes that surrogacy only has meaning if it replaces someone else's infertility. As Lewis would point out, distributing gestational work is important in order to achieve "gestational communism," not just as an effort to help infertile couples reproduce. "[B]ourgeois reproduction today (stratified, commodified, cis-normative, neocolonial)" has a "voracious appetite for private, legitimate babies" and an expansion of surrogacy that is "animated by hatred for capitalism's incentivization of propertarian, dyadic modes of doing family" ought to be replaced by queer polymaternalisms (Lewis 21-22). An expansion to "full surrogacy," through a rethinking of "Surrogacy™" (that is, the gestational surrogacy industry) is, she admits "utopian," and thus "always a fantasy"; but it is an "impossibility" we must strive for anyway, because "infants don't belong to anyone, ever" (19). But just because an infant does not "belong" to anyone does not mean that an infant is not someone's (or many people's) responsibility to nurture. On the contrary, Haraway finds these response-abilities all around her, in infants and in other kinds of agencies. She explains that she

> first started using the word "kin" when I was in college in a Shakespeare class because I realized that Shakespeare punned with "kin" and "kind." Etymologically they're very closely related. To be kind is to be kin, but kin is not kind. Kin is often quite the opposite of kind. It's not necessarily to be biologically related but in some consequential way to belong in the same category with each other in such a way that has consequences. If I am kin with the human and more-than-human beings of the Monterey Bay area, then I have accountabilities and obligations and pleasures that are different than if I cared about another place. ("Making Kin")

"Care" here is directly related to one's nurturing obligations. To care about something is to take on the responsibility to care *for* it. Lewis would have us remember that infants are the responsibility of *many parents* — biogenenetic and nonbiogenetic — and Haraway would have us remember that our response-abilities depend largely on our location and what babies (or nonhuman organisms) are in our "kinship networks."

Blending Biogenetic and Nonbiogenetic Kinship Networks

What's interesting is *not* that polymaternalism is a reimagining of what's "natural," but that polymaternalism was "natural" until it wasn't, biologically and evolutionarily. In *The Farm*, we see kinship networks form organically, and these are often formed in response to a need to care for infants, whether they be one's own biogenetic offspring or someone else's biogenetic offspring. In the biological sciences, *alloparenting* (coined in 1975 by sociobiologist Edward O. Olsen, literally meaning "other-parenting") is one of four primary types of parental care, along with paternal care, maternal care, and biparental care (Kokko and Jennison). Alloparents by definition do not care for their own biogenetic offspring (Olsen). As Richard T. McClelland puts it, "[c]are of the young by non-parents is found widely in the animal world, including

approximately 9% of the 10,000 species of birds and 3% of mammalian species, about 50% of primates, some fish, some social insects, and social spiders." As for humans, Sarah B. Hrdy suggests that based on the calories necessary in the "hunter-gatherer setting" to "nurture a child from birth to nutritional independence" at eighteen years or older, we must assume that alloparenting has existed since as far back as two million years ago: "[a]ncestral human populations almost certainly fell among those species with shared care" (xii). Parenting children who are not one's own genetic offspring is not a new phenomenon in evolutionary history. Instead, the notion of "The Family," in which a family is a closed unit involving the care of offspring by biogenetic parents alone (or, later, by "surrogate"/adoptive parents who became the legal equivalents of biogenetic parents) is the newer phenomenon. But even after the sociological construction and imposition of "The Family" as a key governmental and economic unit, it operated within a contradiction because it never actually was a self-sustaining unit.

Biogenetic and nonbiogenetic kinship relations form seemingly without effort, blending with each other throughout *The Farm*'s plot. When Ate is trying to convince Jane to take over her duties temporarily as Mrs. Carter's "baby-nurse," Jane is initially unwilling, because her daughter is only one month old. Ate reassures Jane:

> "Everyone will help me," Ate remarks. This is true. There is always someone in the dorm — resting before the night shift, off work for the weekend, biding time before a new job. Almost all of them are Filipinas and a good portion of them are mothers who have left their own children back home. They dote on Amalia, the only baby in their midst. The only baby with a mother desperate enough to bring her child to live among them. (9)

Here, Ate expresses confidence in the natural blending of biokin and non-biokin in nurturing responsibilities and response-abilities. At the same time that we see an example of nonbiogenetic

polymaternalism among the Filipinas living collectively, a type of all-hands-on-deck surrogacy that would make Lewis proud, we also are reminded of the importance of biogenetic parent-child bonds. In addition to being reluctant to live for a few weeks in a different borough of New York City from her daughter, Jane's attachment to Amalia is so strong that she brings her baby to the overpopulated dorm because she does not trust her ex-boyfriend, Billy, Amalia's father, to "care for" Amalia in California (8). The attachment is mutual: just two pages prior, the narrator emphasizes Amalia's "read[iness] to latch" onto her mother's nipple, which happens "with ease" (6). Just after birth, this had been difficult, but "they know how to do this now, the two of them," and now "her wet mouth [is] open" (6). The realization of this bond, along with the caring persistence that established it, makes Jane so "overcome" with "tenderness" that it is "almost suffocating" (6). Nurturing is a shared action here because even though Jane acts with greater personal agency than Amalia (an adult brain vs. an infant's brain, for example, is an obvious power imbalance), Jane also benefits from nurturing Amalia.

The importance of alloparenting, surrogacy, and polymaternism are also highlighted by the fact that Jane believes (and I think readers can agree) that Amalia is in better care when *away from* an abusive biogenetic parent. Even Ate, for whom the addition of a baby to the dorm in Queens is inconvenient, agrees that Billy is "no one to depend on, and [Jane] must now think about what is best for Amalia" (21). It's important to remember, however, that the image of child abuse often itself "abused" itself by foster and adoption agencies, when usually, children are taken from their biogenetic parents due to poverty (Trivedi 536). The "majority of cases in the child welfare system deal with neglect, not abuse," Trivedi reminds us, and neglect itself is "conflated" with insufficient income or social safety nets (536). In *The Farm*, however, it is Jane (or, sometimes, the narrator when in the perspective of Jane) who tells us of Billy's "unfitness,"

and we are given no reason to doubt her.[51] For this reason, I feel more comfortable discussing Billy as someone Amalia cannot "depend on" than I would be if I were discussing the role of first parents in the context of foster care and adoption, and their supposed "risks" to their children. I bring up Amalia's separation from her father, which is framed through fear of domestic abuse turning into child abuse (or neglect), because it illustrates two things. First, Billy's absence throughout the novel demonstrates that even though biogenetic connections are important, and even though Amalia should know who her father is and be able to contact him when she is older if she so chooses, biogenetic kinship does not hold primacy over nonbiogenetic kinship when it comes to the ability and response-ability to nurture effectively. Second, Billy's supposed unfitness to parent (again, I defer to Jane and Ate here) provides us another avenue to explore throughout the novel allows us to keep in mind the very real *material* nurturing impacts that money can have. After all, even if Billy's neglect is not due to poverty, his role in *The Farm* prompts us to question — as we must always do — whether neglect was due to "problems of family poverty, not of parental mistreatment" (Trivedi 537). Even if we end up agreeing with Jane's assessment, the entanglement of poverty and nurturing abilities ought to influence how we assess claims of abuse or neglect.

We see more examples of "kin" having more to do with "kind," as I quoted Haraway earlier, than with biogenetic connections. Lisa points out to Reagan that, at the beginning of Jane's time at Golden Oaks, Jane "only hangs out with other Filipinas" (87). While Lisa characterizes this as racism, it is better characterized as establishing kinship based on

[51] Jane does not use the word "abusive," and the only acts of abuse she describes explicitly are examples of emotional abuse (which is, of course, still abuse). However, the reader is given hints that Billy was also physically abusive. For example, when Lisa "grab[s] her arm" too tightly and too abruptly, Jane compares the "strength" of the grip to Billy's. She "does not miss [Billy's] pinching hands or his cloying breath," and she is reluctant to share the actual reasons that she left Billy (7, 58).

"belong[ing] in the same category with each other in such a way that has consequences" (Haraway, "Making Kin"). As Alexander G. Weheliye puts it, "racial categories" are produced by "[r]acializing assemblages" that "articulate relational intensities between human physiology and flesh," which are "subsequently coded as natural substances" (50). Racial categories have consequences related to kinship, materiality, and nurturing. The Filipina Hosts found kinship at Golden Oaks because they shared categories related to race, nationality, language, and immigrant experience, and we know that their categorization *as* Filipinas had material consequences because Mae specifically seeks out Filipinas as Hosts and pays them less than white Hosts. Meanwhile, in the dorm in Queens, Ate is nurturing a "fledgling" catering business (117), assisted by other Filipinas who are not biokin. Angel, her best friend, handles the "day-to-day," while the dorm is "full of Filipinas who know their way around the kitchen" (131). At Jane's home in Queens and at Golden Oaks, Filipinas identify with their *kind* to form *kin*, and they develop senses of responsibility to one another.

Still, the blending of biokin with non-biokin seems to be the more common way in which kinship networks form in *The Farm*. This is vital not only for children, but also for the elderly and the sick (if they do not have access to money, that is). Angel is not biogenetically related to Ate, but she comes to Queens and lives with her, caring for her when she becomes more ill. Both Ate and Angel worry that if Jane knows about Ate's turn for the worst, the resultant stress may affect her work of pregnancy at Golden Oaks, so they hide this information from Jane. Unfortunately, their caginess about Ate's health results in a misunderstanding that causes Jane to believe that Amalia is the one who is deathly ill. Although Amalia *was* temporarily sick, Angel (who is not related "by blood" to Ate, Jane, or Amalia) took over the nurture of Amalia, while also nurturing Ate as she was dying. This is important because, as Ate has pointed out, in

America, "you must be strong or young if you are not rich" because "the old, the feeble — they are hidden away" (119). That's probably why Mae finds it useful, when recruiting Jane, to mention that "many of our Hosts take an advance out of their paychecks to cover child- or elder-care in their absence" (59). For those who must be away from the kin who rely on them, this is a big selling point, and Mae knows that it's especially useful for immigrant Hosts and she also knows that child care *and* elder care ought to be linked during her pitch.

Haraway considers this link to be one of the reasons we ought to take a cue from adoption law, which enshrines responsibilities — including monetary ones — among chosen[52] kinship networks. Many "practical issues, including housing and financial issues" are involved in kinship networks, Haraway says, so she is "interested in questions of inheritance and adoption law — various ways that people can build *financial* obligation into each other's friendship networks" ("Making Kin," emphasis added). This is largely why Jane has been sending money to Ate, but note that Haraway this time says "*friendship* networks." She says "kin networks" or "kinship networks" mostly throughout this interview, but uses "friendship networks" here, reinforcing that these bonds do not have to be blood relation (in the case of Jane and Ate, cousins). Jane sends money partially to compensate for Amalia's care, but also to ensure that both Ate and Amalia have their needs met while Jane is at Golden Oaks. Angel ends up caring for both Ate, a woman who is almost seventy with severe heart problems, and Amalia, an infant. Here, biogenetics (among Ate, Jane, and Amalia) and nonbiogenetics (Angel and the Filipinas whom Ate mentors) combine to fill in the gaps created by a system of capitalism in America that

[52] I should note that adoption is not "chosen" for all involved, a fact I'm sure Haraway is well aware of. For more on the unethical and coercive practices of adoption in the United States, see Gabrielle Glaser's *American Baby: A Mother, a Child, and the Shadow History of Adoption* (2021). The type of adoption practices Haraway is discussing here *are* chosen, however, in the sense that the decision among adults to "adopt" or establish legal financial ties with each other is voluntary; but the choice is informed by what "critters" around us are part of our realm of response-ability.

Ate considers "not solid" enough to take care of those in need who happen to be neither rich nor children (108). Haraway evokes the idea of adoption law with a lens focused on financial obligations because she is aware that there is a *materiality* to the potential that money can have on nurturing from a distance.

Ate's ability to nurture Roy, her paralyzed adult son, from a distance relies on the material nurturing possibilities of money. Ate decided to come to America only after "it became clear that he would not get better, that Roy would always need someone to cut his food, button his shirt — that Ate would have to take care of him until she died and even afterward" (126). By including "and even afterward," Ate is acknowledging that her obligations to nurture Roy extend beyond the grave. Making financial preparations to nurture her son after she dies demonstrates an "enduring" quality of kinship, to use Haraway's term, that *always* implies physical and temporal distance. The ability to take care of Roy is "outsourced," allowing her to facilitate his nurture from across the globe; and the financial preparations she has been making for years will allow her nurturing impact to continue after she has died. But during a videochat with Roy, when she realizes that she is unable, through the screen, to move a fly from his face, she admits that she does not know if she has "made the right choice" in separating from Roy (206). She has always believed that "she [will be able to] focus on Roy" directly (that is, instead of focusing on working to earn money for his care) once she ensures that the "money will be steady" (165). She never believes that making money renders her good deeds "contaminated," however, as Jane occasionally implies, because "it is about Roy. Everything Ate did was for him" (281).

Unfortunately, in capitalism, the material possibilities of money necessarily involve the outsourcing of labor, the alienation of work, and the redistribution of kinship attachment sites. This is perhaps best illustrated by the role of the *yaya* in *The Farm* in particular and in the

Philippines in general. A *yaya* in Filipino is translated by most Filipinos as "aunt," "auntie," or "caretaker" (Davis), but Maria Rosario T. de Guzman defines *yayas* as "domestic workers caring for children in affluent families in the Philippines, who themselves have left their own children in rural areas in the care of alternative guardians" (197). Ate owns three properties back in the Philippines, one of which houses Roy and his *yaya*, "who Ate pays good money to take care of him" (119). Ramos's Filipino characters in the farm seem to have Davis's description of *yaya* in mind when they use the term, rather than de Guzman's definition, and those characters would certainly not be described by readers as "affluent" (especially by American readers). Nevertheless, Ate does earn passive income from property that she owns in the Philippines, which is made possible only from the money she earns "baby-nursing," which is itself made possible by Roy's *yaya*, whom she pays to care for Roy, and who, in turn, is now separated from her own family to be a live-in caregiver to Roy. Ate loves that in the Philippines, if you are old, "[y]our family takes care of you and if they do not, your *yaya* will" (120). But it's important to note that all levels of this chain involve, at some point, caring for someone other than one's biogenetic kin, and *separating* from one's biogenetic kin. Roy's paralyzation means that in the Philippines, he can be categorized in with children and the elderly enough to warrant care from a *yaya*. And, from Ate's comparisons between Filipino and American culture, she seems to believe that care work is more accessible and normalized in the Philippines. Ate always reminds Angel that she should "buy land" or "another house" in the Philippines," to "make good investments so [Angel] can take care of [herself] when she [is] old," especially since Angel cannot rely on her daughters (118). When she says "take care of yourself," however, she implies the involvement of a *yaya*, which means that this work of care is distributed, and monetary transactions are involved in that distribution.

Subjects, Objects, and Control

Sometimes when the labor of nurture is distributed, it is performed by robots. In fact, Lewis and others argue that reproduction has always been assisted in some way or another, if not by other humans then by various forms of technology, no matter how ancient or rudimentary compared to today's technological capabilities.[53] As I discussed in the Introduction, AI and IP have useful (albeit accidental) overlapping meanings: artificial intelligence/artificial insemination and intellectual property/intended parent. Under the "new narcissism" that Lisa identifies in *The Farm*, intended parents use what they view as their own version of intellectual property, their DNA code, to produce offspring that they view as an extension of their own intellectual property, which we culturally and legally refer to as "theirs." And they do this with assistance from artificial insemination, which is increasingly incorporating artificial intelligence in its methods (Broster), and which was used throughout Golden Oaks to monitor the Hosts, while disguised as nurturing the Clients' viable fetuses.

As artificial insemination creates a new generation for the intended parent, passing on the parent's biogenetic line, so does artificial intelligence succeed in "generations," each developed from, but changed from, the generation before. My own iPhone X, for example, is now two generations behind, but it will still turn off my patio lights and lock my front doors at night. And as I worked on this dissertation, my mother was performing eldercare for her own mother; but she still managed to nurture me from almost 600 miles away while I was writing by ordering me breakfast and lunch delivered through DoorDash. Was it the smartphone app that she ordered

[53] "Pregnancy," Lewis says, "has long been substantially techno-fixed already, when it comes to those whose lives really 'matter.' Under capitalism and imperialism, safer (or at least, medically supported) gestation has been the privilege of the upper classes" (3). Moreover, "[n]atural kinship is itself already assisted, already a body modification technology, one that happens to militate at a structural level against queerness" (117).

from that nurtured me? Was it the corporation that owns the app? The one that owns the restaurant? Was it the delivery driver? Yes, to all of those questions; and it was *also* her. She had the thought, she took the action, she made the order, she spent the time, she spent the money, she earned the money with her labor, she touched a screen, which sent radio frequencies across the Trinity River Basin. And then many other people and objects facilitated the rest of the action. It was a form of "cyborg nurture," so to speak, that Ate uses every day when she provides for the care of Roy, and that Ate provides every day when she cares for other people's children.

While the entire concept of "posthuman nurture" is concerned with subject/object dualism and the inherent issues of control associated with it, examining it in *The Farm* focuses our attention on how subject/object power imbalances translate to pregnant people and the fetuses they gestate. At Golden Oaks, despite the rhetoric used outside board meetings, the Hosts are seen as barely more than robots, in which AI is given code via AI, that remains the IP of the IP. Hosts are referred to with numbers, and newer employees are corrected if they accidentally use the Hosts' names. While this can surely be read as a prison metaphor, in which inmates are given numbers to dehumanize them, this also evokes notions of "model numbers" on machines. Any subjectivity the surrogates had prior to becoming Hosts is taken away, and they are now objects carrying the potentiality for a *new subject* in the image of the ultimate subject: the rich and powerful Client, the intended parent. In fact, to advocate for Golden Oaks' offering more hosts who are "lower middle-class *Caucasians*," he supports his idea with the notion that "the forgotten blue-collar American" have been "hammered for decades," "robots taking their jobs," "robot-jobs moving to Mexico or China, anyway" (172). For lower-middle-class white Hosts, they could charge Clients a premium but compensate them less than the upper-middle class "Premium Hosts." Because we are now in a "postindustrial world," Leon explains, "service jobs,

mostly the crappy ones, are the future. Flipping burgers, taking care of old people. *Our* jobs are life-changing. People should be tripping over themselves to land one" (172). Here, Leon seems to think that "taking care of old people" cannot ever be "life-changing" and that someone who "flip[s] burgers" cannot ever do anything "life-changing." Both are problematic in themselves.

What's interesting, however, is that artificial intelligence, to Leon, is the source of the middle class's problems, and that artificial insemination — the other AI — is their only "viable career prospect" (173). Further emphasizing the idea that the Hosts are more like robotic vessels than people, he compares them to accessories and clothing from "affordable" diffusion lines of luxury brands. "Calvin Klein with CK. Dolce with D&G. Armani with...Armani Exchange" are all examples, to Leon, of the ways companies that produce accessories to expand slightly "beyond the ultra-rich" to include some more affordable brands (173). He knows that "artificial intelligence" will only "intensify" the "trends" toward economic inequality, but he sees this as a possibility to use human biopower, that is, AI as artificial insemination, instead, for financial gain.

Leon is proven correct that service jobs are the future and, paradoxically, that those service jobs are becoming more scarce due to the increasing ability of artificial intelligence to take on such work. Mae's husband, Ethan, is a day trader, and every day he worries that he will lose his job because his company is "pouring money into artificial intelligence" (232). Mae does not see this happening for the wealthy. In fact, she "thanks her lucky stars that rich people like to be catered to by actual humans," which implies, incorrectly in my view, that the issue comes down to preference and not access. I'm sure that no matter a person's socioeconomic status, when they call customer service, they are just as likely to say under their breath that they *just want to talk to a human!* So, it is only because Clients have the means to acquire human

"service" that Mae can so confidently say that "[r]obots will never run Golden Oaks" (232). It is not because they are the only ones with the desire to acquire human service. But Mae is referring to Clients' desire to interact with people like her and Leon, not Hosts themselves, which makes their status as human subjects murky. Hosts are not the ones "catering "to Clients' needs (this is done through Mae and others as intermediaries) and many Clients never bother to meet the Hosts carrying their fetuses.

That's because the fetus, for the Client, is the Subject during gestation and the Host is merely an object in which the fetal subject incubates. The subject-object power differential here starts to cross over into issues of fetal personhood and a pregnant person's right to choose what happens to her body. But with the addition of a gestational surrogacy contract, issues of "right to life" for a fetal subject become even more difficult to navigate. Here, it doesn't just come down to the question of "when does life begin?" because the fetal subject at Golden Oaks is always considered to exist *before life*. For example, Hosts do not receive delivery bonuses (which make up the bulk of their compensation) until after a baby is born and survives birth. This implies that the fetus is *not the same* kind of life until it is outside the womb and cut from its umbilical ties to the Host. Coordinators at Golden Oaks, who work directly with the Hosts, refer to the fetuses as "babies," presumably to influence the Hosts to care for the baby as a life that already exists. But Mae, Leon, and the Clients, when speaking outside the earshot of Hosts, consistently refer to them as "fetuses," often with qualifiers such as "viable" and "less-viable/high-beta" (292). Clearly, they recognize that fetuses only carry the potential for life (and thus profit), and do not in and of themselves constitute life. But because Mae is driven by profit motive stemming from the Hosts' own biopower, she gives the fetus *subjectivity* even if she does not give it *personhood*.

The only time Mae considers fetal subjectivity in the context of fetal personhood is when she is looking for a legal "stick" to use against Jane, when "carrot[s]" were not enough to prevent her from escaping Golden Oaks to check on Amalia's health (242). Discovering whether or not, in New York State, a fetus is considered a "person" in the legal sense is important if they are going to dangle the threat of kidnapping charges against Jane (263, 267). This moment might surprise the reader, because until this point, Mae has consistently used terminology related to contract law, which means that in this case, the Client's "property" might be considered "stolen," but not "kidnapped," unless the baby were already born. In fact, when Reagan is told that a growth they discovered is benign, Lisa suggests that she check the contract to see if they are required to tell her the truth if it is malignant: "[w]hat we need is to know what her contract says," and whether it's the fetus or the Host that "takes precedence" if a situation "puts the fetus at risk" (211). In other words, even Hosts know that the "precedence" of the fetus over the Host is possible, but that it comes down to contract law, not criminal code. Even though "fetal kidnapping" is, in fact, a concept in criminal law, it emphasizes the *pregnant person* as the Subject, even though the term linguistically focuses on the fetus. Also referred to as "fetal abduction," or "cesarean kidnapping," it is an "attack [on] a mother-to-be" in which someone "cut[s] the baby from her womb" (Walters). Many states recognize "fetal homicide" as a crime, which implies a form of fetal personhood; but those laws, as of 2021, all include exceptions for abortion in order to conform with *Roe v. Wade*. For example, in Alabama's criminal code, the term "person" includes a "fetus," but the law itself states that it "does not apply to acts that cause the death of an unborn child if those acts were committed during a legal abortion" ("State Laws"). For what it's worth, however, New York State does not have a "fetal homicide" law *or* a

"fetal personhood" law, but this did not stop Mae from lying to Jane to pretend that she would charge her with kidnapping (thus separating her from Amalia).

In *The Farm*, parasites and tumors join fetuses in the "competition," so to speak, over what "takes precedence" in the subject-object dynamic between Hosts and the various entities that their bodies nurture — whether willingly or unwillingly. Jane, for example, must navigate what, for Golden Oaks, is the controversial issue of getting a tick while on a walk with Lisa. Reagan, on the other hand, must negotiate between her health, the health of the fetus inside her, and the growing "lump" on her collarbone that might be malignant. Meanwhile, both Jane and Reagan's bodies are being attacked by their placentas. Here, the word "Host" takes on even more connotations, as both women are "hosts" to other people's fetuses, Jane is a literal "host" to a parasite, and Reagan's body "hosts" a tumor. Evolutionary biologist Suzanne Sadedin calls pregnancy in humans a "biological war between mother and baby," because, unlike pregnancy in "most mammals," the "invading" cells of the human placenta "digest their way through the endometrial surface, puncturing the mother's arteries, swarming inside and remodelling [sic] them to suit the foetus." Sadedin also notes that pregnancy in humans is biophysically similar to a malignant tumor, even down to the genetic activity: "placental cells rampage[] through surrounding tissues, slaughtering everything in their path as they hunt[] for arteries to sate their thirst for nutrients. It's no accident that many of the same genes active in embryonic development have been implicated in cancer." In fact, this is one of Lewis's biggest reasons for calling for "more surrogacy, not less," because "unlike almost all other animals, hundreds of thousands" of humans die from pregnancy each year. She contends that this is a social and not a natural phenomenon. Even though the way cells operate is not a social construction, we have

allowed pregnancy to continue killing humans for "economic and political reasons" by restricting the distribution of gestational labor in the main governmental unit of capitalism: "The Family."

Thus, while Reagan unknowingly provides a nurturing environment for an abnormal cell mass, Jane's body unknowingly provides a nurturing environment for a parasite; and in both cases, the nurturing potential for the fetus — and the overall health of the Host — are put in jeopardy. Moreover, other "subjects" (e.g., Mae, Leon, the Coordinators) must decide which of these various entities to place "higher" on the "hierarchy" of agencies. The Client, from Golden Oaks's perspective, remains at the top of such a hierarchy because the Client is the source of profit for the labor performed by the Hosts. It is here that readers have the best ability to tease out the multitude of problems related to subject-object distinctions and the control of other matter. The reason that a tick is so controversial at Golden Oaks is that ticks carry Lyme disease, which "during pregnancy can lead to infection of the placenta" (CDC). Although it is rare for Lyme disease to "spread from mother to fetus," the mere possibility means that Jane is fiercely interrogated about where she picked up the parasite. Jane is particularly unlucky, because her tick *did* give her Lyme disease, which resulted in the "punishment" of cancelling a planned visit with Amalia. Anya, another Filipina Host and a devout Catholic, was forced to abort her (or should we say "the Client's"?) fetus, despite her objections, because it was discovered that the fetus had a trisomy, and the Client did not want a "defective" baby to come to term. So Jane had precedent that a Client's desires for a fetus override her desires for what happens in her body. The tick, "the size of a poppy seed," looking "completely harmless" (104) had nevertheless threatened the fetus, and with that, it could potentially damage Golden Oaks's relationship with the Client. The risk to Jane, which the CDC emphasizes is much greater than the risk to the fetus, is an afterthought at best to everyone at Golden Oaks, except to the other Hosts.

The difference between *agency* and *personhood* is important, then, when we consider the "perspective" of a Host's fetus and any other "thing" that their bodies are nurturing, whether intentionally or not. Until Jane's tick and Reagan's biopsy are examined by labs, characters are unaware if either bodily invader actually poses a threat to the fetus or to the Host, but both invaders are immediately viewed as something that should be killed (depending on one's perspective). The only time the fetal subject is "allowed" to be terminated is if the Client desires that it be killed. Ian Bogost's view of "alien phenomenology" calls for viewing all experience as existing on the level of "things," including humans. Notably, Bogost believes, in his form of object-oriented ontology, even though "all things equally exist," it is still true that all things "do not exist equally" (11). This allows us to believe that the fetus has some sort of material agency, "animacy" (Chen), or "vitalism" (Bennett) — that it "equally exists" with other matter, including that which makes up the pregnant person's body. But does not compel us to consider the fetus to "exist equally" with the pregnant person, any more than we would consider Jane's tick or Reagan's lump as "existing equally" to them. Haraway agrees with the fact that some agencies can, and must, exert control over other agencies, but she comes to it from a perspective more based in animal studies. She believes that her relationship with her dog is "not a relationship of equality," but is instead a "relationship based on control and necessarily so. Otherwise, you kill your dog with a fantasy of freedom not rooted in what it takes to live together" ("Making Kin"). Haraway's dog's subjectivity is important, but she cannot ever *know* it, and attempting to uncover a dog's subjectivity operates within a "fantasy of perfect communication" that "leads us to violence against the other because the other remains other." To Haraway, violence comes from trying to inhabit another being's subjectivity, not from the fact that it is a relationship based on "control." If one's relationship with an animal "necessarily" allows for "control," as Haraway

puts it, then the fetuses, parasites, or tumors in Jane and Reagan's bodies certainly do not "exist equally" with their Hosts, particularly after their threats to Jane and Reagan have been identified.

Ate's status as a "baby-whisperer" for newborns with colic provides an example of control over other matter in which the "object" controlled benefits, and the action is thus viewed as nurture rather than exploitation. Wealthy clients brag about Ate's ability to get children on sleep schedules when nobody else is able to do so, to the point that they "pass[] Ate on" to other wealthy friends with newborns, as though Ate herself is an object to transfer (12). But what these women do not know is that "Ate stood all night over the crib in the darkened nursery holding a pacifier to the baby's lips" (12). Ate loses sleep and time in order to control the baby by preventing the baby from spitting out the pacifier. In this case, the baby is already alive, and, unlike Jane and Reagan's fetuses, the baby is already a *person* in the legal sense. But that does not preclude control over that person, if the person is dependent. In this case, subject-object control is beneficial to the supposed "object" (the nurtured), but this also benefits Ate, because she has made her wealthy clients dependent on her, giving her job security, and thus a greater ability to provide care for Roy, who is dependent on her for an entirely different reason. What remains troubling, though, is that in *The Farm*, Jane and Reagan's control over the entities that rely on their bodies to grow is limited by the Mae, the Client, contract law, and capitalistic profit motives.

Conclusion: Facts, Fictions, and The Future

Mae repeatedly tells Leon that Golden Oaks is the future of Holloway (37, 139). That's not only because she recognizes that gestation involves creating the humans of the future, but also because she believes in the ability to *guide* evolution. In this case, in contrast to the guiding of evolution advocated by Bellamy and Gilman, Mae guides evolution deliberately by and for the

most wealthy. This is certainly a social Darwinist perspective, since the wealthy are considered the most "fit," but for Mae, this social Darwinist form of nurturing futurities is merely the *effect* of catering to the rich, not necessarily the *intent*. It's a distinction without a difference, however, if the future involves further exploitation of the poor, and even Mae's rhetoric about the future is littered with notions of social and moral fitness associated with Herbert Spencer. For example, in promoting "Project MacDonald" (her "brainchild" for expanding the "gestational retreat" portion of Holloway, which bears a name that implicitly admits that Lisa was right to call Golden Oaks "The Farm"), she suggests that the richest people are those most deserving of assistance in procreation. When Leon emails her that he is signing off on Project MacDonald, she and her friend toast "to the future!" as they spill champagne, "probably a couple hundred dollars' worth," across the floor (228).

Mae "proudly and unabashedly" wants to advertise Project MacDonald as "a high-end, one-stop shop for the procreation of the men and women — the movers, the shakers, the leaders, the iconoclasts — who are changing the world!" (107). The implication here is that those who have less money than Oprah, the Kennedys, or Warren Buffet — whom she uses as examples in this context — are not worth helping procreate because they are less fit to "change the world." She also believes that gestational surrogacy helps give children a "jumpstart in life in an environment calibrated *explicitly* to maximize his fetal potential" (108). Here, she acknowledges that simply changing one's conditions can lead to better "potential," which recalls the analogy Bellamy uses regarding the transplantation of the "rosebush of humanity." But when Bellamy uses the metaphor, he is speaking *against* the Spencerian notion that fitness is the end-all-be-all of survival and that "struggle" is intrinsically valuable to evolutionary potentials. Mae, however, agrees throughout the novel that struggle is intrinsically valuable to individuals' futures, but she

seems, here and at other moments, not to agree that individuals must remain in the same "unfit" conditions in order to improve through struggle. Reagan at one point hopes that her fetus will "repair the world" before she becomes disillusioned with the "facade" of Golden Oaks's rhetoric (244, 132).[54] The "façade" she refers to is the disingenuous rhetoric that Mae and the other staff employ about gestational surrogacy as a "gift," a rhetoric that they press the Hosts to internalize. This leads Reagan to write a satirical article for *BusinessWorld* titled "Top 30 Fetal Bigwigs Under 30 Weeks!", lampooning her interpretation of Mae's rhetoric, in which the "the wombs of the Fetal Leaders inhabit" are "along the lines of luxury real-estate listings" (139).

The Farm reveals issues of authenticity that intersect with the legitimacy of kinship ties, and the responsibilities that stem from those ties. In an author's note, Ramos states that *The Farm* "is a work of fiction" but that "it is also, in many ways, true" because it represents not only her own experiences as a Filipina immigrant to the United States as well as the stories that people have shared with her (324). And she is correct: nothing in the novel is "speculative" other than the ability of such a facility to exist in specifically New York State in 2019, where gestational surrogacy was illegal until February 2021. Such facilities have existed in several countries for decades[55], and the AI depicted in the novel are technologies used daily all over the globe (my Apple Watch, for example, is no less advanced than a WellBand, and CCTV is ubiquitous). Haraway notes an overlap between fact and fiction; American courts have slowly made "artificial families" legally and culturally "the same" as biogenetic ones; and "fictive kin" in child placement law recognizes that "kinship" must, even legally speaking, extend beyond the "fact" of blood relation. Haraway has what she calls her "little skein of fibers for 'SF': string

[54] Although these page numbers may suggest that this is out of chronological order, the "repair the world" quotation appears during a memory of events that occurred "a week ago" (244).
[55] Lewis devotes an entire chapter to such facilities in India (Chapter 4), and Ramos cites a particular facility in India as inspiration for her novel (329), which I presume is the same one.

figures, science fiction, speculative fabulation, science fact, speculative feminism, and so far" ("Making Kin"). Comparing fiction with nonfiction, she notes that the two genres '"foreground and background differently," but that both involve the "care and feeding of facts." Fiction's "imaginative boundaries" are different, she says, but they have several "contact zones," which means that there is a "play, in the Cat's Cradle game, between science fact and speculative fiction." This gives fiction an important role to play in understanding fact.

Perhaps this is why allusions to works of fiction in *The Farm* each at some point deal with subject-object control that involves an attempt to shape the future in one's likeness. The climax of the novel, where Jane manages to escape to see Amalia, occurs when she is allowed to watch the musical *My Fair Lady*. Mae describes the play to Jane as something that "may have some resonance" for her because the protagonist, Eliza Doolittle, "raises herself up," going from "a life with few prospects to one with many" (251). She doesn't mention to Jane that this is likely impossible for her, since, as Mae admits to the reader early in the novel, Hosts do not have a track record of being able to leave "childcare or household services" to become white collar (49). *My Fair Lady* is based on the 1912 play *Pygmalion* by Bellamy-sympathizer George Bernard Shaw, which is itself based on W. S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (written in 1878 but especially popular in the 1880s), and which, in turn, was based on the character Pygmalion from Greek mythology. The original Pygmalion, as well as Gilbert's reimagined version of the character, was a sculptor who fell in love with his own creation. Eliza becomes the "sculpture" of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, who remains the main character in *My Fair Lady*, and Mr. Higgins is the "sculptor" who transforms Eliza into a "lady." But while in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza leaves her "creator" after realizing that he does not recognize her role in her own success, in *My Fair Lady*, Eliza returns to her "creator." As Reagan's father hopes to "forge her in his image" (77) and the

Clients exhibit the "new narcissism" of custom-made babies (72), the theme of parent-child subject-object control is amplified by Mae's insistence that Jane see, and identify with, *My Fair Lady*.

When Mae is "courting" Reagan as a host, she takes her to *Hamlet*, instead, which seems appropriate for a character who spends her entire time at Golden Oaks trying to make it through David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, which gets its title from a line in Shakespeare's play. Lisa calls the book *Infinite Slog*, and says that "only a true narcissist thinks he has that much that's interesting to say" (248). Lisa's discussion of a "new narcissism" and her frustration with Wallace's lengthy prose being indicative of a "true narcissist" underscores the problems she identifies with parents as creators trying to control children as creations. In Greek mythology, Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection, but is tormented by it because it is not *real*: the object of his adoration cannot ever materialize. This is also true of every wealthy Client who commissions Golden Oaks to gestate their DNA: they have an idea regarding what they want to create, but they can never actually achieve it because babies themselves become humans with agencies in their own right. And as Reagan's father can attest, one's desires for one's offspring can be influenced, particularly by financial dependence, but they cannot be completely controlled. The physical copy of *Infinite Jest* in Reagan's room ends up providing her the ability to communicate with Lisa after she leaves (Lisa has left a code on a few of its pages), which allows Reagan to facilitate Jane's escape to get to Amalia — at a production of *My Fair Lady*. These various allusions combine to challenge the authenticity of reproduction and critique the desire to control one's creations or offspring.

Giving agency to a fetus in a theoretical framework informed by a posthuman decentering of the "Human" is *not* to give personhood to a fetus. That is a different matter

altogether. But we have seen that government constructions of familial connection — making "artificial ties" legally *the same* as "natural" or "blood relation," for example — have material consequences. The figure of the child is "greeted with intense emotion," in Rebekah Sheldon's words, which is true about Amalia, whose separation from her mother is the driving force behind *The Farm*'s plot (7). But Sheldon also says that understanding the reason for this intense reaction to the figure of the child "requires first stepping back into the late nineteenth century to rehearse some of the ways in which the child came not only to signal the future but to sentimentalize a rescue that is, in a profound sense, more important than the child who is its putative subject" (7). In *The Farm*, the idea of rescuing Amalia — and the notion that she needs rescuing at all — ends up becoming more important to the plot than Amalia herself.

More Conclusion(s)

I began this dissertation as an attempt to reconcile two efforts that seemed at odds with one another: my endeavor to adopt a baby, and my continued research on posthumanism, new materialism, and object-oriented ontology. At the same time that I was exploding my own notions of the liberal-Human subject, I was preparing to engage in a process that entailed centering my own subjectivity/ies over other materialities. Not only would I be acting as a subject on a baby as an object, but also, because I was working with a domestic infant adoption (DIA) agency, I had even more subjectivities to take into account: a "birth mother," the baby's "biological father," the baby's other blood relatives, etc. And, to be precise, *there was no baby*, only a fetus; and for that matter, the fetus *did not yet even exist*. Moreover, there was also no "birth mother" yet because, given the timeline of DIA, the "birth mother" I would be "matched" with would likely not yet be pregnant at the beginning of the process. I soon realized that the term "birth mother" was also itself a problem, since the agreement would *precede* birth (and

since not all pregnant people identify as "mothers"). In the state of Texas, a pregnant person cannot terminate parental rights until at least forty-eight hours after birth, which is not nearly long enough to make such a permanent decision after such a physically and emotionally taxing experience. After extensive research, I soon learned that a posthuman theory could actually present solutions, not problems, to these predicaments of subject-object nurturing relationships.

As I embraced the idea that all materialities, including human bodies, are intertwined, "enmeshed," and "entangled," I was beginning the process of home study, adoptive parent training, and other tasks necessary to *acquire* a human *of my own* to nurture. I was, at the time, in what adoptee rights advocates call "the fog": I believed that adopting a child was an act of "saving an unwanted" or orphaned baby (Root). But the number of prospective adoptive parents "dramatically outpaces" the number of babies who need adoptive parents (Root), which means that supply-and-demand necessitates the creation of "paper orphans" whose parents are very much alive and capable of parenting. Although the term "paper orphan" usually refers to illegal adoptions made possible by falsified documents, especially international adoption, the adoptee rights community often uses this term to refer to the pressure put on economically disadvantaged pregnant people to enter private domestic infant adoption agreements. Pregnant people are told this is a selfless act that gives their child the "gift" of a "better life." The industry encourages them to use "positive adoption language," such as "placing" their child into adoption instead of "giving up" their child to adoption. We can see this in Jacobson's research regarding surrogacy and in Ramos's novel, in which those performing gestation are encouraged to internalize specific rhetorics of good will. Pregnant people are told that they can change their mind at any time, which implies that they hold the Ultimate Agency in the act of DIA. But the consequences of keeping one's child after entering DIA agreements are stiff, which makes it difficult to back out

of such arrangements, especially for people who came to the process already economically disadvantaged. The money paid by adoptive parents to adoption agencies is usually enough to allow the pregnant person to parent their own child if that money had just gone directly to them. This is another reason that "human infrastructure" is a *generational* investment, as I mentioned in the introduction, given the inherent trauma involved in even the most open adoption arrangements.[56]

Two oppressed groups — LGBTQ Americans and adoptees/donor-conceived persons — are pitted against each other when it comes to reproductive futurities. Adoption agencies have focused on LGBTQ intended parents to increase their client base, particularly as states have loosened their restrictions on gay adoption. And as Jacobson has pointed out, the surrogacy market recruits gay men because "their ability to achieve exclusive genetic parenthood is currently entirely reliant on a [surrogacy] market" ("A Limited" 20). The admittedly valid anxieties that gay men have over the State's historic willingness to remove adopted children from gay couples, alongside the State's legal protections for biogenetic parenthood, leave gay men with "few options" other than this market if they want safeguards against separation. In fact, when New York State — the jurisdiction so important to *The Farm*'s contemplation of pregnancy — legalized gestational surrogacy, the governor framed the legislative "success" almost entirely through the rhetoric of LGBTQ reproductive rights. It is, Governor Andrew Cuomo claimed, a win in the state for "LGBTQ+ couples and couples struggling with fertility"; notice how LGBTQ+ Americans are mentioned *before* nonqueer couples struggling with fertility ("Governor"). Because *The Farm* focuses on the "Hosts," the Clients are unseen, and the only mention we ever get regarding queer reproduction is the idea – never confirmed – that someone's

[56] It should also be noted that "open adoption" agreements are largely unenforceable once a first parent terminates their parental rights, since legal parental rights trump contract law in family courts.

Client might be a "couple of gay guys" (75). I applaud this seeming erasure of queerness in *The Farm* because it does not fall into the ever-growing tendency to privilege queer reproductive rights over the agency/ies involved in making new babies.

As I have discussed throughout these chapters, posthuman nurture does not only involve babies, or even humans. But it always involves Baradian "intra-activities" between material objects. When we decenter the Subject – especially the Human-as-subject – we can discover new ways of caring for others, including the *zoe* and non-*zoe* others in our realms of "response-ability." We can see that nurturing happens all around us in mutual exchanges and that these exchanges do not always involve actions of *intent* (at least as far as our human minds can fathom intent). We see that, sometimes, ethical nurture involves taking the action of *not taking action*, the way that I chose *not* to use a hose on a currently-molting cicada on the rosebush in my garden. We also see that, sometimes, nurture requires making decisions about death: killing cancerous cells, removing and killing a parasite, or weeding my garden so that other plants may thrive. And we see that we can nurture futures that are utopian, even if they involve social collapse or human extinction. Finally, posthuman nurture allows us to accept that even though we *must* often take actions on behalf of other materialities, we must still spend time considering the agencies of those "others" before doing so.

Works Cited

@TheAdoptedLife. (Username for Angela and Bryna Tucker.) “Adoptees ‘Flip The Script’ on National Adoption Month (Extended Version),” *YouTube*, 6 Nov. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTGzZboJCAU.

"aeroplane, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2020.

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self.* Indiana University, 2010.

Alexander, James B. *The Lunarian Professor and His Remarkable Revelations Concerning the Earth, the Moon, and Mars, Together with an Account of the Cruise of the Sally Ann*. Octavo, Unknown Publisher, 1909.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958.

Arkansas Supreme Court. *Verser v. Ford*. 37 Ark. 27, 1881.

Auerbach, Jonathan. “‘The Nation Organized’: Utopian Impotence in Edward Bellamy's Loo*king Backward*.” *American Literary History*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1994, pp. 24–47.

Austen, Roger, *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America*, Bobbs-Merrill, 1977.

Bachelder, John. *A.D. 2050: The Electrical Development of Atlantis*. Bancroft Co., 1890.

Balladeer. “‘The Artificial Man’ (1884): Ancient Science Fiction.” *Balladeer's Blog*, Wordpress, 2 June 2020.

Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*. Ticknor & Co., 1888.

—-. Letter to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 19 Mar. 1891. Papers, 1846-1961, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Collection 177, Folder 137.

—-. Typed notes from *Wonderful Century*, date unknown, presumably 1899. Papers, 1846-1961, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Collection 177, Folder 22.

Berger, Eric. “The Atlantic Hurricane Season’s First Storm Forms Early—Again.” *Ars Technica*, 22 May 2021, https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/05/the-atlantic-hurricane-seasons-first-storm-forms-early-again/.

Bergson, Henri. *Creative Evolution*. Translated by Arthur Mitchell. Holt & Co., 1911. Published in original French in 1907.

—-. *Time and Free Will*. Translated by F. L. Pogson. Allen & Co., 1913. Published in original French in 1889.

Bowler, Peter J. *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Evolution Theories in the Decades Around 1900*. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992.

Brackbill, Yvonne, and Hiram E. Fitzgerald. “Stereotype Temporal Conditioning in Infants.” *Psychophysiology*, vol. 9, no. 6, 1972, pp. 569–577.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman.* Polity Press, 2013.

—. “Introduction.” *Posthuman Glossary*, edited by Braidotti and Maria Hlavanjova, Bloomsbury, 2018, 1-7.

—-. “Placenta Politics.” *Posthuman Glossary*, edited by Braidotti and Maria Hlavanjova, Bloomsbury, 2018, 315-318.

—-, and Maria Hlavajova. *Posthuman Glossary*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Brannon, Elizabeth M et al. “Temporal Discrimination Increases in Precision over Development and Parallels the Development of Numerosity Discrimination.” *Developmental Science* vol. 10,6 (2007): 770-7.

Barad, Karen. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke Univ Press, 2007.

Boswell, Angela. “The Double Burden: A Historical Perspective on Gender and Race Consciousness in the Writings of Lillian B. Jones Horace.” *Recovering Five Generations Hence: The Life and Writing of Lillian Jones Hborace*, edited by Karen Kossie-Chernyshev. Texas A&M Univ, 2013.

Boswell, John. “Revolutions, Universals, and Sexual Categories.” *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. Meridian, 1989.

Breen, Margaret S. “Homosexual Identity, Translation, and Prime-Stevenson's Imre and The Intersexes.” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2012.

Broster, Alice. “Could Artificial Intelligence Be The Future Of Fertility Treatment?” *Forbes*, 15 Jan. 2021, www.forbes.com/sites/alicebroster/2021/01/11/could-artificial-intelligence-be-the-future-of-fertility-treatment/?sh=77e5c61f388e.

Butler, Samuel. “Darwin Among the Machines: To the Editor,” *The Press*, Christchurch, 13 Jun. 1863. Published under the pseudonym Cellarius.

Callahan, S. Alice. *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*. H.J. Smith & Co., 1891.

Chen, Mel. *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Duke Univ Press, 2012.

“Child Protective Services Handbook.” *Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)*, Feb. 2017, www.dfps.state.tx.us/handbooks/CPS/Files/CPS_pg_6600.asp#CPS_6600.

Cleaves, Rachel Hope. “‘What, Another Female Husband?’”: The Prehistory of Same-Sex Marriage in America,” *Journal of American History*, vol. 101, no. 4, March 2015, pp. 1055–1081.

"construct, v." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2020.

Colebrook, Claire. *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction Vol. 1*, Open Humanities Press, 2015.

Connell, Jeanne M. “Revisiting the Concept of Community: An Examination of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Utopian Vision," *Peabody Journal of Education*, vol. 70, no. 4, 1995, pp. 19-33.

Darwin, Charles. *Darwin: Texts, Commentary*. Edited by Philip Appleman, Norton Critical Editions, 2001.

De Guzman, Maria Rosario. “Yaya: Philippine Domestic Care Workers, the Children They Care for, and the Children They Leave Behind.” *International Perspectives in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2014, pp. 197–214., doi:10.1037/ipp0000017.

Dewey, John. *The Later Works, 1925-1953*. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 9, Southern Ill. Univ. Press, 1986. de Kock, Leon. “Interview With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa.” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, vol 23, no. 3, 1992, pp. 29-47.

Donawerth, Jane, et al. *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference*. Syracuse University Press, 1994.

Duberman, Martin, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, editors. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. Meridian, 1989.

Egan, Maureen L. “Evolutionary Theory in the Social Philosophy of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.” *Hypatia*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1989, pp. 102-119.

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive.* Duke Univ Press, 2004.

Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. Verso, 1970.

Fitzsimons, Tim. “LGBTQ History Month: The Early Days of America's AIDS Crisis.” *NBC*

News, 15 Oct. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lgbtq-history-month-early-days-america-s-aids-crisis-n919701.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Pantheon, 1978.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*. The Forerunner, 1915.

—-. *Concerning Children.* Small, Maynard & Company, 1900.

—-. *Women & Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*. Small, Maynard, and Company, 1898.

—. "Similar Cases," *The Nationalist*, 1890.

—. "Survival of the Fittest," *The Nationalist,* 1891.

—-. "Why Walk Backward?" *The Impress*, 1894.

—-. Notes on *Wonderful Century*. Papers, 1846-1961, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. Collection 177, Folder 22.

—- and Denise D. Knight, *The Abridged Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Univ Press of Virginia, 1998.

—-, et al. *The Selected Letters of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. Edited by Denise D. Knight and Jennifer S. Tuttle, Univ. of Alabama Press, 2009.

Glaser, Gabrielle. *American Baby: a Mother, a Child, and the Shadow History of Adoption*. Viking, 2021.

"Governor Cuomo Announces Gestational Surrogacy Now Legal in New York State." *Reimagine, Rebuild and Renew New York*, New York State Government, 16 Feb. 2021, www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-gestational-surrogacy-now-legal-new-york-state.

Grossberg, Michael. *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America*. Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Hall, Matthew, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*. SUNY Press, 2011.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke Univ Press, 2016.

—-. *When Species Meet*. Univ of MN Press, 2008.

—-. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 1, May 2015, pp. 159–165, doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934.

—-. Interview with Steve Paulson. "Making Kin: An Interview with Donna Haraway." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 3 Dec. 2019.

—-. "Making Oddkin: Storytelling for Earthly Survival," Yale University, Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies Symposium on Donna Haraway, October 23, 2017.

Harper, Frances E. W. *Iola Leroy: Or Shadows Uplifted*. Edited by Koritha Mitchell. Broadview, 2018. Originally published 1892.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. W. W. Norton, 2019.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How we Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* University of Chicago Press, 1999.

"Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 19 Apr. 2021, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Harper & Row, 1962.

Hertzler, Joyce Oramel. *History of Utopian Thought*. Routledge, 2019. Originally published 1923.

Highleyman, Liz. "New Vaccine Approaches Show Early Promise for HIV." *POZ*, 25 June 2021, www.poz.com/article/new-vaccine-approaches-show-early-promise-hiv.

Hofstadter, Richard. "Racism and Imperialism," *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, Beacon, 1992.

Holford, Castello N. *Aristopia: A Romance-History of the New World*. Arena Publishing, 1885.

Holmes, Catherine. "Review: 'A Children's Bible' Clings to Hope in a Dystopian Present Where the Kids Are in Charge." *Post and Courier*, 14 Sept. 2020, www.postandcourier.com/features/book_reviews/review-a-childrens-bible-clings-to-hope-in-a-dystopian-present-where-the-kids-are/article_c3b3d078-d59b-11ea-966d-773730291af5.html.

Horace, Lillian Jones and Karen Kossie-Chernyshev. *Recovering Five Generations Hence: The Life and Writing of Lillian Jones Horace*, edited by Karen Kossie-Chernyshev. Texas A&M Univ, 2013. Originally published 1916.

Howells, William Dean. *The Traveler from Altruria: A Romance*. Harper & Bros., 1894. Originally serialized in *The Cosmopolitan*.

—-. "The Editor's Study," *Harper's Magazine*, LXXVII, June 1888, p. 154.

Hrdy, Sarah B. "Allomothers Across Species, Across Cultures, and Through Time." Substit*ute Parents: Biological and Social Perspectives on Alloparenting in Human Societies*, edited by G. Bentley and R. Mace, Berghahn Books, 2009, pp. xi-xviii.

Hubbard, Thomas K. “Review of David M. Halperin’s *How to do the History of Homosexuality*.” *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 22 September 2003.

Huxley, Julian. *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*. George Allena and Unwin, 1945.

Ilgenfritz, Alice, and Ella Merchant. *Unveiling a Parallel: A Romance*. Arena Publishing, 1893.

Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism*, Indiana Univ Press, 2014.

Jameson, Frederic. “Progress vs. Utopia, or Can We Imagine the Future?” *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia, and Other Fictions*. Verso, 2005, pp. 281-295.

Johnson, Diane. “Let's Go to Dystopia: Review of On Such a Full Sea.” *The New York Review of Books*, 24 July 2020, www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/06/05/chang-rae-lee-dystopia/.

Johnson, John J. *Latin America in Caricature*. Univ. of Texas Press, 1980.

Joye, Kathryn. “Shotgun Adoption.” *The Nation*, 14 Sept. 2009, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/shotgun-adoption/.

Kansas Supreme Court. *Chapsky v. Wood*. 26 Kan. 650, July 1881.

Kaplan, Sarah. “The Improbable, 200-Year-Old Story of One of America’s First Same-Sex ‘Marriages’,” *Washington Post*, 20 March 2015.

Karpinski, Joanne B. “When the Marriage of True Minds Admits Impediments: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and William Dean Howells.” *Critical Essays on Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, edited by Joanne B. Karpinski, G.K. Hall & Co., 1992, pp. 202–221.

Keyes, Margaret A., et al. “Risk of Suicide Attempt in Adopted and Nonadopted Offspring,” *Pediatrics*, vol 132, no 4, 2013, pp. 639- 646. doi:10.1542/peds2012-3251

Klumbyté, Goda. “Kin,” *Posthuman Glossary*, edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavanjova, Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 225-227.

Koestler, Arthur. *The Ghost in the Machine*, Macmillan, 1967.

Kolmerten, Carol A. “Texts and Contexts: American Women Envision Utopia, 1890-1920.” *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women*. Syracuse Univ. Press, 1994, pp. 107-125.

Kokko, H. and Jennisons, M.D. “Parental Investment, Sexual Selection and Sex Ratios.” *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, vol. 21, 2008, pp. 919-948. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1420-9101.2008.01540.x

Kumar, Krishan. *Utopia and Anti-utopia in Modern Times*. Blackwell, 1987.

Lane, Ann J. “Introduction,” *Herland: A Lost Feminist Utopian Novel by Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Pantheon, 1979.

Lane, Mary E. Bradley. *Mizora: A Prophecy: A Mss. Found Among the Private Papers of Princess Vera Zarovitch: Being a True and Faithful Account of Her Journey to the Interior of the Earth, with a Careful Description of the Country and Its Inhabitants, Their Customs, Manners, and Government*. Cincinnati Commercial, 1880.

Lane-McKinley, Madeline, and Marija Cetinic. “Theses on Postpartum.” *GUTS*, 29 Sept. 2016, gutsmagazine.ca/theses-on-postpartum/.

Lea, Richard. “Joanne Ramos: ‘Motherhood Is Not Even Seen until It's Outsourced’.” *The Guardian*, 13 June 2019, www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/13/joanne-ramos-the-farm-interview-surrogacy.

Leland, Charles Godfrey. *Flaxius: Leaves From the Life an Immortal*. Phillip Wellby, 1902.

Lewis, Sophie Anne. *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*. Verso, 2019.

Lengermann, Patricia, and Gillian Niebrugge, editors. *Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Routledge, 2018.

Lepore, Jill. “A Golden Age for Dystopian Fiction.” *The New Yorker*, 5 June 2017, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/05/a-golden-age-for-dystopian-fiction.

Levitas, Ruth. *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Palgrave, 2013.

Lowry, Lois. Interview with Jenelle Riley. "'The Giver' Author Lois Lowry Thinks 'Dystopian Fiction Is Passé'." *Variety*, 13 Aug. 2014, variety.com/2014/film/news/giver-author-lois-lowry-dystopian-ya-novels-1201278835/.

Matchar, Emily. "Meet the New Anti-Adoption Movement," *The New Republic*, 1 Sept. 2013, https://newrepublic.com/article/114505/anti-adoption-movement-next-reproductive-justice-frontier.

Marx, Leo. *Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America.* Oxford Univ Press, 1964.

McClelland, Richard T. "Robotic Alloparenting: A New Solution to an Old Problem?" *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2016, pp. 71-98.

McCowan, Archibald. *The Billionaire: A Peep Into the Future*. Jenkins & McCowan, 1900.

Millet, Lydia. *A Children's Bible: A Novel*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2020.

—. Interview with Carolyn Kellogg. "The Climate Gospel According to Novelist Lydia Millet." *Los Angeles Times*, 5 May 2020, www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/story/2020-05-05/lydia-millet-a-childrens-bible-profile.

—. Interview with Amanda Stern. "Lydia Millet: A Children's Bible." *Medium*, The Writing Cooperative, 25 Sept. 2020, writingcooperative.com/lydia-millet-a-childrens-bible-df285ae4ada6.

—-. Interview with Christian Lorentzen. "There Will Be Flood." *Book Forum*, 25 May 2020, www.bookforum.com/print/2702/lydia-millet-discusses-her-new-novel-of-teens-biblical-allusions-and-plausible-environmental-disaster-24048.

Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard Univ Press, 2012.

—. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World. Posthumanities* series. Univ of MN Press, 2013.

Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Screen*, vol. 16, no 3, Autumn 1975, pp. 6-18, doi:10.1093/screen/16.3.6.

Mumford, Lewis. *The Story of Utopias*, Boni and Liveright, 1922.

“NCDJ Style Guide.” *National Center on Disability and Journalism*, 2018, ncdj.org/style-guide/.

Norton, Rictor. *Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity*. Bloomsbury, 2016, originally published in 1997.

"nurture, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2020.

Patai, Daphne. *What Price Utopia? Essays on Ideological Policing, Feminism, and Academic Affairs.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Pereira-Mendes, Henry. *Looking Ahead: Twentieth Century Happenings*. Tennyson Neely, 1899.

Prime-Stevenson, Edward Iranaeus. *Imre: A Memorandum*, Naples: The English Book Press, 1906. Published under the pseudonym Xavier Mayne.

Rafferty, Edward C. *Apostle of Human Progress: Lester Frank Ward and American Political Thought, 1841-1913*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Rahal, Sheryl Ann. “The Ghost Dance as a Millenarian Phenomenon.” *Anglophonia/Caliban*, no. 3, 1998. “Millénarisme et utopie dans les pays anglo-saxons.” pp. 171-181; doi:10.3406/calib.1998.1362.

Ramos, Joanne. *The Farm: A Novel*. Random House, 2019.

Ramsey, Milton Worth. *The Austral Globe*. Milton W. Ramsey Publishers, 1892.

Riedman, Marianne L. “The Evolution of Alloparental Care and Adoption in Mammals and Birds.” *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, vol. 57, no. 4, 1982, pp. 405–435. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2826887. Accessed 6 July 2021.

Robinson, Kim Stanley. “Remarks on Utopia in the Age of Climate Change.” *Arena*. vol. 35/36, 2011, pp. 8-21. (Also *Utopian Studies*, vol. 27 no. 1, 2016, p. 2-15.)

Roemer, Kenneth. “Sex Roles, Utopia, and Change: The Family in Late Nineteenth-Century Utopian Literature,” *American Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1972, pp. 33–47.

—-. “Utopian Literature (1888-1900): An Annotated Bibliography,” *American Literary Realism*, Summer 1971, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 227-254.

—-. *The Obsolete Necessity*: America in Utopian Writings, 1888-1900. Kent State Univ., 1976.

—-. *Utopian Audiences: How Readers Locate Nowhere*, Univ. of MA, 2003.

Root, Tik. “Inside America's Murky Private-Adoption Industry.” *Time*, 3 June 2021, time.com/6051811/private-adoption-america/.

Ryan, Frank X. *Darwin's Impact: Social Evolution in America, 1880-1920*. Thoemmes Press, 2001.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind*, Univ of Chicago Press, 1949.

Sadedin, Suzanne. “Why Pregnancy Is a Biological War Between Mother and Baby.” *Aeon*, 13 Dec. 2020, aeon.co/essays/why-pregnancy-is-a-biological-war-between-mother-and-baby.

Scharnhorst, Gary and Denise D. Knight. “Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Library: A Reconstruction.” *Resources for American Literary Study*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1997, pp. 181–219.

Schindler, Solomon. *Young West: A Sequel to Looking Backward*. Arena Publishing, 1894.

Sedgewick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Univ. of CA Press, 1990.

Sheldon, Rebekah. *The Child to Come: Life After the Human Catastrophe*. Univ of MN Press, 2016.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorti. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271-313.

"State Laws on Fetal Homicide and Penalty-Enhancement for Crimes Against Pregnant Women." *National Conference of State Legislatures*, www.ncsl.org/research/health/fetal-homicide-state-laws.aspx.

Stern, Amanda. "Lydia Millet: *A Children's Bible*." *Bookable*, 25 Sept 2020, https://writingcooperative.com/lydia-millet-a-childrens-bible-df285ae4ada6.

Sternbergh, Adam. "We've Reached Peak Dystopia, But Is It Possible to Imagine Utopia Anymore?" *Vulture*, 22 Aug. 2014, www.vulture.com/2014/08/why-cant-anybody-write-a-utopian-novel-anymore.html.

Stoltzfus, Arlin. "Mutation-Biased Adaptation in a Protein NK Model," *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, vol. 23, no. 10, 2006, pp. 1852–1862.

—-, and Lev Y Yampolsky. "Climbing Mount Probable: Mutation as a Cause of Nonrandomness in Evolution." *The Journal of Heredity* vol. 100, no. 5, 2009, pp. 637-47.

Sullivan, Kate, and Maegan Vazquez. "Biden Pushes for 'Generational Investments in Human Infrastructure' in Speech in Illinois." *CNN*, 7 July 2021, www.cnn.com/2021/07/07/politics/infrastructure-biden-illinois-speech/index.html.

Temple, Emily. "No One Writes Utopian Novels Anymore Because Utopian Novels Are Boring." *Flavorwire*, 22 Aug. 2014, www.flavorwire.com/473562/no-one-writes-utopian-novels-anymore-because-utopian-novels-are-boring.

Texas Supreme Court. *Legate v. Legate*, 87 Tex. 248, 1894.

"Ticks and Lyme Disease: Pregnancy and Lyme Disease," *Centers for Disease Control*, 27 Jan, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/resources/toolkit/factsheets/Pregnancy-and-Lyme-Disease-508.pdf.

Trivedi, Shanta. "The Harm of Child Removal," *NY Review of Law and Social Change*, vol. 43, no. 523, 2019, pp. 523-580.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton Univ Press, 2017.

Tolle, Andrew. Char*lotte Perkins Gilman: Naturalist Playwright*, MA thesis, University of North Texas, May 2012.

"U.S. Immigrant Population and Share over Time, 1850-Present." *Migration Policy Institute*, 15 Nov. 2020. Accessed 13 Feb. 2021.

Vandermeer, John H. *The Ecology of Agroecosystems*. Jones and Bartlett, 2011.

van der Waal, Rodante. "The Pregnant Posthuman: A New Philosophical Subject," *Posthuman Glossary*, edited by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavanjova, Bloomsbury, 2018, pp. 368-371.

Ward, Lester. "Our Better Halves," *Forum*, vol. 6, 1888. Introduces "Gynaecocentric Theory"

Ward, Peter Douglas, and Donald Brownlee. *The Life and Death of Planet Earth: How the New Science of Astrobiology Charts the Ultimate Fate of Our World*. Holt, 2004.

Wallace, Alfred Russel. "Letter to the Editor," *The Radical*, London, 16 July 1881, pp. 4-5.

—-. *The Wonderful Century*: *Its Successes and Failures.* Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1898.

Walters, Joanna. “Fetal Abduction: Brutal Attacks Against Expectant Mothers on the Rise in US.” *The Guardian*, 2 Dec. 2015, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/dec/02/fetal-abduction-attacks-expectant-mothers.

Webb, Stephen. *All the Wonder that Would Be: Exploring Past Notions of the Future*. Springer, 2017.

Wheeler, Michael, “Martin Heidegger,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2020 Edition)*, edited by Edward N. Zalta.

White, Swede. “The Problematic Gender Politics Between Masc and Fem Gays.” *Vice*, 27 July 2016.

Wilson, Edward O. *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Belknap Press, 1975.

Winokur, Marc A., et al. “Systematic Review of Kinship Care Effects on Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being Outcomes.” *Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 28, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 19–32.

Wolfe, Cary. *What is Posthumanism?*, Univ of Minnesota Press, 2010.

“The World's Real Time Billionaires.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, www.forbes.com/real-time-billionaires/#32c57b4f3d78. Accessed 13 Feb. 2020.

Zaretsky, Adam. “Bioart in Question: Adam Zaretsky Talks with Shannon Bell, et. al,” *CIAC’s Electronic Magazine*, Digicult, no. 3, 2005.