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Transitional Women in the Southern Works of Constance Fenimore Woolson

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TRANSITIONAL WOMEN IN
THE SOUTHERN WORKS OF
CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of American Studies
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Carol Ann McGowan Stanton
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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Michael and Marge McGowan, and to my husband, Loren Stanton, for their constant support and encouragement which helped me to complete this work.
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ABSTRACT

The short stories and novels by Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894) which focus on Southern women during the 1870s are analyzed in this thesis. Woolson lived in the South--Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Virginia--from 1873-1879, and she wrote about the South and its people on the basis of her keen observations. During the years after the Civil War women's roles and status in Southern society were uncertain. Women had shown in the war effort that they could do work traditionally done by men, but many people still believed that women belonged in their homes caring for their families. Woolson's female contemporaries lived in a transitional period, when women had to choose between traditional and modern ways of behaving. Woolson herself never married, but chose to be a writer. The fictional women created by Woolson have to make decisions about how they will live and act, and usually there is conflict between old and new values.

Historical information about nineteenth-century Southern women is used to support this interpretation of Woolson's fiction. The expectations of Woolson's editors and readers are considered in analyzing Woolson's female characters. The influence of Woolson's education, travel experience, and family on her writing is also examined. The specific works analyzed are: four short stories, "In the Cotton Country," "Old Gardiston," "Rodman the Keeper," "Bro," and three novels, For the Major, East Angels, and Horace Chase. While Woolson does not openly advocate equality of the sexes in her Southern works, she does expose the suffering and inequities experienced by women because of societal expectations and limitations.
TRANSITIONAL WOMEN IN THE SOUTHERN WORKS OF

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON
Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894) made a valuable contribution to the study of American life with her fiction focused on white Southern women of the 1870s. A Northerner by birth, Woolson lived in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia from 1873 to 1879, transitional years for Southern society. The South had been defeated in its attempt to secede from the United States, and the social order of the South, based on agriculture and slavery, had to be altered. Subsequently, political, economic, and social reorganization was necessary in the post-Civil War South. The changes during the war and post-war years affected the life situations, status, roles, and behavior of women as evidenced in Woolson's fiction set in the South.

Woolson's female characters must make choices in a society with both traditional expectations of women and new possibilities for them. Woolson has several female characters in her Southern novels and short stories follow tradition not because the author believed that was best, but because more often than not women were forced to choose the traditional way even when it worsened their life situation. In three of her war-related short stories there is a slightly different tension between the old social order and the new one. The women of these stories want to live in the tradition of the Old South, but instead they must be reconciled with the North, and thus they are forced to choose new options. Through her
fiction Woolson exposes the suffering and inequities experienced by women because of the struggle between old and new ways of living. The transitional women of Woolson's fiction provide for the twentieth-century reader a picture of women's reality in the South of the 1870s.

Although Woolson is nearly forgotten today, she was a popular and respected author among her contemporaries. She was only one of several Northern writers who went to the South to write about that region, but, according to Jay B. Hubbell, she distinguished herself as "the earliest Northern writer of fiction who after the war treated Southern life with sympathy and knowledge."¹ A critic and friend of Woolson, Henry James said that her works on the South are "the fruit of a remarkable minuteness of observation and tenderness of feeling on the part of one who evidently did not glance and pass, but lingered and analyzed."² Further, James noted that Woolson "loves the whole region and no daughter of the land could have handled its peculiarities more indulgently or communicated to us more of the sense of close observation and intimate knowledge."³

Analysis of Woolson's Southern writings is limited. John D. Kern and Rayburn S. Moore in their biographies of Woolson provide general commentary on her Southern period. Anne Rowe, in The Enchanted Country: Northern Writers in the South, 1865-1910, provides more detailed analysis of Woolson's fiction about the South, but Rowe devotes only
one chapter to Woolson and therefore is unable to make a complete study of the Southern women characters. There is a need for this study focusing exclusively on Woolson's Southern fiction and examining the portrayals of women in particular.

The works analyzed in this study are four short stories: "In the Cotton Country," "Old Gardiston," "Rodman the Keeper," and "Bro," and three novels: For the Major, East Angels, and Horace Chase. "In the Cotton Country" (1876) is about a bitter widow who is struggling to eke out a living on war-torn land in South Carolina. "Old Gardiston" (1876) is the story of Gardis, a young woman who hates Northerners because of war destruction but eventually accepts reconciliation. Bettina, in "Rodman the Keeper," (1877) also abhors the North and has difficulty adjusting to the new social order. "Bro" (1878) is about a woman's choice between marriage and education. Set in North Carolina, For the Major (1883) centers on the sacrifice Madam Carroll makes for her husband, Major Carroll. In order to uphold the Major's belief that she is young and innocent, Madam Carroll pretends to be younger than she is, thus denying her true self. East Angels (1886) is set in Florida and portrays two contrasting female characters: modern Garda, who follows her emotions instead of social mores, and old-
fashioned Margaret, who gives up her freedom to remain bound to her unfaithful husband. The events in *Horace Chase* (1894), Woolson's last novel, occur in North Carolina and Florida. In this novel the actions of the Franklin women reveal their dependence on men and their lack of self-discipline.

The main female characters are white, from the middle- or upper-class, and lead lives of leisure (except that the women in the war-related short stories have lost their wealth and lead lives of hardship.) Many nineteenth-century Americans believed that the woman's role was to be wife, mother, and homemaker; the majority of white Southern women followed this expectation. However, none of Woolson's fictional Southern women are young mothers whose lives are focused on raising children; they are older women with grown children, single women (young and old), and young married women without children. Woolson portrays women who try to control their own destinies but are always affected by others, social standards, and their life circumstances. It was difficult for a woman who wanted to break from tradition and establish herself in a non-traditional role to do so. The women in Woolson's Southern fiction experience a tension between forces which promote new roles and status for women and forces which impede them.

To gain an understanding of Woolson's attitudes about her characters and about women of her day, it is necessary
to consider her life history as well as the general historical situation of nineteenth-century American women. Woolson was born in New Hampshire on March 5, 1840, and moved with her family to Cleveland, Ohio, the same year. As a girl, she travelled to Ohio and Wisconsin with her father, Charles Jarvis Woolson, who at various times was involved in journalism, publishing, stove manufacturing, and other business. She also vacationed with the whole family at their cottage on Mackinac Island between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. In 1858, the family travelled to New England, to sites where Charles and his wife, Hannah Cooper Pomeroy Woolson, had previously lived. They also visited popular resorts.

These early travel experiences had an impact on Woolson's future writing. Later she developed a process for her literary work: first, she read histories of the area she visited; second, she became familiar with the natural environment as well as the inhabitants; and third, with her impressions fresh in her mind, she wrote travel sketches, which later served as the basis for her short stories and novels. Travel helped Woolson develop her powers of observation, which in turn strengthened her ability to understand different regions and people.

Hannah and Charles influenced their daughter's writing. Several of Woolson's main characters display the sacrificial nature of her mother, who hid her sadness and other emotions in order to uplift the lives of others.
Mrs. Woolson gave birth to nine children, six of whom died; still, she did not let the losses keep her from devoting her life to the care of her remaining family. Mr. Woolson's death in 1869 had a strong impact on Constance, who many years later still regretted that she was not with her father when he died. Woolson had shared with her father a love of books and literature. Following his death, she began to write for a living to support herself and her mother. Because Mrs. Woolson was ailing, they moved to the warm, healthful climate of the South, where they spent most of their time in Florida and the Carolinas. Subsequently, Woolson found new subject matter for her writing in the Southern region and people.

In a period when a majority of American women received limited formal education, Woolson was an exception. As a child growing up in Cleveland, Woolson attended Miss Hayden's School in the 1840s and then, in the 1850s, the Cleveland Seminary, at which she discovered her writing talent. Later she was to thank her Cleveland Seminary teacher, Miss Guilford, for "the pains you took with my crude compositions; the clearness with which you made my careless eye notice the essential difference between a good style and a bad one. . . ."

Woolson graduated at the head of her class in 1858 from Madame Chegaray's finishing school in New York City. There she learned more than academic subjects, for many of her classmates were wealthy Southern girls who introduced
Woolson to Southern culture. Woolson learned through them that the South had a slow-paced agrarian society focused on family and home-life. The well-bred yet simple manner of these girls immensely charmed Woolson. During her childhood and adolescence, Woolson learned to write, travelled widely, and met many different kinds of people, all of which aided in the success of her career.

Woolson's writing was influenced not only by her personal experiences, but also by the experiences of nineteenth-century women. Societal expectations had an impact on the development of Woolson's attitudes about women. One of those expectations was the ideal of a "true woman," an ideal which is explained by Barbara Welter in her 1966 article, "The Cult of True Womanhood." In nineteenth-century America, the prevailing assumption about woman was that her place was in the home. A "true woman" was expected to give up her own interests to devote herself fully to her family. Being a "true woman" required "purity, piety, submissiveness, and domesticity." Considered to be the moral defenders of society, women had to act purely and piously, and as a wife, a woman had to obey her husband, the head of the household. Although white middle- and upper-class nineteenth-century women generally aspired to the ideals of the "true woman," not all women could meet such standards, and not every woman wanted to do so.
Clearly, Woolson did not adhere to all of the requirements of the ideal woman, for she did not marry and have children, and she had a career that led her outside of the domestic sphere. Possibly Woolson had mixed feelings about the status and role of women since she did not follow the traditional pattern herself, nor did she openly advocate reform or formally take part in the woman's movement. In her fiction on the South, Woolson reveals an openness to changes in women's status and roles, yet she also tends to support tradition through her portrayals of women. The tension between traditional and modern ways apparent in her Southern works reflects the author's own life situation.

In the North, it was the woman's movement which challenged the "true woman" ideology, while in the South, it was the Civil War which brought women out of their traditional roles. Anne Firor Scott notes in *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics* that while men were at war, women operated farms and businesses, made clothes and ammunition for the soldiers, cared for the sick, and buried the dead. Southern women suffered great losses during the war: the deaths of loved ones, the burning of homes and land, and the destruction of their family life and tradition. Through the war experience, Southern women learned to survive and proved that they could do jobs from which white women formerly had been barred.
Nevertheless, in the South, the woman's movement never grew strong, and the "true woman" ideology did not die, despite the changes wrought by the Civil War. William Taylor, in *Cavalier and Yankee*, asserts that the "Cavalier gentleman" felt threatened by the "new Southern woman" because she had the potential to destroy traditional home life and to challenge his position at the top of the patriarchal social order. In an 1899 article "Woman's Economic Status in the South," Laura McAdoo states that in the South "old habits and modes of thinking are firmly rooted in the general mind," and "former ideals insensibly influence the decrees of present conventions." McAdoo explains that many Southerners objected to educated women and working women because "the 'sacred duties of wife and mother' are alleged as all-sufficing claims to the woman, and ample compensation for the absence of a more personal development." Not only men, but also women, stifled the emergence of the "new woman" in the South. Anne Firor Scott points out that numerous Southern women were afraid of change and feared that home life would be disrupted if women were freed from their traditional domestic duties. Other Southern women were open to change "but had not the courage," Scott states, "to do battle with public opinion or to face ridicule." Thus, the region remained a stronghold of conservatism regarding women's status and roles in society.
Woolson portrayed the South and its people within the context of the tensions between traditionalists and modernists. Most of her fictional Southern women submit to the expectations of society. Those who do not submit are criticized by other characters, male and female. There are characters who do not fit the traditional mold for woman and are portrayed unfavorably by the author. However, Woolson also reveals some disapproval of the status quo by showing the suffering of those who follow social standards instead of their own wills. Oftentimes women experienced conflict between personal wishes and societal expectations. Woolson knew that women were caught between two worlds, one traditional and the other modern. Through her fiction Woolson reveals some of the harsh realities faced by many women of her day.

One reality faced by Southern women, and not by Northern women, was their defeat in the Civil War. Some problems which Southern women encountered in the aftermath of the war are revealed through the theme of reconciliation between North and South. Woolson develops this theme in her portrayals of the feelings of defeated and suffering Southern women. After losing family, property, and independence, many Southern women hated Northerners and rebelled against the new social order. Certainly Northerners would expect Southerners to accept their defeat and be reconciled, but reconciliation was difficult for the defeated Southerners. Woolson
sensitively portrays women who experience conflict as they long for the past while attempting to deal with the present.

The first of Woolson's Southern stories, "In the Cotton Country," published in the April 29, 1876 issue of Appletons' Journal, introduces the related themes of reconciliation and women's position in the post-Civil War South. A bitter South Carolinian widow, Judith, feels tremendous grief over the wartime deaths of her two brothers, her husband, and her father. In addition to death, the war also brought destruction and poverty. Judith relates to Woolson that the Union soldiers

`swept the town clean of food and raiment; many houses they wantonly burned; what they could not carry with them they destroyed. My own home did not escape; rude men ransacked every closet and drawer, and cut in ribbons the old portraits on the wall. At length the last straggler left us, and we remained among the ashes. We could not sit down and weep for ourselves or for our dead—the care of finding wherewithal to eat or else die thrust its coarse necessity upon us, and forced us to our feet.'

Judith's sacrifices to the war effort left her desperate, and even as she struggles to eke out a living, she resigns herself to death. Judith claims,
'I cannot pray. But do not think I am defiant; no, I am only dead . . . I live on as the palsied animal lives, and if some day the spring fails, or the few herbs within his reach, he dies; nor do I think he would grieve much about it; he only eats from habit. So do I.'

Judith has no hope for her own future as she laments:
". . . my world has been torn asunder, and I am uprooted and lost . . . no one can help me; I cannot adjust myself to the new order of things, I cannot fit myself in new soil, the fibres are broken.'"

Judith's story reveals Woolson's sympathy for those Southern women who lost loved ones, property, and hope in the war. Woolson tells readers, "I have written stories of imagination, but this is a story of fact, and I want you to believe it." Woolson wanted to present a true-to-life Southern woman who made great sacrifices for a lost cause and cannot begin a new life in the present because she cannot forget the past. Woolson did not share Judith's defeatist attitude, for, as a Northerner, she supported reconciliation; however, she perceived the negative sentiment as real and justified to those who suffered in the war. This perception is further apparent in Woolson's reflections after visiting a Confederate monument in Georgia:

There too we found the ranks of low head-boards far as we could see, thousands upon thousands, I
cannot describe it, but certainly there is something very impressive in these poor soldiers' graves. So many of them were young, all died painful deaths, almost all left broken hearts behind them, fathers and mothers who lost their boys, young wives who lost their husbands.  

"Old Gardiston," first published in Harper's April 1876, is another story whose main character, Gardis, is bitter about the Civil War. A prideful woman, Gardis lives with a cousin "down in the rice lands" in their family's formerly beautiful mansion, Gardiston House. Since her money and possessions were lost before the war and hardship prevailed during and after the war, Gardis leads a hand-to-mouth existence. Her only income is rent from a small warehouse in a nearby town. Union troops come to camp close to Gardis' home, and even though Gardiston House was untouched during the war, Gardis abhors Northerners, and Union soldiers in particular, for causing destruction in the South. Gardis rhetorically asks her cousin about the Union soldiers, "'Are they not our enemies, and the enemies of our country? Vandals? Despots?'"  

One evening marauders attack Gardiston House, and the nearby Union soldiers fend them off, saving Gardis and the mansion. Although Gardis still despises Northerners, she says to her cousin that there is "something we must do;
noblesse oblige! . . . we must invite them to dinner." David Newell and Roger Saxton, the leaders of the battalion, accept the invitation to dinner. Gardis wears a worn-out yet still lovely gown, the meal is simple but good, and the officers enjoy the hospitality they receive. Despite the success of the dinner, Gardis is still angry and, as she burns the "desecrated" dress worn at the dinner, says to herself, "so perish also the enemies of my country!" Despite the cold reception he receives, Saxton visits Gardis again and again trying to win her affection. But when Saxton proposes marriage to Gardis, her response is "that you, a Northerner and a soldier, should presume to ask for the hand of a Southern lady, shows, Sir, that you have not the least comprehension of us and of our country." Bitter Gardis still will not accept reconciliation, and she is glad when the Union soldiers leave.

Woolson is emphasizing in this story the plight of a young woman who would like to regain the past, but cannot. Gardis' situation is a difficult one:

Bitterly, bitterly poor was the whole Southern country in those dreary days after the war. The second year was worse than the first; for the hopes that had buoyed up the broken fortunes soon disappeared, and nothing was left. There was no one to help Gardis Duke, or the hundreds
of other women in like desolate positions . . .
So the little household lived along, in a spare, pinched way, until, suddenly, final disaster overtook them: the tenant of the warehouse gave up his lease, declaring that the old building was too ruinous for use; and as no one succeeded him, Gardiston House beheld itself face to face with starvation.  

In desperation cousin Copeland goes to town to get a job. He does not succeed, but he does meet Captain Newell, who promises to find a new renter and to make repairs on the warehouse. Copeland is grateful for Newell's assistance, but Gardis tells Newell, "'I do not choose to receive a favor from your hands . . . I would rather starve than accept assistance from you.'" Nevertheless, Newell takes charge of the warehouse and finds a new renter. Gardis' pride tells her that she must obtain money without an outsider's aid, and so she decides to sell the mansion. Because he loves Gardis, Captain Newell offers to buy Gardiston House; Gardis refuses both the love and the offer because of her pride and her prejudice against Northerners. Then cousin Copeland dies, and Gardis is alone and hopeless. Shortly thereafter, Captain Newell brings news of a stranger from the North who wishes to buy the house. Gardis accepts this offer saying, "'some time I trust I shall feel like thanking you for what was undoubtedly intended, on your part, as kindness.'" Newell
responds, "'It was never intended for kindness at all,'" . . "'It was never but one thing, . . . and that one thing is, and always will be, love.'" However, Newell adds that Gardis is unworthy of his love, because, he says,

'A woman should have a womanly nature. But you [Gardis] do not seem to have any thing in you but a foolish pride. I verily believe, Gardis Duke, that if you loved me enough to die for me, you would still let me go out of that door without a word, so deep, so deadly is that pride of yours.'

Newell leaves, and Gardis, alone again, thinks about her past and Gardiston House, the living reminder and the constant support of that family pride in which she had been nurtured, her one possession in the land which she had so loved, the beautiful, desolate South—would soon be hers no longer.

Woolson shows Gardis' difficulty in forgetting the former glory of her family and of the South and in accepting the present reunited country. In deciding to sell Gardiston House, Gardis is sacrificing all that she holds dear, yet in that sacrifice she is opening herself to new opportunities, including reconciliation. Before the final transaction of the house is completed, a fire, accidently started by a candle Gardis forgot when she was "saying good-bye" to the mansion, burns Gardiston House to
the ground. Symbolically the old South and Gardis' past are now gone; neither Southerner nor Northerner could save it. Upon seeing the fire, Captain David Newell returns to Gardis' side, and this time she confesses her love for him. The union of David and Gardis symbolizes the union of North and South.

Woolson's love of both North and South and her desire to promote the new nationalism are expressed in "Old Gardiston," through Gardis' choice to overcome her prejudice in order to love David. However, Gardis does not change her attitude until she has lost everything in the burning of Gardiston House. Gardis' decision to marry has been, it seems, forced upon her by life circumstances. Also apparent in the story is Gardis' inner conflict over the love of David, not because of who he is but whom he represents. It was considered treason (by Southerners) for a Southern woman to marry a Yankee, according to Myrta Avary in Dixie After the War. Thus, Woolson's short story about reconciliation reflects the tension involved for an individual changing from one social order to another. Woolson favors the union of Gardis and David because she believed in reconciliation.

The third short story, "Rodman the Keeper," focuses on the themes of reconciliation and the conflict over women's role in society. First appearing in the March 1877 issue of The Atlantic, "Rodman" is the story of two ex-soldiers, Rodman of the Union and Ward of the
Confederacy. Rodman, a lonely and ostracized caretaker of a Union cemetery in the South, goes to a spring for water and on the way discovers Ward, sick and penniless in his dilapidated house. Rodman feels sympathy for a fellow soldier and takes Ward into his home to nurse him back to good health, despite the animosity between the two former enemies. When Ward's cousin Bettina finds Ward in the home of a Northerner, she becomes upset and tells Rodman, "We are indebted to you for some days' board, I believe, Keeper, medicines, I presume, and general attendance; my cousin will be removed to-day to our own residence; I wish to pay now what he owes." However, Bettina has no money and no means to care for her cousin. Swallowing her pride, Bettina finally accepts that Ward will be better off staying with Rodman.

Bettina moves into her rundown ancestral home and visits her cousin daily. In spite of Rodman's aid, Ward dies, and Bettina feels desperately alone, for she is the only one of her family left. Bettina decides to go to Tennessee to become a teacher; she tells Rodman, "I have sold the place, and I shall never return, I think; I am going far away." Rodman asks Bettina to sign her name in the cemetery guest book before she leaves, and he adds, "do not write it unless you can think gently of the men who lie there under the grass; I believe you do think gently of them, else why have you come of your own accord
to stand by the side of the graves?"\(^{31}\) Bettina's response is not at all conciliatory.

`Shall I, Bettina Ward, set my name down in black and white as a visitor to this cemetery, where lie fourteen thousand of the soldiers who killed my father, my three brothers, my cousins; who brought desolation upon all our house, and ruin upon all our neighborhood, all our state and all our country?—for the South is our country, and not your icy North. Shall I forget these things? Never! Sooner let my right hand wither by my side! I was but a child; yet I remember the tears of my mother, and the grief of all around us. There was not a house where there was not one dead.'\(^{32}\)

"`It is true,'" Rodman answers, "`at the South, all went.'" Rodman tells Bettina that this is a time of transition and that "`education will be the savior. The lack of general education is painfully apparent everywhere throughout the South; it is from that cause more than any other that your beautiful country now lies desolate.'"\(^{33}\)

After the Civil War the South did develop a public education system, and a majority of the new teachers were women, so teaching was a viable option for educated women, like Bettina, who needed to earn an income. Seemingly Bettina is ready to forget the past and adopt a new role for herself, but she cannot overcome her hatred for the
North and its people. In the conclusion of the story, Rodman says to Bettina, "Nothing can change you . . . you are part of your country, part of the time, part of the bitter hour through which she is passing. Nothing can change you . . ." \(^{34}\) Bettina never signs the cemetery register, and thus symbolically refuses reconciliation.

Woolson promotes reconciliation through the example of Rodman nursing an invalid former enemy. Through Bettina, whose sacrifice is the loss of loved ones, home, and "country," Woolson reveals her understanding of the defeated Southern woman who could not readily accept the reunited nation. While sympathetic with Bettina's grief, Woolson approves of Bettina's decision to become a school teacher: the author states, through Rodman, that education will improve Southerners' lives and save their "country." Bettina never expresses enthusiasm about becoming a teacher, and the story ends before she goes to Tennessee. Bettina was prompted to move because her home and traditions had been destroyed, and the work she would do was accepted by society as woman's work. Like Judith and Gardis, Bettina is a character who would choose to relive the past, but life circumstances force her to live within the new social order.

A comparison of these three short stories shows change from Judith to Gardis to Bettina. Judith's suffering is worse than that of Gardis and Bettina, and "In the Cotton Country" presents the most hopeless picture
of life in the 1870s South. Refusing to adjust to the new social order, Judith seems resigned to die with a hateful heart. In "Old Gardiston" we see the symbolic ending of Gardis' life in the traditional Old South and the beginning of her life in the reunited country. The marriage of Gardis and Newell represents the reconciliation of Southerner and Northerner. Although Bettina also suffers because of the war, she at least makes a decision to deal with the present in a positive way. Bettina will become a teacher, and Woolson suggests in the story that education will "save" Southerners. Bettina does not accept reconciliation, but her decision to become a teacher is a positive first step to overcome her personal losses and to help improve Southern society.

We learn through these short stories that Woolson recognized the bitterness felt most intensely right after the war, as well as the growing possibilities for renewal and reconciliation in the South.

"Bro," which appeared in Appletons' Journal in November, 1878, is like the other short stories in that the main female character experiences conflict between modern and traditional ways. But unlike the other short stories, "Bro" is not war-related. Marion, the main character in "Bro," is pressured by her mother, her husband-to-be, and society into choosing marriage instead of education. An adept mathematician, Marion is ridiculed by friends who think that women should not and need not be
educated. According to her mother, Marion had "always been more like the best scholar, the clear-headed girl at the top of her class, than a woman with a woman's feelings." Marion's mother believes that an educated woman is no longer a real woman and that a woman should be concerned with getting a husband, not an education. Because Marion has not had a suitor for five years, Marion's mother regretfully says that "what she [Marion] would like best of all, . . . would be keeping accounts; she will do a sum now rather than any kind of embroidery, and a page of figures is fairly meat and drink to her. That Miss Drough [Marion's math teacher] has, I fear, done her more harm than good." Marion is very happy pursuing her interest in mathematics and is not interested in suitors until a young man named Lawrence Vickery arrives in town and falls in love with her.

Lawrence ridicules Marion's intelligence by saying, "what will you do next? Build a stone wall--or vote? Imagine a girl taking light recreation in equations, and letting her mind wander hilariously among groves of triangles on a rainy day!" Upon hearing this statement, Marion "colored highly, but said nothing. Her usual incisiveness seemed to fail her when with Lawrence Vickery." In a short time Marion is overcome by emotions of love, and she does not refute Lawrence's criticism of her talent. When Marion accepts Lawrence's marriage proposal, she is described as being happier than
ever before. This romantic development exemplifies the tradition of a woman foregoing education to marry. Unsympathetic to this tradition, Woolson writes with irony: Marion is so devoted to Lawrence that "to please him she would have continued smiling on the rack itself until she died."*

Woolson was aware that most women had not received the benefits of an education like hers, and she believed this was a tragedy. In a letter to Mrs. Samuel Mather she wrote,

> Girls do so need a more thorough education! I never hear, or, rather, I seldom hear, one of my own sex talk long without noticing the lack of broad, reasonable solid views ... But I am sure that education is all that is required. I do not think the feminine mind inferior.41

These statements make clear that Woolson does not share Lawrence's negative attitude about women being educated.

In the post war South there was a surge of interest in women attending school and college. In the 1891 article entitled "Southern Womanhood as Affected by the War," Wilbur Fiske Tillett reveals the thoughts of an anonymous male director of a Southern female college. According to him, more women were getting educated in order to support themselves, and more women were going to school and staying for a longer period of time.42 Anne Firor Scott also discusses the significance of education
in changing women's lives. As more women graduated from college, they entered the fields of medicine, law, education, and community leadership. Still, the group of educated women was small, and so Woolson's story reflects the norm of a woman foregoing education for marriage.

Marion will not continue her education because she seems to be overpowered by Lawrence's dismissal of her mathematical ability. Nevertheless, Woolson believed in the advancement of women into traditional male roles. This is affirmed by Woolson's approval of education that broadens women's minds and provides the opportunity for women to form "reasonable solid views," by her own choice of education and not marriage, and by her creation of a woman character adept at math and taught math by a woman. Hence, Woolson does not view Marion's turn to tradition as the correct act, but rather, as an act resulting from societal expectations.

Marion is not the only one to suffer from her choice. Lawrence is unable to support Marion. The person who actually provides for Marion is Bro, a man who is proud of her talent in math and who cares only for her happiness. In addition to the romantic aspects of the story "Bro," there are disheartening inequities: Marion sacrifices pursuit of her math skills and a career, and Bro sacrifices his money as well as Marion to Lawrence. The story "Bro" can be seen as a promotion of women in
education, because Woolson shows the suffering that resulted from Marion's tradition-based choice of marriage over education.

Woolson's novels about the South continue to show the tension between conventional and modern standards. The ways the women interact with other characters and make decisions provide insight into the struggles of living in a changing society.

Woolson's first novel from her Southern period is For the Major (1883), serialized in Harper's from November, 1882, to April, 1883. The setting of this work is a fictional small town, Far Edgerley, North Carolina, and the main characters are Madam Carroll and her stepdaughter Sara Carroll. Although Madam Carroll is forty-eight years old, she is described as looking like a school-girl for she conceals her age by using make-up, styling her hair in long blonde-dyed ringlets, and wearing high-necked, long-sleeved dresses to hide her wrinkled skin. "No sign of age was visible in all her little person from head to foot." Madam Carroll wants to look young not because she is vain, but because her husband, Major Carroll, believes she is young and innocent, and he is pleased with her youthful appearance. Major Carroll sees her as "a little blue-eyed, golden-haired girl-mother, unacquainted with the dark side of life, trusting, sweet," and Madam Carroll "feared to shatter his dream." In reality, Madam Carroll had previously suffered an
unhappy marriage; her husband deserted her, took their son with him, and both supposedly had died. Then she struggled to earn a living until she married Major Carroll. Madam Carroll never revealed her sad past to the Major because she thought it would destroy his happiness (in her youth and innocence), and she feared she would then lose his love. Thus, she keeps her true self a secret and pretends to be what the Major thinks she is.

According to one resident of Far Edgerley, the Major "'has always been one of our grandest men; in personal appearance, character, and distinguished services, one of the noblest sons of our state.'" Madam Carroll's life is focused on supporting her husband; she says that the Major's "comfort must always be first." As the Major's mind fails and he becomes an invalid, Madam Carroll's responsibility grows and includes hiding the truth about the Major's condition from the townspeople. When the Major appeared in public, at church, or at receptions, it was Madam Carroll

upon whom he relied, who kept herself mentally as well as in person by his side, acting as quick-witted outrider, warding off possible annoyance, guiding the conversation towards the track he preferred, guarding his entrances and exits, so that above all and through all her other duties and occupations, his ease and his pleasure were always made secure."
Woolson creates Madam Carroll's sacrifice (of committing all of her time to serving her husband) as something to be admired by the townspeople. Since the Major is so well respected in the community, it follows that Madam Carroll also is respected by the community for her devoted care of the Major. In a conversation with the Reverend Mr. Owen, the local Episcopal priest, Sara says of her step-mother:

'You admire her sincerely, many do. But no one save those who are in the house with her all the time can comprehend the one hundredth part of her unselfishness, her energy, . . . her tenderness for others, her constant thought for them.'

The Major's expectations of his wife are demanding, but Madam Carroll does all she can to fulfill his false vision of her and insure his happiness; yet there is a question of how long she can hide her true self.

Woolson puts Madam Carroll's sacrifice to the test by bringing the long lost son, Louis Dupont, into the story. Dupont, now thirty-one, walks up to Madam Carroll in her garden one day and reveals his identity. Madam Carroll visits with Dupont, mends his clothes for him in secret, and even gives him money. But she never publicly recognizes Dupont as her son, so the townspeople and the Major always consider Dupont to be a stranger. Madam Carroll claims that she never told the Major the truth about Dupont because she feared that "'It would have been
a great shock and pain to him to know that I had deceived him—a shock which, in his state of health at that time, he could not have borne."50

Sara knows about Dupont's identity, for Sara is the only one with whom Madam Carroll will share her secrets and concerns. A problem arises when the Reverend Mr. Owen, becomes jealously distressed over seeing Sara with Dupont. In order to prevent Owen from talking to the Major about this subject, Sara tells Owen that she is engaged to Dupont. Later, Madam Carroll thanks Sara by saying that what she did "'was noble'" and "`. . . that the sacrifice you then made in lowering yourself by your own act in his eyes was as great a one as a woman can make; for he loves you devotedly, jealously, and you--you know how much you care for him.'"51 Both Madam Carroll and Sara falsify information because of their love for the Major, and thereby make sacrifices.

Even though Woolson is not directly critical of the sacrifices made by Madam Carroll and Sara and might have seen the mother and step-daughter as noble, the author does emphasize the suffering caused by the expectations imposed upon the two women. When Dupont dies Madam Carroll grieves over her loss: she had not been able to raise her own son because her first husband had taken him away, and when her son returned to her she could not openly receive him because it might shock the Major.
After her son's funeral Madam Carroll relates to Sara her feelings when she repaired her son's clothes:

'... they were almost in rags. I cried over those clothes ... It showed so plainly what his life had been. I could not help remembering in what careful order were all his little frocks and jackets when he was my dear little child.'

Hiding her complete identity caused distress for Madam Carroll, who asks Sara to listen to the true story of her past, claiming that "'it is ... a relief to me to tell.'" Madam Carroll says that the reason for acting younger was that the Major

'had made up his ideal of me, and by the time I found it out, his love and goodness, his dear protection, had become so much to me that I could not run the risk of losing them by telling him his mistake. I know now that I need not have feared this ... but I did not know then, and I was afraid.'

Madam Carroll had been afraid of losing the Major's love for her. She probably also feared losing her economic security, since she had struggled to survive before she married the Major. After years of fulfilling the Major's ideal of her, Madam Carroll realizes that she would not have lost the Major's love if she had told the truth. As Madam Carroll explains her charade, she says that she did it because of her love for the Major. Her explanation is
like a confession, as if she has been tormented by her sin and is seeking forgiveness. She says about herself, "'I did my best, or at least I tried; but I have been so--tortured--harassed--'". She decides that she will not pretend to be young anymore. Her veil of golden hair, no longer curled, was pulled

 plainly back, and fastened in a close knot behind; her eyes . . . looked tired and sunken and dim, with crows'-feet at their corners; all her lovely bloom was gone, and the whole of her little faded face was a net-work of minute wrinkles.^

Through Madam Carroll's conversation with Sara, Woolson reveals that Madam Carroll suffered because of trying to live up to the Major's expectations. Woolson also shows that if Madam Carroll had told the Major the reality of her past, he still would have loved her, she could have been properly reunited with her son, and she would not have experienced the difficulties of upholding a falsehood. Sara also would have not suffered if Madam Carroll's past had not been kept a secret from the Major, for she would not have needed to lie to Owen to protect her father. In the conclusion of the story Major and Madam Carroll renew their wedding vows. Sara and Owen are reconciled as well. Even with a happy ending, Owen complains to Sara, "'You made me wait in my pain so long,
in For the Major, there is some comment on women in the work force, revealing the tension between old and new roles. While Madam Carroll was financially well-off and therefore able to spend her days caring for her husband, other women had to work for an income to support their families. Despite the fact that many women had proven during the Civil War that they could do jobs traditionally done by men, many people objected to women doing "indelicate" work. Madam Carroll is one who objects. Referring to a neighbor in Far Edgerley, Madam Carroll tells Sara:

'Our poor Miss Dailey's life had been harshly narrowed down . . . all their small property was swept away by the war, and she is now obliged to support herself and her mother by dyeing . . . You must have noticed her hands. But we always pretend not to notice them, because in all other ways she is so lady-like; when she expects to see any one, she always, and most delicately wears gloves.'

Because Madam Carroll had to work to earn a living before her marriage to the Major, one would think she would be in sympathy with a woman who did dyeing to earn money. Madam Carroll is critical of Miss Dailey's work because it is
improper for a lady. Further evidence of Madam Carroll's critical attitude is in the remarks of Sara, who admires Miss Dalley for her work and thinks her step-mother "had not quite done justice to poor Miss Dalley and her aspirations, and that some time she ought to try to atone for it."59

It was commonly acceptable for lower class women to work because it was necessary for their survival. During the time Woolson wrote For the Major most women joining the work force were young and single. Upper class and married women were not expected to have income-producing jobs.60 Woolson lists domestic, feminine pastimes in Far Edgerley: "cultivation of flowers, garden rock-work, and... bees (they allowed themselves to go as far as bees, because honey, though of course edible, was so delicate)."61 The ironic tone of Woolson's writing (about raising bees) indicates that Woolson approves of women working for income and doing jobs that were not necessarily delicate. Madam Carroll's traditional view that women should not do anything indelicate is shown, through Sara, to be unjust, as well as unrealistic in light of some women's need to work outside of the home for income. Woolson reveals in this story her belief that females should not be confined to women's traditional roles and lives of domesticity.

After writing about Madam Carroll's self-sacrifice and commitment to tradition, Woolson wrote about a greater
female martyr and the struggle between traditional and contemporary ways in *East Angels* (1886), her most substantial novel with the best-developed characters. Originally published in *Harper's* from January 1885 to May 1886, *East Angels* is set in Gracias-a-Dios, Florida, an imaginary town based on St. Augustine, Woolson's writing "headquarters." There are two main female characters, Edgarda (Garda) Thorne and Margaret Harold. Garda and Margaret illustrate the struggle of choosing between old and new modes of behavior. Garda has an independent nature and usually does things which further her own happiness, although others tell Garda to follow social mores rather than personal desires. Margaret, on the other hand, puts her marital duty to her unfaithful husband before her own happiness. Thus, in *East Angels* we see two women make different life decisions based on their opposing values.

Garda, who is sixteen at the beginning of the novel, is beautiful, spoiled, and uninhibited. She expresses her attitude about life when she tells a friend, Evert Winthrop:

"That is what I mean to do, have all there is of my life, I have told mamma so. I said to mamma more than a year ago, 'Mamma, what are our pleasures? Let us see if we can't get some more;' and mamma answered, 'Edgarda, pleasures are generally wrong.' But I don't agree with
mamma, I don't think them wrong; and I intend to take mine wherever I can find them, in fact, I do so now.'

One example of Garda's willful and unguarded behavior is her continual visiting with Lucian Spenser. Not only is Lucian a married man, but by this time Garda is engaged to Evert Winthrop. Margaret has the responsibility of watching over Garda after Mrs. Thorne's death (while Dr. Kirby is the official guardian), and the older, wiser Margaret tries to convince Garda that her behavior is immoral, but the attempt is futile. During a walk with Margaret and Mrs. Spenser, Garda announces: "I think I will . . . join Mr. Spenser . . . I like to watch him sketch so much; I'll bring him back in an hour or so." Mrs. Spenser immediately objects, telling Garda: "He is fond of sketching by himself; and especially, when he has once begun, he cannot bear to be interrupted. 

'I shall not interrupt him', said Garda. 'I hardly think he calls me an interruption.' She spoke carelessly; her carelessness about it increased Mrs. Spenser's inward indignation." Then Margaret says: "Garda is not really going, I think.' But Garda, not giving up, says: "Yes, Margaret, this time I am.'" On another occasion when Margaret asks Garda to obey her, the young girl insists that "there's no use in your trying to keep me from seeing Lucian . . . I can't imagine how you should even think of it, when you know so well how much I have always
liked him." Throughout the novel we learn that "Garda will think what she pleases; she isn't a girl to be guided."

There is conflict between Garda's emotion-guided actions and the expectations of her guardians and the people of Gracias-a-Dios. Knowing that she loves Lucian and not Evert, Garda breaks her engagement (an act which other characters consider to be very forward behavior for a woman). Then Garda goes to stay with Dr. Kirby's cousin in Charleston, South Carolina. When Lucian becomes a widower, he goes to see Garda in Charleston and the two become engaged without the consent of Dr. Kirby, who objects to the marriage because Lucian is not his choice. Nevertheless, Garda and Lucian still marry, and they are "two supremely happy persons." Garda successfully followed her own wishes, despite objections from others.

Unlike Garda, Margaret is an unhappy woman who suffers from following her sense of duty, instead of her heart. Married at nineteen, Margaret was soon deserted by her husband, Lansing (Lanse) Harold, who went to Europe to have an affair with a married French woman. Margaret never reveals the truth about her husband, and she accepts the blame for the separation, even though she is not at fault. Since Lanse left her, Margaret has been a companion and nurse to her husband's elderly aunt, Katrina Rutherford. Margaret has no freedom as she fulfills all
her aunt's wants; she calls herself an appendage of her aunt.67

After being away for several years, Lanse returns to Margaret and expects her to take care of him as if he had never wronged her. Lanse does not think he is a terrible husband, but his words to Margaret are ironic:

`. . . I might have been worse, I might have been brutal, tyrannical, in petty ways, I might have been a pig; instead of leaving you as I did, I might have stayed at home--and made you wish that I had left! Even now I scarcely touch your personal liberty; true, I ask you to keep house for me, set up a home and make me comfortable again; but outside of that I leave you very free, you shall do quite as you please.'68

After hearing this, Margaret leaves Lanse's room, "fighting with an unhappiness so deep that her whole heart was sobbing and crying, though now she did not shed outwardly a tear. . . ."69 In reality, Margaret has no freedom as long as she remains married to Lanse. Margaret accepts Lanse's request, even though she does not love him, because she believes she must never break her marriage vows. What makes Margaret's situation even more painful is that she and Evert (who was engaged to Garda and is a cousin of Lanse) love each other. Evert knows that Lanse has been unfaithful to Margaret, and he
believes that Margaret has no reason to be loyal to her husband, but Margaret will not abandon her wifely duties. Then Lanse leaves Margaret a second time, and Margaret finally feels that she must live on her own. Margaret tells Evert,

'When have I ever failed to be kind? I have always repressed myself. What is the result? I have been at everybody's beck and call, I have been expected to bear everything in silence. . . . I need a complete change, I must have it. . . . I have been for years--a slave. Oh to be somewhere! . . . anywhere where I can breathe and think as I please--as I really am! Do you want me to die without ever having been myself--my real self even for one day? I have come to the end of my strength; I can endure no longer.'

Margaret makes plans for "going north alone," and she asks Evert to leave her. Unfortunately, Margaret is not able to move north before Lanse reappears, this time as an invalid and again with a request that Margaret take care of him. In Woolson's words, Margaret "had been very free, but now she was called back--called back to the slavery, and the dread."

Evert tries to convince Margaret that she should not go back to her husband; the following conversation between Evert and Margaret reveals their struggle.
"Now, Margaret, ... of course you do not
dream of doing as Lanse wishes?"
"Yes, I think I shall do it."
"Do you mean to tell me that you wish to go
back to that man--after all he has done?"
"I do not wish to. But I must."
"Do you think he deserves it--deserves
anything? You actually put a premium on loose
conduct. You reward him for it, while--while
other men, who are trying, at least, to lead
decent lives, are thrust aside."
"He is my husband."
"So good a one!"
"That has nothing to do with it."
"Nothing?"
"No; not with my duty."
"Margaret, listen to reason. In some cases
it is right that a wife should go back to her
husband, almost no matter what he has done. But
yours is not one of them, it would kill you."
"No more than it did before."
"He left you a second time."
"I have only to thank him for that, haven't
I? It gave me a respite. Over there on the
river, when I learned--when I knew--that he had
really gone, I could scarcely hide my joy--I had
to hide myself to do it! It was the relief, the delight of being free.'

'The law, you know would free you forever.'

'I shall never take advantage of it.' . . .

'Why are you going back to Lansing Harold, when you are not in the least forced to go?'

'I am forced; my marriage forces me.'

The twentieth century reader would expect Margaret to seek a divorce after all she has suffered, but Woolson has Margaret firmly decide that a divorce is impossible. When Margaret is tormented by her situation, only the "Unseen Presence" knows her true feelings. The narrator explains that

for all these changes the Presence had no rebuke; the torturing longing love, the misery, the relapses into sullen rebellion, and then the slow, slow return towards self-control again, all these it beheld with pity the most tender. For it knew that this was a last struggle, it knew that this woman, though torn and crushed, would in the end come out on the side of right—that strange hard bitter right, which, were this world all, would be plain wrong. And Margaret herself knew it also, yes even now miserably knew (and rebelled against it), that she should come out on that hard side; and from that side.
go forward. It would be blindly, wretchedly; there could be for her no hope of happiness, . . . She could endure, and she must endure; and that would be all.  

Woolson writes that Margaret's choice to remain married will keep her on the "side of right." But Woolson also implies that this "strange hard bitter right . . . would be plain wrong," if this world were free of injustice. Woolson reveals that Margaret's situation is horrible: Margaret rebels against remaining loyal to her husband because she will continue to suffer, but she believes that divorce is unacceptable in her case, and she must bear the pain. Margaret does say that divorce would be an option if Lanse were a drunk, or if he struck her, or if they had children whom he abused. Thus, this novel does not make the point that divorce is absolutely wrong, but shows that women often times did not choose to divorce even when they suffered from the treatment of their husbands.

In the nineteenth-century women were not seen as equals to their husbands; upon marrying a woman lost most of her legal authority to her husband. As one Florida judge is recorded as saying in a divorce case, " . . . the husband is the head of the wife, and whatever is his is his'n and whatever is hers is his'n. . . ." A woman seeking a divorce had to prove not only that her husband wronged her, but also that she was innocent of any crime against her husband. A man who wanted a divorce only had
to show that his wife was guilty and did not have to prove that he was free from guilt. Even when divorce laws were liberalized, there were still judges and jurists who believed in the sanctity of marriage and would not liberally interpret divorce laws.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite the inequity in the legal system, many women stood up for their rights. According to Anne Firor Scott, the number of divorces in the South and elsewhere had increased faster than the population since 1870.\textsuperscript{78} Scott believes that the rising divorce rate indicates that women felt freer than in the past to express their discontent with marriage.\textsuperscript{79} Margaret confides in Evert, but she never complains to her husband. In reality, Margaret could obtain a divorce because her husband is an adulterer, and Margaret is innocent. Furthermore, Margaret is independently wealthy and does not love her husband, so she has no reason to stay with him besides her view that it is her wifely duty. In her article on Southern women and divorce, Jane Turner Censer notes that a woman might choose to be a martyr rather than carry the stigma of being divorced.\textsuperscript{80} Certainly Margaret is a martyr when she doesn't seek a divorce.

Margaret is Woolson's most self-sacrificing character. William Dean Howells feels that Margaret's martyrdom is so extreme that it is unbelievable. In an 1886 review of \textit{East Angels}, Howells describes Margaret's self-sacrifice and suffering, and then writes
If this is not enough for the worshippers of grand and perfect women, we cannot imagine what they want more. For ourselves we will confess that it is too much . . . Neither Margaret nor Winthrop her lover appeals to our sympathy, perhaps because we cannot believe in them; they form for us the one false note of the book. 81

As an unselfish woman who suffers to please her unfaithful husband, Margaret could be viewed as a heroine whose extreme suffering makes her even more noble. However, I do not agree with this interpretation for several reasons. If Margaret were truly selfless and noble in her commitment to her husband, she would not have been so tormented over her decision to remain with him, nor would she have been so overjoyed when she thought she was free from him. Margaret is upset that she has been a slave for so many years and says she needs a change, to be herself for once.

Even if the narrator says that Margaret is right to not seek divorce, Woolson's voice can also be heard through Evert and Garda, who tell Margaret to get a divorce, and through Margaret herself, who acknowledges that divorce can be an acceptable option. Why would Woolson say that Margaret was going back to a life of slavery and dread, if she thought Margaret's life was noble? Lastly, the "Unseen Presence" which knows that Margaret will be on the "side of right" if she stays with
Lanse also knows that this side is "hard" and "bitter" and would be "wrong", "were this world all." Although Woolson probably did not approve of divorce because of her religious views, she did recognize that marriages can be inequitable and cause suffering. The novel shows that Woolson would not discount the sacredness of marriage vows, nor could she ignore her concern for women who suffer in bad marriages.

The state of marriage and other issues concerning women are addressed in *Horace Chase* (1894), Woolson's third novel set in the South and the last novel she ever wrote. The work was serialized in *Harper's* from January to August, 1893. In this work Woolson portrays the lives of the Franklins: the widowed Mrs. Franklin; the vivacious, spoiled daughter Ruth; and the sickly elder daughter Dolly. After Mr. Franklin died, Mrs. Franklin and her daughters moved from the North to spend winters in St. Augustine, Florida, and summers in Asheville, North Carolina, in houses inherited from a relative. The three women do not have jobs and spend their time in leisure activity, such as conversing, walking, reading, and sewing. The relationships of the Franklins with men and with other women characters reveal themes identical to those in the earlier novels: women suffering and experiencing tension between old and new values. In *Horace Chase* Woolson is critical of women who are dependent on men to find happiness in life. But in this
novel she portrays unfavorably those independent women characters who seek fulfillment in other ways.

Ruth, the main female character, "was heedless and frivolous, caring only for her own amusement..."; "hers was a disposition in its essence self-indulgent; she was indolent; she was fond of luxuries..." Ruth becomes engaged to Horace Chase, a wealthy entrepreneur, who made his money from baking powder and steamships, among other business ventures. Horace had offered Ruth's brother, Jared, a job in Charleston, and Jared believes that Horace did this only to gain Ruth's love. Jared objects to the marriage because he distrusts Horace Chase, who, Jared says, "is purely a business man, a longheaded, driving, money-making fellow; all his ambition (and he has plenty of it) is along that one line." Being "headstrong" and always doing as she pleases, Ruth says, "I am marrying because I like it, because I want to. I intend to marry Horace Chase. If not with your consent then without it." Jared's assertion of authority is ineffective. Mrs. Franklin does not fully approve of Ruth and Horace marrying either, but she thinks to herself that Horace could free the family from their debts.

It is Horace's wealth which seems to attract Ruth, for she never mentions love as a reason to marry him. When Ruth first becomes acquainted with Horace, she tells him, "I have always wanted to see somebody who could do everything. It must be very nice to have money." Upon
the announcement of the proposed marriage, one character states that "'there are some who maintain that she is marrying him for his money.'" After Ruth and Horace are married, Horace gives Ruth "a large income for her personal use"; she pays off her mother's debts, restores the house in Asheville, and refurbishes the house in Florida. Ruth is happy in her marriage because she is pampered by her husband, who provides everything she desires. Ruth herself admits, "'I have everything I like—and I like so many things! And everybody does whatever I want them to do.'"  

Ruth is so content that she does not realize her mistake in marrying Horace until she falls in love with Walter, one of Horace's business partners. Knowing that she cannot marry Walter, Ruth sorrowfully says: "'I will not care for him; it makes me too wretched!'" Ruth is so spoiled that she has not dealt with pain before, and she does not have the self-control to combat her emotions. Unable to conceal her grief, Ruth tells Horace that she loves Walter. Horace is deeply hurt, but he forgives Ruth and apologizes for his own faults, such as putting his business before his wife. Through the portrayal of both Horace and Ruth Woolson shows that caring for money and the things it buys can cause suffering.  

In *East Angels* Garda's impulsiveness was not approved of in general, but in the end it brought her great happiness. Woolson is more critical of Ruth's lack of
self-discipline and the result in Ruth's case is grief rather than joy. The main difference is that Ruth is more selfish than Garda and is interested in happiness gained by wealth, while Garda is interested in finding happiness for herself and others by simple means, not involving money. In addition, Garda has confidence in her own feelings and intentions, while Ruth seems weak and dependent.

In the marriage of Jared and Genevieve there is also suffering because of greed for money. Jared has a "chronic indifference to money-making." Genevieve, on the other hand, wants her husband to make a great deal of money, not only for themselves, but also to give to charity. The tragedy is that Genevieve pushes her husband into work which makes him ill and unhappy. During one of Jared's visits with his family, Ruth comments that "'Jared was always well when he was in the navy . . . Now he is never well . . . And as for happiness--he is miserable!'" Mrs. Franklin, in particular, objects to her daughter-in-law's power over Jared. Genevieve is blamed for Jared's death because she had driven him to do work he hated and did not do well. Mrs. Franklin berates Genevieve, "'You have killed your husband . . . your greed for money made you urge him incessantly to go into business which he knew nothing about. You gave him no peace; you drove him on! . . . '" Once again Woolson is critical of putting money before human compassion. Both
Ruth and Genevieve wield power over their husbands to fulfill their own wishes, and their behavior is not favored by other characters. If Ruth and Genevieve had not been dependent on their husbands to reach their goals, I believe they would not have been as destructive as they were. In Horace Chase, Woolson thus shows women's lack of independence to be one cause of the greed and subsequent corruption characteristic of the Gilded Age.

Woolson also disapproves of Mrs. Franklin, who is portrayed as being completely dependent on men. After Jared dies, Mrs. Franklin has "no desire to live" because, as Dolly explains, "'Her father, her husband, and her son—these have been mother's life. And now that the last has gone, the last of the three men she adored, she doesn't care to stay.'"94 Throughout the novel we see that Dolly and Mrs. Franklin have a close mother-daughter relationship and Dolly often reads her mother's mind. Dolly's interpretation of the mother's depression is correct, and the reader wonders why Mrs. Franklin would want to die when she still has two daughters living. Nevertheless, Mrs. Franklin is intensely devoted to the men in her family and seemingly believes that men are more important than women. In asking Horace to be guardian of her daughters, Mrs. Franklin says "'As I sat here beside my son . . . I knew that I longed to go too. I want to be with him--and with my husband--and my dear father. My life has now come to its end, for they were my life.'"95
Mrs. Franklin is an exaggerated stereotype of the traditional wife and mother whose life revolves solely around her husband and male children. Woolson uses Mrs. Franklin to illustrate the absurdity of a woman's making the men in her life the only reason for living, especially when she still has the companionship of two daughters. Through her portrayal of Ruth, Genevieve, and Mrs. Franklin, Woolson reveals her objection to wives who take advantage of their husbands for personal benefit or pleasure, as well as her disdain for women who depend so completely on men that they overlook their own self-worth.

Woolson also describes other women in *Horace Chase* in unfavorable terms. Miss Maud McIntosh is a "spinster of thirty-six" who "possessed a wealth of beautiful red hair, whose thick mass was combed so tightly back from her forehead that it made her wink; her much-exposed countenance was not at all handsome." Maud is a sculptor whose works included many studies of arms, and hands, and a dozen finished portrait-busts in clay. The subjects of the busts appeared to have been selected, one and all, for their strictly commonplace aspect; they had not even the distinction of ugliness. Dolly laughingly tells about seeing Maud smoke a clay pipe behind a bush with her face "exactly as solemn as it is when she models her deadly busts." Maud is a caricature of the single woman artist. Miss Billy Breeze,
a friend of Maud, is also an exaggeration of a type. Billy is in love with a man, Achilles, but she does not know how to act toward him, and he does not particularly like her. Dolly comments that Billy "`has the happy faculty of living in illusions, day after day. She can go on hopefully admiring Achilles to the last moment of her life.'" 99

On one occasion Dolly and Maud address the topic of woman suffrage. When Dolly receives some books loaned by Billy, she is grateful because, she says, "`Mother really has nothing [to read] for today. The one [book] she had yesterday was very dull; she said she was `worrying through it.' It was a story about female suffrage--as though any one could care for that!'" 100 Maud's response is that "`care for it or not, it is sure to come . . . '" 101 Maud is positive that women will get the vote someday. The discussion ends with Dolly making a joke about the issue.

Perhaps Woolson mocks these women and the suffrage movement to provide comic relief in a serious novel. Or Woolson may be revealing her more conservative feelings. Henry James believed that Woolson's writing breathes a spirit singularly and essentially conservative--the sort of spirit which, but for a special indication pointing the other way, would in advance seem most to oppose itself to the introduction into the feminine lot of new
and complicating elements . . . it would never occur to her to lend her voice to the plea for further exposure--for a revolution which should place her sex in the thick of the struggle for power.  

James thought that Woolson saw the life of a woman as "essentially an affair of private relations." Possibly Woolson felt that equality could be gained on personal levels, so there was no need for public group promotion of equality of the sexes.

Supporting this possibility is Woolson's negative presentation, in *Horace Chase*, of women's charitable work, which was part of the public rather than the private sphere. Genevieve talks of building a new hospital, and she serves on the board of managers for "the Colored Home" which aids freedmen. Both Dolly and Ruth laugh at Genevieve's efforts and make her acts of charity sound worthless. Genevieve causes her husband mental and physical strain as she drives him to provide money for her charity work and eventually achieve her ultimate goal: to become the director of a charitable institution.

Another illustration of Woolson's view on the subject is Mrs. Kip's party for some Native American captives. During the party, Mrs. Kip asks the interpreter, "a very intelligent young man," to tell the Indians that "'we love them,'" and that "'we think of their souls.'" The translation is, "'The white squaw says that you have had
enough to eat, and more than enough; and she hopes that you won't make pigs of yourselves if anything else is offered--especially Drowning Raven!' Woolson makes the reader see Mrs. Kip's exuberance in introducing her guests to "high culture" as humorous and ridiculous.

In reality, as Anne Scott notes, missionary societies grew rapidly in the 1870s, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was a strong movement in the 1880s, and the rise of women's clubs occurred in the 1890s. All of these groups developed because of women's desire to "learn about and begin to deal with the world outside of the home." In Horace Chase, however, Woolson does not show that women became leaders, supported each other, or gained independence from their traditional roles through their involvement in charity and reform organizations. In her own life Woolson did not openly support women's rights activism, nor did she participate in a woman's reform group; the author's criticisms of Genevieve and Mrs. Kip reflect her lack of involvement in women's organizations and even her hostility towards them.

To understand fully why Woolson's writing about women seems ambiguous, it is necessary to learn about Woolson's original reading audience. Woolson's fiction is not an overt expose of the sacrifices and struggles of women, because, in order to sell her fiction, she had to consider the interests of her readers. The majority of subscribers to nineteenth-century popular magazines were middle- and
upper-class women, predominantly from the North. These readers wanted their leisure time reading to be filled with romance and adventure. Northerners wanted to read about the slow-paced, religious, family-oriented life of the South, a pleasant contrast to the industrial boom of the urban North. Reading about romantic and leisurely lives in the traditional, agrarian South was probably a comfort to Northern women caught in the rise of modern industrial society. Woolson thought "that nine-tenths of the great mass of readers care only for the love story." Woolson's stories set in the South are indeed filled with romanticism, yet realism is also present. In a letter to a friend, she wrote, "The beautiful and the pleasant and the good are only a part of life. Literature must not refuse to deal with the ugly and the commonplace and even the shockingly unpleasant." Sometimes Woolson was criticized for writing unhappy endings, but she still preferred to be realistic. Fred Lewis Pattee said of Woolson, "Our earliest realist, in the modern sense, undoubtedly she was."

Woolson's fiction has been labeled "local color" writing, "one early sign of the new realism" of nineteenth-century American literature. In his article on local color in Southern literature, Claude B. Green defines it as "a pleasant and often sentimental presentation of typical life in a certain definite
locality that had characteristics of manners and customs peculiar to itself." This type of fiction, which provided a mainly immobile society with stories of regions unfamiliar to them, was published in magazines such as Harper's, Appletons', and the Atlantic. Although local color fiction usually provided a realistic view of a locale, much of the writing was fraught with exaggeration and romanticism. Nevertheless, Green noted that "... the nineteenth-century writers of Southern fiction, particularly the local colorists, were writing social history at a time before many of the professional historians were particularly interested in that genre." Woolson's Southern fiction is an example of the historical value of local color writing.

Woolson's portrayals of southern women show how women of the 1870s South experienced a tension between traditional and modern behavior in a changing social environment. Woolson shows that during a period when women were gaining new opportunities, they were still influenced by tradition and societal expectations. Woolson did not create women characters who easily stepped into new roles and new ways of behaving because this was not generally the reality of the 1870s South; instead, women lacked control over their own destinies and suffered many inequities. After analyzing Woolson's fiction on the post-Civil War South, I conclude that Woolson was at times critical and at times accepting of the restrictions placed
on women who lived in a period defined by tension between traditional and non-traditional ways of life.

Woolson's perspectives on women of the late nineteenth century are expressed through her fiction. In the three short stories which deal with the aftermath of the war, Woolson displays her sensitivity to and comprehension of the struggles Southern women had as the Old South declined and the New South was being established. At the same time, Woolson communicates her own attitude that women should adjust to the present, instead of dwelling on the past. Woolson endorses a liberal education for women in the story "Bro," in which Marion, the main female character, is a skilled mathematician, who was taught by a woman teacher. Woolson shows that when Marion chooses the traditional course of marriage and gives up the possibility of a career in mathematics, the result is loss and suffering.

Through the plots of her novels, Woolson demonstrates that a woman who lets societal expectations or other people control her life does not find happiness. Madam Carroll is not content until she has removed the mask placed on her by her husband. Margaret Harold never gains freedom to enjoy herself because of the demands of her husband and her aunt, and her commitment to her marriage vows. The dependence of a woman on men is exaggerated in Mrs. Franklin, who feels that her whole life revolves around her father, husband, and son. Through these
sacrificing women Woolson makes her points that women should have some independence from men and that relinquishing one's true self for another person is detrimental.

Garda is Woolson's best example of a woman who follows her heart, ignoring tradition and social standards, to discover that she can travel, learn, and make her own decisions. Although the other characters are critical of Garda's behavior, she is presented as a happy, rather than a suffering, person. Ruth and Genevieve are also strong-willed characters, but they are criticized because their lack of understanding and self-control causes suffering to themselves, their husbands, and their marriages. Woolson is critical of their dependence on their husbands and on money. Through these characters Woolson promotes equality among men and women, self-determination, and affectionate, equal marriage, for the author is more critical of Ruth and Genevieve than of Garda.

Woolson reveals her interest in the new opportunities developing for women of her day by addressing several pertinent subjects. Education for women, of which Woolson highly approves, is treated in "Bro." Delicate work versus indelicate work, or jobs for income, is a topic of debate in For the Major, and through her satire Woolson shows her lack of sympathy with those who oppose women's working outside the home. Divorce is a major controversy
in *East Angels*, showing that Woolson is open-minded enough to consider such a radical change from the tradition of marriage for life. Woolson shows that Margaret leads a depressed and tormented existence because she does not choose divorce. Suffrage and women's charitable work are examined in *Horace Chase*, but Woolson presents these subjects in a negative light.

From the war-related short stories to the final novel, published during a period of seventeen years, there seems to be a change in Woolson's attitudes toward women. Woolson portrays Judith, Gardis, and Bettina with tender sympathy, and she has the latter two choose lives that fit the new social order. Although Marion sides with tradition when she marries instead of pursuing a career, she is favorably portrayed as an adept mathematician trained by another female math expert. Madam Carroll makes personal sacrifices in order to please her husband and her community. But Woolson shows that when Madam Carroll removes her mask she is still accepted and loved. Through Garda and Margaret we see clearly the tension between old and new values. By this period in her writing Woolson seems to be holding more steadfastly to tradition, yet she still indicates that following tradition, as Margaret did, can cause suffering, and that ignoring social expectations, as Garda did, can bring happiness. In the last novel we see most clearly Woolson's conservative nature as well as her ambiguity about women's
status and roles. Woolson is critical of Ruth, Genevieve, and Mrs. Franklin for their dependence on men. The author is also critical of signs of women's independence: Miss McIntosh, the suffrage movement, and Genevieve's and Mrs. Kip's charitable work. Woolson's treatment of her characters reflects the transitional period in which she lived.

When one ponders the fact that equality of the sexes has not been achieved even in the 1980s, and that women still feel tension between "conventional" and "modern" role models, it is helpful to consider the struggles of Southern women during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, because in knowing our history we can better understand the present. These women were taught to be pure, pious, submissive to men, and to be fully satisfied as wives and mothers at home. These women also were learning that there were other possibilities for them, in education, careers, and activities outside of the home. In the South, the Civil War allowed women to prove that they could do the same work that men did and that they were not inferior to men.

Once the door of change had been opened, it could not be closed, although many would try to shut it again and again. A woman stood on the threshold: she could walk through the door to support new roles and equal status for women, or she could step back, accepting her traditional roles and secondary status. All of Woolson's female
characters stand on that threshold between old and new values, and all of them must decide which way to step, forward or backward.

Woolson also stood on that threshold. As an unmarried woman author, Woolson was neither radical nor conventional for her day. Being an author was an acceptable and not uncommon position for a nineteenth-century woman. Nevertheless, Woolson did deviate from the norm by never becoming a wife and mother. Living in a transitional period, Woolson could not write freely about the "new woman," who did not strictly follow tradition because too many people, including her editors and readers, held conservative views about woman's place in society. If Woolson had openly advocated equality for women in her fiction, she might not have made a living by her writing. Woolson's own conservative views concerning women are apparent in her works. Yet her writing also indicates that she did not approve of the suffering which the status quo often caused women. Perhaps Woolson never stepped off the threshold.

Woolson's contribution to American culture is her fiction which, through the lives of her women characters, reveals the inequality of the sexes and the conflict between traditional and modern ways existing in the 1870s South. Woolson brought out the questions and ambiguities regarding women's status and roles through the choices made by her fictional female characters. Even though
Woolson's criticisms of women's suffering may be veiled by her recognition of the dominance of tradition, it would be hard to convince anyone that the pain, heartache, and inequality experienced by Woolson's female characters after they have accepted secondary status or traditional roles are what Woolson wished to promote as the best options for women. Thus, I am convinced, Woolson believed and expressed through her fiction that women should be enabled to choose their own life path, to be modern, educated, equal contributors to American society.
Notes


3 James, 180.


6 Benedict, *Constance Fenimore Woolson*, 41-45. This excerpt is from one of the few remaining letters by Woolson, as the author believed in burning letters and requested this of people who received letters from her. This lack of letters makes interpreting Woolson's views more difficult.

7 Hubbell, 609.


McAdoo, 744,

Anne Firor Scott, "The 'New Woman' in the New South," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 61 Autumn 1962: 481.


Woolson, "Cotton," 549.


Woolson, "Cotton," 548.

Benedict, *Voices*, 252.

Constance Fenimore Woolson, "Old Gardiston,"


Woolson, "Gardiston," 665.

Woolson, "Gardiston," 667.

Woolson, "Gardiston," 668.

Woolson, "Gardiston," 669.

Woolson, "Gardiston," 669.

Woolson, "Gardiston," 670.
26 Woolson, "Gardiston," 673.
27 Woolson, "Gardiston," 673.
30 Woolson, "Rodman," 276.
31 Woolson, "Rodman," 276.
32 Woolson, "Rodman," 276.
33 Woolson, "Rodman," 276.
34 Woolson, "Rodman," 276.
37 Woolson, "Bro," 423.
38 Woolson, "Bro," 423.
40 Woolson, "Bro," 426.
41 Benedict, Woolson, N. pag.
42 Wilbur Fiske Tillett, "Southern Womanhood as Affected by the War," The Century 21 November 1891: 9-16.
43 Scott, 110-114.
45 Woolson, Major, 158.
46 Woolson, Major, 22.
47 Woolson, Major, 139.
60 Julie A. Matthaie, An Economic History of Women in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1982): 120, 127. By 1890 only 4.5 percent of married women in the United States were gainfully employed, while 40 percent of single women were in the labor force.
72 Woolson, *East Angels*, 527.
73 Woolson, *East Angels*, 529-531.
74 Woolson, *East Angels*, 556.
75 Woolson, *East Angels*, 531.
80 Censer, 38-39.
82 Woolson, *East Angels*, 556.
84 Woolson, *Horace*, 138-139.
85 Woolson, *Horace*, 137, 142-144.
87 Woolson, *Horace*, 127.
88 Woolson, *Horace*, 159.
89 Woolson, *Horace*, 200.
90 Woolson, Horace, 260.
91 Woolson, Horace, 121.
93 Woolson, Horace, 304.
94 Woolson, Horace, 292.
95 Woolson, Horace, 296.
96 Woolson, Horace, 60.
97 Woolson, Horace, 80.
98 Woolson, Horace, 52.
99 Woolson, Horace, 11.
100 Woolson, Horace, 71.
101 Woolson, Horace, 71.
102 James, 178-179.
103 James, 192.
104 Woolson, Horace, 184.
105 Scott, The Southern Lady, 136.
107 Benedict, Constance Fenimore Woolson, 103.
109 Pattee, 132-133.
110 Pattee, 141.

113 Green, 4.
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