

Winds of Change: New Women and the Bicycle around the Turn of the Twentieth Century

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Introduction

In 1893, Frances Willard, famed temperance reformer and suffragist, felt the wind in her face for the very first time on the seat of a safety bicycle.¹ Before the bicycle, women were prisoners in their own homes and bodies, their identities were tied to the domestic realm. The bicycle first emerged in America during the nineteenth century. Anxieties about the bicycle arose out of tensions of the changing roles of women yet there were little anxieties expressed about men riding bicycles. The New Woman was a cultural phenomenon that transformed British and American culture from the 1890s through the 1910s. New Women were dedicated to different types of independence. However, the stereotypical American New Woman was white, college educated, and often sought jobs that advance women's equality.² Also, the New Woman outspoken and assertive relentlessly fought women's economic autonomy through the right to vote while prioritizing "intellectual or artistic aspirations over domestic concerns – which earned her both scorn and praise in the popular press."³ Much of the cultural comment focused on the New Woman and the bicycle. In the era of technological modernity from 1890-1900, New Women seized the opportunity to ascribe individuality to a mass produced object such as the bicycle in order to spread the idea of equality for women to the masses.

New Women's belief in gender equality, independence and increased mobility out of the home had a major effect on women's self-concept. In this essay, I will argue that the American Women who identified as New Women were drivers of materialism, which helped women gain independence and mobility through the mass production of bicycles in the 1890s-1910s. American New Women embraced modernity despite the ugly reality that industrialization created for America's urban working class. Men feared the swift away from traditional gender roles such as wives and mothers, would have a negative impact on marriages, society, and culture. One scholar emphasized, "The complex passage from Victorian culture to modernism involved, among many other changes, a redefinition of gender relations, what might be termed the

¹ Frances Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (New York: F.H. Revell Company, 1895), 72.

² Charlotte Rich, *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 1.

³ Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 1.

shift from homosocial to heterosocial culture.”⁴ At the core of men’s fear was the bicycle was giving women more of a right to choose how to think, behave, and make their own choices about their bodies. In my essay, I draw on the contributing scholarship in bicycle, health, fashion, and gender history. Popular magazines, literature, advertisements, personal hygiene handbooks, posters published by bicycle manufacturers, fiction, and medical journals offer evidence of the beginning of the first women’s social movement that was brought on with the bicycle. The bicycle was a means of empowerment for women because of the rejection of Victorian ideas of femininity which stated that women were inferior to men and belonged in the domestic sphere. In order to understand the bicycle’s role in the empowerment of women, understanding the history surrounding it is necessary.

Background

The turn of the twentieth century was a period of rapid economic, social, and cultural change in the United States. In 1898, the president of the American Bankers Association said, “We hold now three of the winning cards in the game for commercial greatness ... iron, steel and coal. He went on to say, “We have long been the granary of the world ... we now aspire to be its workshop, then we want to be its clearing house.”⁵ At the end of World War, I, Europe was heavily indebted to the United States, and New York had replaced London as the financial capital of the world. By 1919, the United States outproduced the rest of the world in manufacturing, agriculture, and credit.⁶ This meant that middle class American women had more money to spend for their own enjoyment.

Throughout the 1890s in the US, there was great wealth disparity. One percent of the wealthiest families in 1890 owned fifty-one percent of the real and personal property. The bottom forty-four percent of families owned just above one percent of all property.”⁷ Wealthy and affluent families, which together represented twelve percent of families, owned eighty-six percent of all wealth. Additionally, the poor and middle classes, which represented eighty-eight percent, owned only fourteen percent of the wealth in the United States.”⁸ As industrialization spread throughout Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, the United States became inundated with immigrants looking for employment. Between

⁴ Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 6.

⁵ Nell Irvin Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton), xviii.

⁶ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xviii.

⁷ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xx.

⁸ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xx.

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the early 1880s and the 1930s, the US received a total of 27,000,000 immigrants.⁹ The millions of immigrants that flocked to the United States mark the human labor needed to keep the industrial system churning.

A decent working-class income, that allowed children to remain in school and wives to stay home to care for their families, was around 800 dollars per year.¹⁰ Middle-class income was 900 to around 3,500 dollars per year. A majority of middle-class employees were male; “salesmen, clerks, and government workers, who wore jackets and ties and worked in offices.”¹¹ Teachers, who were almost all female, largely belonged to the middle class, though they made only about 250 dollars per year.¹² Other women found employment opportunities in “department stores, large factories, and offices provided alternatives to domestic service, household production, and sweated labor in small shops.”¹³ Because of growing industrialization, leisure time gained increased importance and a culture surrounding amusements and sports arose. The commercialization and invention of leisure time, particularly in cities, drastically changed the lives of working-class Americans. The invention of leisure came to fruition because of legislation that restricted working hours.¹⁴ Leisure culture appealed to men and women alike, as women were also increasingly working for wages. More women were working and had excess money to spend. Naturally, the participation of women in the economy was encouraged because it was highly profitable.¹⁵ The invention of leisure, the safety bicycle, and consumerism created the perfect storm for the only bicycle craze in American history.

The Dawn of the Bicycle Age

To understand how the bicycle craze was born, we need to understand the evolution of the bicycle. First, there was the precursor to the modern bicycle: the draisine, also called the velocipede. The draisine is similar to a modern bicycle, but without any pedals or chains, so the rider would have to move by pushing their feet off the ground; it had an

⁹ Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 50.

¹⁰ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xxiii.

¹¹ Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xxiv.

¹² Painter, *Standing at Armageddon*, xxiv.

¹³ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 35.

¹⁴ Paul Smethurst, *The Bicycle Towards Global History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 36.

¹⁵ Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 6.

uncomfortable seat and a rigid wooden frame.¹⁶ Denis Johnson, a pioneer bicycle maker, improved upon the velocipede by adding an adjustable seat and a steering handle.¹⁷ Johnson additionally altered the velocipede to be suitable for women riders by “dropping the horizontal bar that linked the wheels” in order to make room for their long skirts.¹⁸ Many people referred to this bicycle as the dandy horse or the hobby horse. However, the velocipede was considered a novelty item and was only briefly popular amongst the wealthy in the US and Europe when it first emerged.¹⁹ The next version of the velocipede was nicknamed the boneshaker, and it was invented by French carriage makers Ernest Michaux and Pierre Lallement. The latter played a crucial role in American bicycle history when he patented the boneshaker in the US and gave manufacturers licenses to produce it.²⁰ This newer version featured tires made from iron, it weighed 150 pounds, and there were no shocks under the seat to absorb bumps in the road.²¹ The problem with the boneshaker was its weight, it was difficult for people to store and get out of their homes.

In the 1870s, two-wheeler designs became fine-tuned. The high wheeler, or penny-farthing, was patented in 1870 by the British firm Stanley and Company.²² The front wheel was forty-eight inches high, and the much smaller second wheel kept the weight of the vehicle to the ground.²³ As the two-wheeler’s evolution progressed, iron and wooden frames were replaced with steel, and solid rubber tires and pedals were replaced with metal parts. Shock absorbers were added to seats, brakes were installed, and the weight of the vehicle was reduced by about fifty pounds.²⁴ The high wheel was extremely dangerous because any bump in the road could throw the rider over the steering handle, and it was difficult to mount since the seat and front wheel were so high. Also, scholars note, the penny-farthing “was impossible to ride in skirts or even [in] divided skirts, and riding it was specifically marked as a masculine

¹⁶ Smithsonian Institution Archives, 325369/ 254379/Smithsonian Bicycle Collection, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/si-bikes/si-bikes-velocipede>

¹⁷ Sue Macy, *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2011), 15.

¹⁸ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 15.

¹⁹ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 15.

²⁰ Smethurst, *The Bicycle Towards Global History*, 29.

²¹ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 16.

²² Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 17.

²³ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 17.

²⁴ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 17.

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pursuit.”²⁵ The American bicycle industry had its own manufacturing icon in Albert Pope, who produced America’s most popular bicycle, the Columbia, in 1878.²⁶

Pope embarked on an aggressive marketing campaign in order to sell the bicycle to the American public and to make bicycling a legitimate sport. For instance, Pope financed a monthly magazine called *The Wheelman* and gave prizes to doctors who published articles saying that the bicycle was good for cyclists’ health.²⁷ Pope also supported legal defenses of riders and was an avid supporter of American cyclist rights.²⁸ His invention of the Columbia safety bicycle, which had two equal sized wheels, was a popular novelty in the early 1890s for wealthy riders.²⁹ Scholars argue that the safety bicycle “opened to the middle-class kinds of travel that had previously been available only to those wealthy enough to keep a horse, while it posed new problems and opportunities for its makers and marketers.”³⁰

Mass production had made some upper middle-class women cyclists hesitant to own a bicycle. However, articles successfully the manufacturing industry crafted unique bicycles and that mass production had not made the bicycle lose its beauty. One article stated that “The material and workmanship that go to the making of the standard modern wheel – The care and skill it still represents, and the magnitude of the cycle manufacturing industry – Speed records and tricking riding.”³¹ Wealthy Americans wanted to distance themselves from the massive crowd of new bicyclists on their mass-produced bicycles and commissioned the production of luxury bicycles. Gilded-Age celebrity, Diamond Jim Brady reportedly commissioned a diamond encrusted bicycle with pearl handlebars for his mistress, actress and singer Lillian Russell.³²

With the bicycle’s surge in popularity in the US, many inventors acquired patents for their bicycle-related inventions. In 1890, Kate Parke received a patent for a bicycle lock, “My present invention has, primarily, for its object to provide improved lock mechanism whereby bicycles may

²⁵ Ellen Gruber Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women,” *American Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (March,1995),67, <https://www-jstororg.ezproxy4.library.arizona.edu/stable/2713325>.

²⁶ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 17.

²⁷ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 18.

²⁸ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 18.

²⁹ Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” 67.

³⁰ Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” 67

³¹ “The Bicycle Today,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, May 1896, 153.

³² David V. Herlihy, *Bicycle: The History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 273.

be locked to prevent them from being used without the owner's consent or to prevent them from being stolen."³³ One scholar notes that bicycle manufactures aimed to sell as many bicycles to both men and women, and that, "Assurance that riding the new safety was appropriate to their gender could be important to female potential buyers and could allay either their own concerns or those of others who might object to their riding."³⁴ The mass public understood that the safety bicycle was masculine women's riding had to be made socially acceptable to sell safety bicycles to a larger market.³⁵ The invention of the drop frame bicycle suited manufacturers who needed to sell a bicycle specifically suited for female consumers. In 1888, the drop frame was invented after Mrs. W.E. Smith of Washington D.C. noticed her husband's new safety bicycle and desired one for herself, but the high bar in the center of the bicycle got in the way of her skirts.³⁶

New Women and the Bicycle

Henrik Ibsen's *The Doll's House* opened in 1889 and was a New York play arguing that it was not right that women were being taught that domesticity was the only thing which could make them happy, and that women should turn their backs on the ideal of achieving domestic bliss.³⁷ In Act III, Nora, the heroine, is in trouble with her husband, Torvald, who has just discovered she has taken out an illegal loan of money and is now being blackmailed for it. He is furious and thinks Nora is deranged, declaring that she will, "never see the children again!"³⁸ Torvald screams at Nora: "You miserable creature – what have you done?"³⁹ But then the maid arrives, handing Torvald a blackmailer's letter. It says that the blackmailer has returned the incriminating document, and this makes Torvald very happy, so he immediately wants to reconcile with Nora. Next Torvald essentially tells Nora that though she is not bright, he appreciates her dependence upon him.⁴⁰ But Nora will not tolerate this dependency anymore and she tells Torvald such.⁴¹ She leaves behind her wedding ring, the key to her home, her three

³³ Kate Parke, Bicycle Lock, US Patent, 436,800, filed April 28, 1890, and issued September 23, 1890.

³⁴ Garvey, *Reframing the Bicycle*, 69.

³⁵ Garvey, *Reframing the Bicycle*, 69.

³⁶ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 23.

³⁷ "An Ibsen Play Enacted – "A Doll's Home" at a Matinee," *The Sun*, December 22, 1889.

³⁸ Henrik Ibsen, *The Doll's House: A Play*, trans. Henrietta Frances Lord (New York: D. Appleton & co., 1894), 131.

³⁹ Ibsen, *The Doll's House: A Play*, 132.

⁴⁰ Henrik Ibsen, *The Doll's House: A Play*, 134-36.

⁴¹ Henrik Ibsen, *The Doll's House: A Play*, 139.

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children, and she angrily storms out, slamming the door.⁴² One critic of the play said ~~that~~, “The character of Nora is untrue to nature.” He went on to confidently add, “Not one woman in this American audience would have felt sympathy for her.” And he said ~~that~~, “Ibsen’s idea was distinctly perceptible, but the wife was a wild piece of fiction who could have never existed.”⁴³ However, women like Nora did exist all over America. The radical idea that self-fulfillment was more important than fulfilling the role of wife and mother inspired a new generation of women, both in the US and around the world, later known as New Women.

One such woman was, Annie Cohen Kophovsky who declared, “I am a journalist and a “new woman” – if that term means I believe I can do anything that any man can do.”⁴⁴ One scholar notes that New Women “challenged existing gender relations and the distribution of power.”⁴⁵ Other scholars highlight that “cultural comment centered around,” the New Woman, “and her bicycle,” despite there being many other subjects of change at the same time.⁴⁶ The New Woman was powerful because “controlling their fertility, new women caused those in power to fear national population declines – industrialists feared a shortage of workers, and imperialists politicians feared there would be insufficient troops to extend or defend the power of the nation-state.”⁴⁷ Kophovsky was Jewish and she had emigrated from Latvia, at five years of age with her family, to arrive in Boston, Massachusetts.⁴⁸ By the time she was around seventeen, both of her parents had died, leaving her and her older brother to raise two younger siblings.⁴⁹ When she was eighteen, she married a peddler named Max Kophovsky. She worked selling advertising space for different newspapers. During this period of her life, she claims to have overheard two wealthy businessmen wager that a woman could not ride a bicycle around the world just as Thomas Stevens had done in the 1880s.⁵⁰

Kophovsky said the men stipulated the woman had to start her journey with no money and that she had to return with at least five thousand dollars. Only twenty-four at the time, she left her husband and

⁴² Henrik Ibsen, *The Doll’s House: A Play*, 146-49.

⁴³ Alan Dale, “A Doll’s Home,” *The Evening World*, December 23, 1889, New York edition.

⁴⁴ Nellie Bly, Jr., “Around the World in Bloomers on a Bicycle,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 27, 1895.

⁴⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245.

⁴⁶ Smith, “*Changing Lives*,” 317.

⁴⁷ Smith, “*Changing Lives*” 317.

⁴⁸ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 67.

⁴⁹ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 67.

⁵⁰ Bly, “Around the World.”

three children and set out from Boston to do the impossible – to ride a bicycle around the world.⁵¹ She had never ridden a bicycle before but learned to just days before on a forty-two-pound ladies' bicycle. Her experience in newspaper advertising likely made her especially fit for this journey around the world. Before she started her journey, she changed her name to Annie Londonderry, and Lithia Spring Water Company in New Hampshire paid her one hundred dollars to place an advertising sign on her bicycle. In June 1894, Annie's trip officially began. She reached New York in eight days, but she didn't reach Chicago until September 24, 1894. Londonderry quickly changed her heavy clothing by instead wearing bloomers and she traded her bicycle for one that was much lighter. She traveled by ship across the Atlantic to Europe, the Mideast, and Asia, and would make short cycling appearances at various stops. However, Londonderry exaggerated a large portion of her trip to keep the public more enthralled in her journey. For example, she wrote,

I saw the bodies of women nailed to the houses; the bodies of little children torn limb from limb. Everywhere there was evidence of most horrible butchery and mutilation of the dead. That same day we were captured by the Japanese and were thrown into a cell and left without food for three days. While thus imprisoned a Japanese soldier dragged a Chinese prisoner up to my cell and killed him before my eyes, drinking his blood while the muscles were yet quivering.⁵²

Although her account was fabricated, Londonderry crafted her tale to fit into the New Woman mold, using technology to become stronger and more powerful. When she landed in San Francisco in March 1895, she followed a difficult path along the Southern Pacific Railway tracks to Arizona, then on to Chicago, Illinois to successfully complete the wager on September 12, 1895.⁵³ Despite exaggerations, there are countless newspaper articles that prove that Londonderry was a brilliant marketer and an avid cyclist. Even today, society often looks down on women who leave their children in the care of husbands or women who profit by creating a celebrity mystique. Also, Londonderry's story is influenced by individualism – the idea that one is responsible for creating their own fate.⁵⁴ Annie Cohen-Kophovsky's trip around the world was her journey

⁵¹ Bly, "Around the World."

⁵² Bly, "Around the World."

⁵³ Peter Zheultin, *Around the World on Two Wheels: Annie Londonderry's Extraordinary Ride*, (New York: Citadel, 2007), 101.

⁵⁴ J. Harry Wray, *Pedal Power: The Quiet Rise of the Bicycle in American Public Life* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 55.

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inward, and her feat of self-discovery embodied what it meant to be a New Woman.

Bicycle manufacturers quickly seized on the “New Woman” trend and crafted advertisements that would specifically appeal to upper middle-class women. Scholars argue that new technology such as the bicycle “offers a reformed body, more powerful and capable, producing...a fascination...with the interface between body and machine.”⁵⁵ American women crafted new identities through advertising consumption. The *Santa Fe New Mexican* published an advertisement in 1896 that depicted a stereotypical image of a bloomer-clad woman riding through the idyllic countryside on the seat of a safety bicycle. However, sitting atop of the handle bars is a large crate of “Battle Ax” chewing tobacco.⁵⁶ Another example of manufactures marketing to middle class women is from an 1896 Remington Bicycle advertisement that appeared in *Munsey Magazine*. The advertisement depicts an art nouveau illustration of a woman in a fur coat on a bicycle.⁵⁷ The advertisement hides the unfortunate reality of what mass production was doing to people, the environment, and how it even changed the way people think. One scholar identified that in many bicycle advertisements, “effortless movement and liberty convey an idealistic vision of modernity divorced from the social realities of industrial labor and the stress of urban life,” and that “the bicyclist is transported to a fantasy world where lightly clad nymphs glide effortlessly through the idyllic countryside or otherworldly landscapes.”⁵⁸

Another art nouveau advertisement depicted a New Woman riding upon her New Haven Bicycle. The image blurs reality and portrays an image of delicate femininity.⁵⁹ One part of getting the masses of middle-class women to ride a bicycle is to link the bicycle with the idea of civility. The message was that owning a bicycle makes you apart of civilized society and is a part of the bourgeoisie identity. *Munsey Magazine* tells readers that “How bicycle has gone around the world, and reckons its devotees among the great men of every nation.”⁶⁰ The article goes on to add “the young autocrat of all the Russias, the Czar Nicholas”

⁵⁵ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.

⁵⁶ Advertisement in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Sept. 8, 1896, 2.

⁵⁷ “What You Do and What You Do Not,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, May 1896, 72.

⁵⁸ Paul Smethurst, *The Bicycle Towards Global History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 6.

⁵⁹ “The New Haven Bicycle,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, May 1896, 78.

⁶⁰ “The Wheel Aboard,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, May 1896, 156.

has been photographed riding a bicycle.⁶¹ Also, the daughters of Queen Victoria, Princess Louise and Princess Harry of Wales are known to enjoy riding the bicycle according to the same article. Magazines for women made a clear connection with the bicycle and progress for women, that the invention and easy availability bicycle meant that women would move further into the new century. As seen in this article quotes, "The condition of women had not changed materially for the better since the early days in the America," and that "the healthy capable, clear headed colonial dame, the ruler of her household, could hold her own with any of her granddaughters" because in that period the article claims women rode horseback. The New Woman did not shy away from using propaganda in order to get more women to adopt feminist ideology and identity, no matter how subtle it may be. Romanticizing the bicycle permeated not only advertisements but also literature because it was targeted American New Women.

The Bicycle in Literature

In 1917, Edith Wharton published her novel *Summer*. The heroine of the novel is Charity Royall, the daughter of poor New England moonshiners. She has a brief affair with a widowed lawyer named Mr. Royall. Then, she has a love affair with a man named Lucius Harney, an educated upper-class man. Charity becomes pregnant by Lucius and he abandons her for a higher society woman. In the end, Charity bitterly marries Mr. Royall who agrees to raise her lovechild.⁶² Wharton described Charity as embodying the New Woman. Charity was financially independent and was a consumer in the economy. Additionally, she rode a bicycle for leisure and transportation. Wharton wrote, "With part of what was left of her savings she had hired a bicycle for a month, and every day after dinner, as soon as her guardian started to his office, she hurried to the library, got out her bicycle, and flew down the Creston road."⁶³ Riding her bicycle represents Charity's ability to escape temporarily the reality of her marriage of conformity for a fantasy of momentary freedom.

Charity decided when and where she wanted to go because the bicycle gave her additional independence in deciding her future. For example, "Before starting she had forced herself to swallow a glass of milk and eat a piece of bread; and she had put in her canvas satchel a little packet of the chocolate that Harney always carried in his bicycle bag.

⁶¹ "The Wheel Aboard,"156.

⁶² Edith Wharton, *Summer* (The Floating Press, 1917).

⁶³ Edith Wharton, *Summer* (The Floating Press, 1917), 156.

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She wanted above all to keep up her strength, and reach her destination without attracting notice ..."⁶⁴ Wharton portrayed Charity as a free woman, and her mobility, enabled by the bicycle, was key to that freedom. Although she was liberated when compared to the ordinary woman of the time, she is still ~~is still~~ represented as constrained by society's ideas of respectability and class.

The previous sources illustrate how the turn of the nineteenth century was a time of immense change and transformation for many in the US. Some women used their agency in society to identify themselves as New Women and take advantage of new consumer and leisure opportunities in the changing society. However, although white, upper and middle class women experienced more independence, their newfound liberty often meant oppression for others who worked to support the lifestyles and free time bourgeois women enjoyed, often as servants, domestic laborers, and child caretakers.

Women such as Andrea Villarreal who molded her feminist agenda to be palatable to Mexican-American women along the US southern border. Andrea Villarreal was ~~an~~ a newspaperwoman who with her sister Teresa Villarreal published a feminist newspaper in El Paso. In her first newspaper debut of *La Mujer Moderna* in ~~of~~ December 1909 Andrea Villarreal, challenges newspapers in the Southwest who do not promote, "ideas that might facilitate the evolution of women." She goes on to say, "certain men, who prefer the humble servant, ignorant and submissive, to a worthy companion, intelligent and free, capable of giving happiness with her love, which otherwise would only be a morbid pleasure, and the strength and courage that men often lack during life's tortured times." Villarreal declared to her readers, "We are starting the movement; other more competent women will come later to erect on the rock of our efforts the future liberation of our sisters, and with that the joy of humanity." Finally, she adds, "And, since so many men remain on their knees, we women will stand up and make them get on their feet too. We have come to find freedom for us women and also for you men."⁶⁵ Although Villarreal's work was published in 1909 it demonstrates the intellectual ideas that influenced the New Woman.

Apparel and New Women

The leisure culture adopted by the mass populations of Americans created a specialized market for dress reform. On October 31, 1891 *Sporting Life* quoted one woman saying, "The wind was behind me, the

⁶⁴ Edith Wharton, *Summer* (The Floating Press, 1917), 204.

⁶⁵ "What We have Come For," *La mujer moderna* (San Antonio, Texas) December 1909.

road good, with just the least bit of down-slope, and I was skimming along like a bird, when there was an awful tug at my dress and a cracking sound, and before I knew what was the matter I found myself lying in the road with the safety on the top of me.”⁶⁶ She went on to say, “My dress was so tightly wound round the crank bracket that I could not get up until I had got it free.” Six years later, Sarah O. Clagett explained how her bicycle-related invention worked in her description by stating, “This I accomplish by attaching to the skirt about one foot each side from the front and within an inch or two from the bottom and parallel therewith a cable or cord, preferably elastic, on which is a clasp free to slide from end to end of said cable or cord and adapted to clasp a button, hook, or other equivalent on the lady’s shoe or legging.”⁶⁷ The need for dress reform for women bicyclists also provided entrepreneurial women like Sarah O. Clagett with opportunities that were not available before the bicycle.

Most of what the New Woman learned about fashion and their bodies originated in the opinions of men and classical art. For example, women drew upon aesthetics influenced by classical Greek and Roman periods that were romanticized at the turn of the century in architecture and dress. One scholar argued ~~that~~, “Yet these reformers believed that the body as it appears in nature could be improved through exercise and enhanced by making choices of clothing styles and colors based on the principles of art.”⁶⁸ However, there is a deeper meaning to the New Women’s claim to classical Greek fashion and art. Greece and Rome were thought of as classical examples of early democracies and early republics; women suffragists were especially drawn to these aesthetics because it fit with their desires to claim full citizenship; they used such images in newspapers, magazines, suffrage parades. Another scholar emphasized that the bicycle affected all classes of women’s fashion not just upper-class women but these effects remained uneven.⁶⁹ For example one Mexican woman was quoted in Tucson’s Spanish language newspaper *El Fronterizo*, opined “the bicycle does not represent the emancipation of women, if not the emancipation from the petticoat.”⁷⁰ Many dress reformers argued that a woman’s body could only be beautiful if corsets did not contort their bodies. On December 19, 1891, in *The Women’s Tribune*, Annie W. Johnson quoted John Collin who boldly declared, “My

⁶⁶ “Dress Reform Needed,” *Sporting Life* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) October 31, 1891.

⁶⁷ Sarah O. Clagett, Bicycle-Skirt Fastener, US Patent, 578,444, filed March 31, 1896, and issued March 9, 1897.

⁶⁸ Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women’s Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2003), 206.

⁶⁹ Smith, “*Changing Lives*,” 326.

⁷⁰ “Al Rededor del Mundo,” *El Fronterizo* (Tucson, Arizona) August 15, 1896.

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own opinion is that female dress will never be thoroughly satisfactory until women have realized that they have no waists."⁷¹ Collin adds, "Nature has not endowed them with waists, which are artificial forms produced by compressing the body." It is clear Collin is idealizing Grecian fashion for women because he writes, "Of course the Greek lady never supposed she had a waist." He continues, "She often, for the sake of convenience, had a string around the body, but only just tightly enough to keep her clothes in place, and then nearly always let some folds of the drapery fall over and hide the unsightly line."⁷² John Collin's push toward artistic dress reform for women highlights that New Women were always under the male gaze.

Many women engaged in respectability through leisure fashions that were centered in New Woman ideology that contributed to artistic dress reform. On September 22, 1899 in Nogales, Arizona a bicycle tournament and parade were held for the local community and women played a visible role in the festivities. *The Border Vidette* reported, "A unique feature was that of the judges." The article goes on to say, "In an enclosed platform were twelve of the prettiest of Nogales' society girls in Roman costumes, who, as queens, passed judgment upon the competitors."⁷³ Changing fashions from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century intersected with the arrival of the New Woman. One notable change to women's fashion due to the influence of the New Woman was the absence of the corset which made it easier for women to breathe, move, and enjoy exercise. The use of Roman and Grecian costumes reinforced the absence of corsets. The revolution in women's fashion would not have been possible without the bicycle craze. One scholar wrote, "women had played sports such as lawn tennis for several decades, dressed in fairly traditional attire, [but] the introduction of the bicycle into women's sphere could not have occurred without modification of clothing."⁷⁴ Under Victorian dress requirements, women's apparel had been designed to restrict and constrain women's bodily movement. For example, Frances Willard wrote in her memoir about the confinement of women's dress in *Wheel within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, stating it was customary to see "A woman with bands hanging on her hips, and a dress snug about the waist and chokingly tight at the throat, with heavily trimmed skirts dragging down

⁷¹ Annie W. Johnson, "The Unnatural and Unartistic Waist," *The Women's Tribune*, December 19, 1891.

⁷² Annie W. Johnson, "The Unnatural and Unartistic Waist," *The Women's Tribune*, December 19, 1891.

⁷³ "Bicycle Tournament," *The Border Vidette* (Nogales, Arizona) September 23, 1899.

⁷⁴ Smith, "Changing Lives," 326.

the back and numerous folds heating the lower part of the spine out to be in agony."⁷⁵ Women like Willard knew the natural consequence of more women riding the bicycle: that they would be freed from corsets and petticoats.

Physicians were aware of the dangers of the corset in the 1890s and urged women against them, allowing women to justify adopting a new corsetless fashion. Kellogg, a famous doctor of the era, wrote in 1893 that, "We wish also to call attention to the important fact that continuous pressure upon these parts may cause such a degree of degeneration of the muscles of the chest as to seriously impair the breathing capacity."⁷⁶ Kellogg also answered a question from a woman who states that she cannot live without her corset because she needed its support to keep her upright. Kellogg responded to this concern by writing, "It is possible that such individuals do really feel better when encased in a framework of whalebone, steels, and cords, than when depending on their natural resources for support. They have so long confined their yielding muscles in a rigid, unyielding case, that they have lost their strength and elasticity."⁷⁷ Consequently, what he implies is that women might benefit from greater physical activity and strengthening to avoid relying on contraptions for support. Another harmful women's fashion accessory Kellogg identified was the "elastic bands worn about the leg to keep the stocking in place, and sometimes used upon the arms to hold the sleeves up."⁷⁸ In June of 1891, *The Arizona Daily Star* criticized woman's exercise. The article stated, "the craze for serve exercise has been growing among women for the past three or four years, until now it is a question whether more injury than benefit is not derived from it."⁷⁹ The article goes on to add, "You cannot get too much fresh air, so drive and stroll out of doors as much as you can, but do not wear out your body and bring premature lines into your face by excessive exercise." Unlike women like Frances Willard, Kellogg advocated that the place for women would always be inside the home. The idea of staying at home was completely at odds with the New Woman and reflects the anxieties of changing gender roles and the fear of women slowly gaining agency over their own bodies.

Before describing her own experience with bicycle clothing, Frances Willard, in *Wheel within a Wheel*, made herself relatable to readers by sharing a personal story about learning to ride a bicycle. She wrote,

⁷⁵ Frances Willard, *Wheel within a Wheel; How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, 39-40.

⁷⁶ Kellogg, *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease*, 245.

⁷⁷ Kellogg, *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease*, 251.

⁷⁸ Kellogg, *Ladies' Guide in Health and Disease*, 253.

⁷⁹ New York Truth, "Sound Advice about Exercise," *Arizona Daily Star*, June 03, 1891.

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“Thus ruthlessly thrown out of the usual lines of reaction on my environment, and sighing for new worlds to conquer, I determined that I would learn the bicycle.”⁸⁰ Her words spoke directly to her audience of middle-class white women who were uniformly constrained in long skirts and tight corsets. Additionally, American women’s personal freedom was greatly restricted by their clothes once they matured to be a certain age. Willard recalls ~~that~~, “At sixteen years of age, I was enwrapped in long skirts that impeded every footstep, I have detested walking and felt with certain noble disdain that the conventions of life had cut me off from the freedom of my prairie home had one of life’s sweetest joys.”⁸¹ She also notes her age and that she had been out of shape for most of her life until discovering the liberty that bicycling offered.

Another dress reformer, Helen G. Ecob, urged women to think critically about their fashion because ultimately it is a reflection of their own intelligence. Ecob wrote, “Intelligence in fashions, it appears, will come only through the application of intelligence to the subject of dress.”⁸² Ecob understood that the New Women were consumers, and with power comes reasonability. Ecob wrote, “The serious obstacle in our problem is the tyranny of trade... The color of our hose, the depth of the mourning band is regulated by trade” she continues, “Women challenge the shifting styles no more than they do the tides of the sea.”⁸³ It is clear that Ecob wants women not to be frivolous in their fashion choices but to consider their power as consumers to enable change for all women by creating stability in fashion trends. Ecob urges women to boycott fast fashion trends, “We cannot live without coal, but we can live without the latest styles. Trade always adjusts itself to the demands of the purchaser. The despotism of manufacturer and dealer will cease women combine to demand stability in modes and intelligence in design.”⁸⁴ One scholar notes that, “Writers on both sides of the debate also shared widely held concerns that as America industrialized and urbanized, its people were becoming weaker and sicker, and passing their weaknesses from generation to generation.”⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Frances Willard, *Wheel within a Wheel; How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*, 11.

⁸¹ Willard, *Wheel within a Wheel*, 72.

⁸² Helen G. Ecob, “A New Philosophy of Fashion,” *Chautauquan* 31 (September, 1900), 607.

⁸³ Ecob, “A New Philosophy of Fashion,” 607.

⁸⁴ Ecob, “A New Philosophy of Fashion,” 607.

⁸⁵ Lara Freidenfelds, *The Modern Period: Menstruation in Twentieth-century America*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 79.

Popular Discourse and Controversy around Women Cyclists

The bicycle changed previous beliefs about health, morality, and etiquette. The Women's Rescue League was adamantly against the bicycle. Smith wrote in her Women's Rescue League group, "Bicycling by young women has helped to swell the ranks of reckless girls who finally drift into the standing army outcast women of the United States." Smith adds, "The bicycle is the devil's advance agent morally and physically in thousands of instances." The resolution calls for, "all true women and clergymen to aid in denouncing the present bicycle craze by women as indecent and vulgar."⁸⁶ When the resolution was published, Charlotte Smith was fifty-five years old, she was the daughter of Irish immigrants and she dedicated her life for defending the rights of female workers.⁸⁷ In defense of Charlotte Smith, given her sympathy working-class women, she must have witnessed first-hand the ravishes of industrialization and how manufacturers treated their workers. It was in Charlotte Smith's interests to be naturally against the bicycle.

Reverend Dr. A. Stewart Walsh promptly responded to Smith's call to action in *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* one day later on August 20, 1896, "I have associated with thousands of riders and have not seen among them that could begin to approach the outrageous and scandalous indecency of the resolutions of the alleged rescue league." Walsh adds, "Let the husbands who ride with their wives and daughters hold a meeting and decide as to how they may rescue their families from the slanderous fangs of these Washington rescuers."⁸⁸ For religious men like Reverend Dr. A. Stewart, it was in his interest to be accepting of the bicycle because cycling was the "only sport that religious authorities feared would siphon off not only men but also women from their congregations."⁸⁹ Religious authorities feared because of the bicycle that "they would soon find themselves preaching only to the sick and elderly."⁹⁰ Religious authorities embraced industrialization and the bicycle as a means to survive and keep their congregation even if it meant supporting women cyclists. While institutions such as law enforcement viewed female cyclists as criminals.

⁸⁶ Charlotte Smith, "Is Bicycling Immoral," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) August 19, 1896.

⁸⁷ Macy, *Wheels of Change*, 28.

⁸⁸ A. Stewart Walsh, "The Rev. Dr. A. Stewart Walsh Replies to the Rescue League," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York) August 20, 1896.

⁸⁹ Michael Taylor, "Rapid Transit to Salvation: American Protestants and the Bicycle in the Era of the Cycling Craze," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no.3 (July, 2010), 342.

⁹⁰ Taylor, "Rapid Transit to Salvation," 342.

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The image of the female bicyclists seemed to conform into the popular scientific portrait of the female criminal.⁹¹ On May 15, 1899 Rev. W.W. Reynolds wrote to Captain Colleran Chief of the Chicago Detective Department, "Inquiring if the use of the bicycle among women had affected their morality in any perceptible manner " adding that Capt. Colleran's reply does not offer any statistics that his reply "deals with the subject in a positive manner."⁹² Captain Colleran replied:

I am not an advocate of the use the bicycle among women when viewing it from a morality phase. Women of refinement and exquisite moral training addicted to the use of the bicycle are not infrequently thrown among the uncultivated and degenerate element of both sexes?, whose course, boisterous, and immoral gestures are heard and seen while speeding along our streets and boulevards. A large number of our female bicyclists wear shorter dresses than... decency permit, thereby inviting the improper conversations and remarks of the depraved and immoral. I most certainly consider the adoption of the bicycle by women detrimental to the advancement of morality – nay, even its stability. I have always entertained deep sympathy for the hosts of noble and honorable ladies, who while riding their wheels are frequently associated with women whose morality will not stand investigation and whose conversation is invariably coarse and undignified.

Captain Colleran is clearly addressing the class line that upper middle-class women have made between themselves and working-class women. The working-class woman who rode a bicycle was seen as a moral degenerate in the eyes of law enforcement. While upper middle-class women were highly romanticized and even fetishized in the eyes of law enforcement. Captain Colleran put down the working-class woman cyclist because "defining her as physiological "unnatural," the symptom of a diseased society, those whom she threatened reaffirmed the legitimacy and the "naturalness" of the bourgeois order."⁹³ Newspapers also fed into this type of rhetoric by associating bloomers with crime. For example, "Charles C. Whippert, of Rochester, reported to the police that he had been robbed of his Thanksgiving turkey by a bicycle woman who

⁹¹ Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*, trans. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson,

⁹² "Morals of the Wheelwomen," *New York Times* (New York, NY) May 16, 1899.

⁹³ Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 245.

wore bloomers, tan leggings, a derby hat, and had red hair.”⁹⁴ The *New York Times* ran an article about Bloomer clad women would pretend to rent bicycles under the guise that their own as being repaired, steal it, and then sell it on the black market.⁹⁵

Another attempt of societies to establish the bourgeois order was establishing etiquette rules for women cyclists. One article answered that question titled, “Widows May Ride the Wheel,” that was printed on May 17, 1896. The article stated, “Widows who have given away their bicycles and who shrink from wheeling as an impropriety will delight to know that a wheel has been patterned for their special use.” The article goes on to say, “The ‘mourning wheel’ is now thoroughly approved by mourning etiquette, and the widow can take her mourning spin with the comforting assurance that she is doing quite the proper thing.” Finally, the article adds, “The mourning wheel is an appropriately somber affair of sold ebony blackness unrelieved by any gleaming steel or nickel.”⁹⁶

An article from *The Los Angeles Times* in 1895 advises that “unmarried woman who cycles must be chaperoned by a married lady – as everyone rides nowadays this is an affair easily managed.” The article further advises that “the married woman,” should never, “ride alone; failing a male escort, she is followed by a groom or a maid.”⁹⁷ Although industrialization, mass production, and technology as the bicycle have given upper class women some freedom, they were truly never free. The more and more women took the bicycle the more ridiculous warnings against cycling became. For instance, in 1895 appeared an article in *The Literary Digest* which talked about the “bicycle face.” According to the digest bicycle face claimed that “over-exertion, the upright position on the wheel, and the unconscious effort to maintain one’s balance tend to produce a wearied and exhausted bicycle face.”⁹⁸ Also, the article describes the appearance of bicycle face as “usually flushed, but sometimes pale, often with lips more or less drawn, and the beginning of dark shadows under the eyes, and always with an expression of weariness.”⁹⁹ Bicycle face was an inconspicuous attempt to shame women back into the domestic sphere and to inhibit other women from cycling.

⁹⁴ “Bloomer Girl Stole His Turkey,” *The Allentown Leader* (Allentown, Pennsylvania) November 27, 1895.

⁹⁵ “A Boy Bicycle Thief Confesses,” *New York Times* (New York, NY) August 21, 1895.

⁹⁶ “Widows May Ride the Wheel,” *The World* (New York, NY) May 17, 1896.

⁹⁷ “Wheel etiquette,” *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA) July 28, 1895.

⁹⁸ Edward J. Wheeler, ed., “The Bicycle Face,” *The Literary Digest* 11, no.19 (September, 1895): 548.

⁹⁹ Wheeler, ed., “The Bicycle Face,” 548.

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In the realm of health, men sought to use their influence to chip away at women's new freedoms granted by the bicycle. To understand the argument male doctors were formulating against women riding the bicycle, we need to understand its origins. Scholars have pointed back to debates on whether riding trains was good or bad for women because "it subjected them to vibration."¹⁰⁰ Orgasms in women would be encouraged when "sitting as to be leaning forward."¹⁰¹ In 1884, a medical advice book warned mothers that "secret vice, which leads their daughters to the grave, the madhouse, or, worse yet, the brothel."¹⁰² Also the book called this the "habit solitary vice."¹⁰³ Claims by these doctors negativity impacted women because they sexualized the bicycle, thus limiting women from exercise.

Medical discourse of the era took on a sexual form in order to taint the New Woman's image but also to keep middle class women in their traditional roles. In 1896, Dr. James Prendergast wrote in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* that while riding the bicycle, women push their weight forward and that "friction and heating of the parts where it is very undesirable and may lead to dangerous practices."¹⁰⁴ In Tennessee, one physician reported that his patient got into the hobby of riding the bicycle for the "purpose of masturbation," the patient told him, "it was no uncommon thing to experience a sexual orgasm three or four times on a ride of one hour."¹⁰⁵ The bicycle offered middle-class women mobility and even solitary moments outside of the home, away from the male gaze. The sexualization of the bicycle riding opened the market to products to prevent women from developing the habit of solitary vice. One such product was the Sager Pneumatic Bicycle Saddle which prevented women from leaning forward while riding. The advertisement exclaimed that the product "holds the rider like a chair, the entire weight being supported by the bones of the pelvis, which alone touch the saddle."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Rachel Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," "the Vibrator," and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 89.

¹⁰¹ Charles William Malchow, *The Sexual Life: A Scientific Treatise Designed for Advanced Students and the Professions, Embracing the Natural Sexual Impulse, Normal Sexual Habits and Propagation, Together with Sexual Physiology and Hygiene* (St. Louis, Missouri: C. V. Mosby, 1923), 56-57.

¹⁰² George Napheys, A.M., M.D., *The Physical Life of Woman: Advice to the Maiden, Wife, and Mother* (Philadelphia, 1884), 39.

¹⁰³ Mary Wood-Allen, *What a Young Girl Ought to Know* (Philadelphia, PA 1897), 106.

¹⁰⁴ James F. Prendergast, M.D., "The Bicycle for Women," *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* 34, no.1 (July, 1896), 245.

¹⁰⁵ Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm*, 90.

¹⁰⁶ The Sager Pneumatic Bicycle Seat, *Harper's Magazine* 92 (December 1895-May 1896), 70.

As the United States became more industrial the population developed a sedentary lifestyle. According to one scholar this concerned many physicians one observed, "this easier scheme of living had produced a generation of people "prematurely aged," and possessing "easily prostrated physiques."¹⁰⁷ The scholar highlights that medical men endorsed the bicycle because of the health benefits and how it reshaped men's bodies to be more muscular and athletic.¹⁰⁸ However, it is clear to see that only extended to men during the height of the bicycle craze in the 1890s. In August of 1894 a reporter in the New York Times covering the "Commissioners in Lunacy" to British Parliament was covered suggested that the bicycle was the culprit of rising lunacy. The article stated, "There is not the slight list doubt that bicycle riding, if persisted in, leads to weakness of mind, general lunacy and homicidal mania" and "The unsoundness of mind which characterizes women riders is, however, seldom homicidal in its nature. The women who rides a bicycle manifests her mental unsoundness by her dress."¹⁰⁹ Women thinking for themselves and having the ability to choose her own identity through new accessible fashion trends thanks to mass production made men insecure during this period. The bicycle outfit represented suffrage which in the 1890s was slowly encroaching on the male realm. In contrast, men were not viewed as having an inherently unsound mind. One article from the *Sacramento Daily Record Union* headlined "The lunatic has taken to the bicycle." Unlike women, it was a proven fact that men suffering from insanity could become sane again. For men the bicycle was no better exercise better to relieve their mental anguish than that of the bicycle.¹¹⁰ The article states ~~that~~, "One of the most notable instances of the efficiency of the bicycle as a remedy for insanity is found at the Michigan Asylum for the Insane in Kalamazoo."¹¹¹ At the asylum, male patients were given the privilege of taking daily countryside bicycle rides in groups of five to eight men.¹¹² Rather than been confined to inside of the facility, male patients were applauded for entering the public sphere on a bicycle instead of intense scrutiny such as women had been. This is evidence of men trying to establish that only men, even if they are deemed insane have more of a right that women to ride the bicycle in public.

¹⁰⁷ Harmond, "Progress and Flight," 243.

¹⁰⁸ Harmond, "Progress and Flight," 242.

¹⁰⁹ "Lunacy in England," *New York Times* (New York, NY), August 12, 1894.

¹¹⁰ "Insanity and the Bicycle," *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* (Sacramento, CA) January 3, 1897.

¹¹¹ "Insanity and the Bicycle."

¹¹² "Insanity and the Bicycle."

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Conclusion

This quote in *Munsey Magazine* from 1896 best captures the bicycle era for women, "To men, the bicycle in the beginning was merely a new toy, another machine added to the long list of devices they knew in their work and play. To Women, it was a steed upon which they rode into the new world."¹¹³ Since the draisine first appeared on the market in the 1820s it evolved as technology became more advance until the invention of the modern safety bicycle. As more and more women started riding their own modern safety bicycles in public, men sought to ways to limit their participation in public and push them back into the domestic realm. New Woman seized the opportunity to use the bicycle as the vessel for their political message. They embraced modernity despite the ugly reality that industrialization created for America's urban working class.

The New Woman ideology was rooted in individualism—the idea that one is responsible for creating their own fate caused and used the bicycle to spread idea the growing middle class women. Women like Frances Willard and Annie Londonderry successfully gave meaning and an aura to a mass produced object. Also, the fact that New Woman used the bicycle as a means of accessing changing fashion trends, that enabled women to enter the public sphere by literally leaving the domestic sphere. Art nouveau illustrations created illusion around the bicycle that hid the horrible ramifications of industrialization and globalization that led to the technological developments like the bicycle. Furthermore, art nouveau illustrations of the New Woman riding the bicycle symbolize how the New Woman was embracing modernity and tying its meaning to the bicycle.

The cultural critics of women on the bicycle that is found in popular magazines, literature, advertisements, personal handbooks,

¹¹³ "Woman and the Wheel," *Munsey's Magazine*, May 1896, 157.

posters published by bicycle manufacturers, fiction, and medical journals is evidence that the New Women's ideas were successfully entering the masses of society. Men and some women such as Charlotte Smith tried to shame women back into their homes. Their anger stems from the fact that the bicycle gave masses of women the ability to make independent and empowering choices for herself but also threatened to upend gender roles not only within society, but arguably within the home.

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Black Visions Collective

<https://www.blackvisionsmn.org/>

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