

Its Prohibitive Cost: The Bicycle, the New Woman and Conspicuous Display

Eva Chen

It was over, this wonderful excursion of his, so far as she was concerned, and with the swift blow that separated them, he realized all that those days had done for him. He tried to grasp the bearings of their position. Of course, they would take her away to those social altitudes of hers. She would become an inaccessible young lady again. Would they let him say good-bye to her? [...]indeed, it was only now he was beginning to realise what he felt. Love he wouldn't presume. It was worship. If only he could have one more chance.¹

This lament comes at the end of H. G. Wells's 1896 novel *The Wheels of Chance*, when Mr. Hoopdriver the Cockney drapery assistant, an 'uncomplicated, half educated, commonplace, sentimental & well meaning shopman,'² is forced to end his short bicycling adventure in the company of the New Woman Jessie. Hoopdriver has met Jessie on his bicycling holiday, rescues her from her gentlemanly seducer, protects her from the jibes and insults of villagers, and helps her in her efforts to run away from her family and the prospect of an arranged marriage. When their money runs out, Jessie, the idealistic but unworldly girl brought up on the New Woman literature of Oliver Schreiner, has no choice but to go back to her family and give up her vague hopes of making an independent living as a London journalist. Hoopdriver returns to his humble and dreary shop work -- '[t]omorrow, the early rising, the dusting, and drudgery, begin again' (*Wheels* 115). But for five days, he lives in a fantasy world of idyllic happiness and excitement. The excitement comes not just from the thrill of adventure, in which the Cockney shop hand imagines himself as a noble knight-errant saving a lady in distress. It also comes from Hoopdriver's imagined elevation into a more refined world of books, manners and enlightened conversations with a lady on equal terms, a brief glimpse of a life beyond the crippling confinements of a London shop.

That this New Woman, normally 'inaccessible,' has now been accessible for five days to 'a mere counter-jumper, a cad on castors, and a fool to boot' (115), is down to one important object, the bicycle. Wells in this novel taps into the feminist celebration of the bicycle as an emancipator of women, for the bicycle allows Jessie to go on a failed elopement away from a life of conventional domesticity. But the novel also establishes one more fact about the bicycle—that it is a symbol of status and expensive consumption. It is as a fellow cyclist that Hoopdriver has made his first acquaintance with Jessie when his second-hand bicycle runs into Jessie's brand-new, glittering, expensive Safety. The two are then able to establish an empathetic rapport common among early cyclists, when Jessie enquires earnestly about his bruises, offers

help in the form of a sticking-plaster she keeps in the side-pocket of her rational dress, and apologizes for not giving way to an obvious novice, being a skillful cyclist herself. Because cyclists are still relatively rare on the road, Hoopdriver is later able to notice Jessie and her gentlemanly companion after repeatedly coming across them, and detects and scuppers the latter's ignoble designs. The following days are all spent on wheels, as the two cyclists race to shake loose from their chasers, register as fellow cyclists in pubs and hotels, and generally enjoy the spirit of adventure, excursion and equal comradeship that social bicycling offered in those mid-1890s days.

This sense of comradeship may be predicated upon the bicycle's status as a latest technological invention pursued for its novelty and wonder, but it is also derived from the fact that the bicycle at this time was still very expensive and limited to a certain group of mostly middle-class users. The first thing Hoopdriver concludes about Jessie is that she must be rich, because her shining new bicycle, to his reckoning, 'couldn't cost much under twenty pounds' (14). Wells's description of Hoopdriver's bicycling tour as 'against all the conditions of his calling, against the counsels of prudence and the restrictions of his means' suggests that bicycling was still associated with high costs and middle-class status, and too impractical for the urban worker (3).

Hoopdriver is laughed at by his fellow shop assistants, and his roommate Briggs, though friendlier and constantly lecturing him about how to ride safely, has 'never been on a cycle in his life' (5). Hoopdriver could only afford an old battered Ordinary weighing 'three-and-forty pounds' (11) that has seen multiple ownership. Yet even on the wheels of this 'antiquity' (11), now made obsolete by the much lighter diamond-framed, pneumatic-tired Safety bicycle, Hoopdriver is called a 'bloomin' Dook' by a heath-keeper (8), 'the gentleman wizzer bicitle' by a nursemaid (9), and spoken to as an equal by a man in drab—'evidently a swell' (15). Even Jessie the rich New Woman mistakes him, at a distance, for her gentleman companion. Hoopdriver revels in a sense of 'social superiority,' talks in his 'most aristocratic intonation,' and imagines himself as 'a gentleman, a man of pleasure,' 'as good as a Dook, if not precisely in the peerage' (9, 19), all because he is riding a bicycle. Jessie's later conjecture that Hoopdriver must be a South African colonial, to which Hoopdriver readily agrees, adding also that he is an ostrich farmer, has once shot a lion and chased cattle robbers, is a result of her naivety and inexperience, but surely a bicycling man of leisure and pleasure could not possibly be a humble Cockney shop hand toiling 'six long days out of the seven, and all the year round,' in a 'cheerless, shutterdarkened, wrapped-up shop' (7).

Wells's 1896 novel underlines one important issue this paper seeks to explore. The bicycle has enabled Hoopdriver's transient transformation precisely because, more than a machine of speed and technological innovation, it is also a key marker of

status and a commodity of fashion. As a late Victorian form of transport, the bicycle is often linked with the New Woman and hailed as a harbinger of emancipation and public mobility for women, or a tool for female sartorial reform and physical improvement.³ This paper points out that in the mid-1890s when the high society of late Victorian England was swept by the so-called 'bicycle craze,' the bicycle, with its high costs and initial association with the younger, fashionable members of the upper middle class, was also one of the most advertised commodities and a fashionable emblem of modishness and class-distinction. Compared with other products of the Victorian enthrallment to technology like the telegraph, the gramophone or the typewriter, the bicycle lent itself better to conspicuous display because it was mostly ridden in full public view on urban streets or country roads. Its speed, noisy bells and brakes as well as the performative element in riding compelled and forced public attention. It was, as Mackintosh and Norcliffe point out, the 'best public platform' to stage new styles of clothing and accessories, including hats, shoes and parasols, and traversed into the realm of fashion, style and conspicuous display much more than other technological products.⁴

When a great public uproar broke out over the New Woman's adoption of a more sensible, shorter cycling costume called the rational dress, the heated nature of the opposition both reflects traditionalist unease over disruptions to female decorum, and also underlines the high visibility cycling afforded to the rider's costumed body and the inextricable links between cycling, display and fashion. This goes to explain why public attitudes toward women's bicycling changed in 1895 and 1896 from initial scandalization to later acceptance, because rather than direct public support for the New Woman or her calls for social change, this change rests more on a general perception of the bicycle as a commodity of fashion, novelty and upper-middle-class status, a perception greatly aided by the maneuvering of the bicycling industry and their advertisers. The same logic seems to apply to the bicycle's later quick demise from the pedestal of fashion, when by the end of the 1890s even working-class people could afford a bicycle as a result of drastically reduced costs. Within a short space of several years, the bicycle was soon replaced by the automobile as a new upper-middle-class tool of fashion and status display, and became a common means of daily transport.

This paper discusses the fictional work of George Gissing, Grant Allen and H. G. Wells written during or soon after the mid-1890s 'bicycle craze,' in order to situate the bicycle as an integral part of a wider late Victorian material culture of conspicuous consumption where commodities, objects and spectacles increasingly articulate human subjectivities and denote their classed identities. The ability to consume objects and to use display to perform a new, modish identity is now a crucial part of

modern urban life. As a commodity of display, the bicycle thus inevitably entails class differentiation and new forms of hierarchization, which may mean that though the bicycle has contributed to more opportunities and greater emancipation along gender lines for many bourgeois women, it at the same time functions as a new marker of visible class privilege denying access to less privileged men and women. As a crucial emblem of the much advertised, ridiculed but also emulated ensemble that constituted the New Woman, the bicycle signifies her complicity with modern commodity culture and her ability to utilize commodities to articulate her new identity, an ability denied to other women. Consumption of the bicycle and the rational cycling dress, together with all the visual and symbolic trappings that come with cycling, now become a most visibly constitutive part that differentiates the real New Woman from her lower-class sisters.

‘The most fashionable people have taken it up’

The Victorian era teemed with things and material objects. This is reflected, as Elaine Freedgood writes, in the Victorian novel which catalogues and ‘shows’ us with objects to the extent that these ‘threaten to crowd the narrative right off the page.’⁵ The Victorian street, especially toward the last decades of the nineteenth century, was turning into a glittering commodity spectacle where new advertising and display techniques and ceaseless arrays of new products commodified the visual experience and evoked desires of ownership. Such a culture took on the prototypical traits of a modern consumer society after the watershed event of the 1857 Crystal Palace exhibition, where the viewing public, totaling 16 million in that summer, was interpellated as the consumer who gazed in wonder upon a phantasmagoria of dazzlingly displayed products.⁶ There, set up like artworks alongside fragrant flowers, singing fountains and ornamental gardens in what Victorian contemporaries called ‘a temple of human Industry,’⁷ man-made products were elevated above the mundane act of practical usage, and turned into omnipotent commodities promising multifariousness to the human subject.

It is noteworthy that the bicycle made its first public appearance in England in the Crystal Palace in 1869 amid such an ambience of phantasmagoria. The 1869 displayed bicycle was a lightweight all-metal model manufactured and patented by the Coventry firm of Reynold and May. It consisted of a large front wheel and a much smaller rear one, with the rider to be perched on top of the large wheel high in air.⁸ But it was more than just the most technologically advanced model based on renovations on previous German and French inventions; it was also a much gazed-at and desire-stimulating commodity of symbolic power. As a speed machine which

promised to expand human mobility and transcend the limits of time and space, the bicycle was in perfect synchronization with the exhibition's overall message of progress and novelty, and with the quintessential modern preoccupation with time-space compression. Right from its debut, the bicycle was thus embedded in a complex semiotic system of commodity representation and desire-stimulation, a system that would later also resonate in various literary representations of the bicycle.

It was not until the 1890s, however, that the bicycle really transformed from a clever gadget into a practical, popular commodity. The early models, called the Ordinary, were difficult to ride. The huge wheel, often five feet in diameter in order to maximize speed, made both steering and mounting difficult, and the smallest road obstacle would send the rider fall head first over the front handlebar. The extraordinary athleticism this required, its accident-prone nature and the prohibitively high costs meant that the bicycle was mostly used in racing as a means of sport or as an expensive toy to display status.⁹ The later development of chain technology and the production of efficient pneumatic tires led to the invention in the late 1870s of the Safety Bicycle, so called because by positioning the rider between two equally sized wheels and closer to the ground it was much safer and easier to ride.¹⁰

When the 'bicycle craze' came about in the mid-1890s, the bicycle became a coveted commodity and the latest fashion statement for a mostly middle-class clientele. Davidson wrote in 1896 that 'cycling is at present a fashionable craze,' with 'a more vehement hold upon the smart world than any mania before.' 'It is becoming, through its smart patronage, admired and desired by all other women.'¹¹ The improvement in technology had much widened its appeal to women and older men, but the continuing high costs still precluded mass use. New models could cost between 10 and 30 pounds in the UK and between \$100 and \$150 in the US in 1895, and even though prices came down to \$80 by 1897, the bicycle still remained largely within the province of the upper and middle classes (Rush 2).¹² In the summers of 1895 and 1896, Battersea Park and Hyde Park were thronged with fashionable cyclists who gathered there in great numbers, while two or three thousand cyclists could be seen along the northern bank of the Serpentine in Hyde Park on a fine morning in March 1896.¹³ Affluent buyers would go to great expenses to decorate their bicycles, hand-paint them with bright colors and house them in the halls of fashionable houses rather than in the stables or outbuildings (Bijker 94).

That style and fashionable elegance weighed as much, if not more, as bicycling itself could be seen in the fact that bicycle accessories, from decorated chain-guards to novelty cycling bells to handle-bar revolvers, cost American consumers more than \$200 million in 1896 alone, as opposed to only \$300 million on the bicycles themselves that same year.¹⁴ Bicycling literature of the time emphasized the

importance of manners and clothes when bicycling. As the *Handbook for Lady Cyclists* urged in 1896, 'to look well is as much the ambition of every lady cyclist as to ride well. And so it ought to be, for every woman who looks well awheel... benefits the world at large by adding an item of beauty to it' (Davidson 21). Cycling should therefore be 'graceful, pretty and charming, as well as enjoyable' (Davidson 22).

The interest in bicycle was such other middle-class form of leisure, like the piano, declined in sales by almost 50% by the late 1890s (Smith 30). The bicycle became the ur-commodity and symbol of fashion and progress, appearing in all kinds of ads to boost sales of all kinds of products.¹⁵ Many bicycle shops popped up, while others sold bicycles as a sideline; one source noted that in Ottawa in 1895 along the busy Sparks Street, an 'importer of men's fine furnishings,' a camping and flag supply shop, an insurance agent, a machine and foundry shop, and a combined jeweller/watchmaker/optician all sold bicycles to take advantage of the huge fad (Rush 18). In Britain large stock floatations for bicycle manufacturers attracted huge funds, and even a ship-building company were reported to enter the cycle trade (Bijiker 97).

Many well-known writers of the period also took to riding the bicycle. Wells, who learned to ride on sandy tracks in the countryside 'with none but God to help me' in 1895 and soon had his wife to ride on a tandem bicycle with him, 'rode wherever Mr Hoopdriver rode in that story' along the Surrey roads.¹⁶ In *The Wheels of Chance*, Hoopdriver relishes the prospect of being seen as a member of that 'fashionable' community of cyclists, by 'the imaginary spectators [who] would fall a-talking of the fashionableness of bicycling – how judges and stockbrokers and actresses, and, in fact, *all the best people rode*' (235; emphasis added). Wells also helped George Gissing to learn, in order to help restore his health. Gissing turned out to be too nervous and excitable at the first attempt, 'shrieking with laughter' when he fell on the roadside grass (482). But by 16 July 1898 Gissing wrote to Wells that he was able to 'ride perfectly with one hand, waving the other wildly.'¹⁷ The New Woman writer Sarah Grand was an avid cyclist herself and made several appearances in magazine interviews as a cyclist, including *The Hub* in 1896, *Lady's Realm* and *Cycling World Illustrated* in 1897.¹⁸ In the latter interview, Grand praised cycling's benefits in offering great exercise for homebound women 'at a nominal cost,' and commented appreciatively on stylish Parisian bicycling costumes that accentuated the 'good points' while concealing the 'less pleasing' (ibid). What Grand deems as 'nominal' is, of course, prohibitively expensive for the masses. By 1898 at the end of the 'bicycle craze' when Gissing bought his bicycle, he paid 14 pounds, the equivalent of 650 pounds in today's money.¹⁹

It is interesting that Grand's emphasis on health benefits, easiness of movement

as well as fashionable elegance, a rhetoric that the pro-bicycling feminist campaigners on the rational dress also adopted, was replicated by the bicycling industry and their advertisers. This suggests that the bicycle's benefits of self-empowerment and self-improvement, diligently promoted by both the feminist campaign as well as the bicycle industry, were intricately linked with fashion and consumption. The advertising industry and the popular magazines played an instrumental role in promoting the fashionable image of the bicycle, particularly through their shaping of the public perception of women cyclists. Conservative anxieties over female decorum and the alleged damage to the female reproductive system had always dogged the relatively small number of female cyclists in the early days of the Ordinary or the tricycle (Marks 175). By the 1890s, after many middle-class men were already converts to the Safety bicycle, the bicycling industry decided to tap the female market and used mostly female cyclists in its advertising. To allay conservative anxiety, these ads promoted female-specific cycle saddles designed to avoid undue stimulation of sensitive parts. They also emphasized bicycling's health benefits and promoted these as necessary in order to prepare women for socially approved functions like motherhood.²⁰ But the most important method was to highlight the bicycle and female cyclists in images of fashion.

In a scene that replicates the fetishistic aesthetics of the Crystal Palace exhibitions, the 1890s bicycle ads rarely pictured the bicycle in social or realistic settings but instead in a scenic, decorative and garden-like ambience. This association of the steel-and-iron bicycle with nature and organic images appears not far-fetched, because the bicycle, whilst emblematic of the latest achievements of industrial mechanization, was also linked with the outdoor, fresh air and the countryside, values deemed as organic, pre-industrial and seemingly at odds with industrial urbanization. But what is more significant is that many of these bicycle ads employed the help of famous or aspiring artists who used 'Aubrey Beardsleyish' aesthetic techniques of swirling lines and stylized curves.²¹ There the fashionably dressed female cyclist posed with her bicycle, surrounded by flowers, leaves and Eden-like garden images, suggesting not just an image of harmony with nature but also one of beguiling seduction, fantasy and glamor. This seamless blending of art and commerce, so adroitly utilized in the earlier Crystal Palace exhibitions when lighting and similar stage displays helped theatricalize the viewing experience, had now come to aestheticize the bicycle and its woman rider, imbuing both with symbolic, fantastical powers.

In his 1896 *The Wheel of Chance*, Wells evokes the bicycle's aesthetic associations when describing Hoopdriver's encounter with Jessie the New Woman. Hoopdriver's own clumsy riding is described as 'opulent,' in 'voluptuous curves,' and

his old bicycle ‘became convulsed with the most violent emotions directly the Young Lady in Grey appeared.’ The sight of Jessie’s ‘unwomanly,’ ‘French’ rational dress drives Hoopdriver’s bicycle into further unruliness. ‘It began an absolutely unprecedented Wobble—unprecedented so far as Hoopdriver's experience went. It ‘showed off’—the most decadent sinuosity. It left a track like one of Beardsley's feathers’ (11). This association of Hoopdriver’s battered, old bicycle with Beardsleyian ‘decadence’ suggests an ironic reference by Wells to the many Beardsleyian touches of the popular bicycle ads. Used in the context of Hoopdriver’s encounter with Jessie’s bicycle, which ends in Hoopdriver falling off his bicycle and landing hard, alarmed and bruised on the pavement kerb, it also suggests the emasculating influence of New Woman’s cycling upon men. The association of the bicycle with sensual desire and feminine elegance, intended in the popular bicycle ads to soften the mannish image of women cyclists, now seems to be twisted round to affect and feminize the male riders.

The bicycle ads of the mid 1890s represent the full unfurling of the bicycle’s potential as a coveted commodity. It is at this stage that the bicycle, symbol of progress and ceaseless change since its earlier days of public racing and record-breaking speed,²² fully traverses into the realm of fashion and conspicuous consumption. If the earlier Crystal Palace exhibition inaugurated a new way of looking at and displaying the manufactured product as desire-stimulating commodity, the mid-1890s bicycle ads have brought this to a new height. For the first time in the history of Anglo-American advertising, modern visual and associational techniques were used on a wide scale. The bicycle was not just the most advertised product at the time, occupying almost a fifth of all advertising space in many magazines, bicycle ads were also ‘trail-blazing pioneers’ in their wide use of sophisticated visual graphics to emphasize the bicycle in terms of glamor and evocative fantasy (Garvey 69). This conscious pursuit of desire-stimulating visuality trains the public to respond to and appreciate narratives that reset the image of women cyclists, and successfully translates the mannish and menacing images of women cyclists, much maligned and satirized in popular humor magazines, into those of elegance, femininity and fashion.

The bicycle is now, as Rush points out, fully absorbed into the middle-class culture of consumption, an image that was abundantly reproduced in cycling as well as general family and fashion periodicals (5). Sarah Hallenbeck writes that the bicycle and the popular magazines enjoyed a ‘symbiotic relationship’ in the 1890s, because both experienced rapid success in that period, both exploited a heavy commodification of the visual register, and both celebrated a discourse of fashion, progress and consumption.²³ The popular magazines turned heavily visual and reliant on advertising in the 1890s, and if the bicycle industry pioneered the advertising

techniques so crucial to the livelihood of the magazines, the latter integrated the bicycle in a discourse of consumption not just in its many ads but also editorial contents like reports and stories, educating the reader to view the bicycle as a desirable symbol to articulate a new identity of fashion and progress. During the height of the 'bicycle craze,' almost all popular magazines had their cycle correspondents, while cycling magazines mushroomed and sold up to 41, 000 copies a week.²⁴ The latter adopted a format and layout that stressed visual pleasure and consumption, often little different from the general women and fashion magazines.

Cycling World Illustrated, for instance, a bi-weekly launched in March 1896, is a delight to the eye with well over half the space devoted to the latest Parisian cycling costumes, millinery, dainty cycling accessories, proper manners and etiquettes for women cyclists. A September 16 issue, for instance, chatted excitedly about a Parisienne cyclist attired in 'a costume of dark blue silk, consisting of *culotte* cut quite straight and short and trimmed with three rows of narrow silver braids.'²⁵ A 'marvelous powder' was also recommended to lady cyclists to be sprinkled on their hair to add luminousness. The anonymous reporter, camouflaging as an English lady writing home from Paris, was particularly enthusiastic over an expensive small leather case which could be attached either to the handle-bar of the bicycle or to the waist-belt, or 'worn across the shoulder *à la bandoulière*,' because it usefully contained toilette as well as 'a small button-hook, a tiny pair of scissors, needles, cotton and a stiletto' in case of tears and rents to the bicycling costume ('Parisienne Cycling Modes' 11). These magazines form a part of the mushrooming bicycling literature which advised women about proper posture and exertion but also fashion and comportment whilst bicycling, thus fortifying the image of the bicycle as a must-have commodity of conspicuous display for the rich, and upward mobility for the less well-off.

This image of the bicycle as fashion and status display, perhaps more than its links to the women's movement and emancipation, has played a key role in the transformation of public attitudes to women and bicycling. A 1895 entry in the *Cassell's Family Magazine* succinctly summed up the rather sudden transformation of public perceptions of women cyclists: 'It would hardly be too much to say that in April of 1895 one was considered eccentric for riding a bicycle, whilst by the end of June eccentricity rested with those who did not ride.'²⁶ Writing in 1898, Frances Abbott explained,

I have lived to see the woman who never wished her daughter to have a bicycle ride a wheel herself in company with that daughter; and when I ventured to recall her former opinions she said with unblushing serenity: 'Oh, well, everybody rides now; the most fashionable people have taken it

up; there is really nothing like it,' and she began to chide me because I did not own a wheel. (qtd. in Mackintosh and Norcliffe 26)

That 'the most fashionable people have taken it up' is probably the strongest reason to persuade even the most conservative-minded. The New Woman certainly plays a strong role in spearheading the bicycle's links with social radicalism, but this is never severed from a commodified image of cycling as fashionable consumption. The popular magazines, in touting the bicycle in their ads and editorial contents, use a rhetoric that knits self-empowerment, so vital to the New Woman, with consumption and progress. Bicycling is as much about enlarged scope and liberation for the New Woman as about the rights and means to join the commodity show and display, as much about to see and to explore as about to be seen and emulated. Possession of a bicycle, its make, type and price, and the style and fashion of your bicycling costume all become as much important, if not more, as the freedom bicycling entails. The New Woman indeed shows an ability to use bicycles to construct her 'progressive' identity, but progressiveness for a large number of the public means fashionableness and not to be left behind in the consumption and display of the latest commodity. This display, in which the New Woman actively participates, excludes other, less privileged men and women, who are thus denied a part in a progressive modernity where consumption and utilization of commodities are essential to articulating and performing new identities.

'It's a pity the machines can't be sold cheaper'

The bicycling New Woman is a recurring image in satirical journals like the *Punch*, which often vilified her mannish manners and her disruption of norms of female decorum. In the New Woman literature of the period penned either by male or female writers, the bicycle appears mostly as a telltale accessory of the New Woman but not as a key thematic device or subject. However in some of the short stories and early novels of writers like George Gissing, Grant Allen and H. G. Wells, the bicycle and the New Woman do make important appearances.

In Gissing's short stories, particularly 'A Daughter of the Lodge,' the bicycle and the New Woman take on a thematic role. This story was published in 1901, but judging from the enthusiastic talk in the story among Mrs. Lindley's upper-middle-class circles about the latest cycling fashion, as well as the aristocratic, bicycle-riding Lady Hilda's condescending remark that 'it's a pity the machines can't be sold cheaper,'²⁷ the story was probably set in the mid-1890s during the 'bicycle craze.' Here Gissing pits two New Woman characters against each other and describes how the heroine May is exposed as an impostor because of her inability to

consume the bicycle or lay claims to true New Womanhood. May is a daughter of the gardener in the service of Sir Shale in the country, but has shown from childhood an ambition and intellect 'which sharpened itself on everything with which it came in contact' ('Daughter' 167) After outgrowing anything her humble family circumstance or the local High School could offer, she leaves for London to make a 'livelihood upon her brains.' Eventually she achieves a form of independence by first working as a governess and then as a secretary to 'a lady with a mission – concerning the rights of womanhood' (167). When she arrives home after a couple of years for a short visit, she looks very bit the New Woman of advanced talk, practical masculine clothes and confident manners. May is 'well dressed in a severely practical way; nothing unduly feminine marked her appearance, and in the matter of collar and necktie she inclined to the example of the other sex' (168). She talks 'with the tone and gesture of one who habitually gives orders,' and shows off her wide knowledge by declaring the local country doctor a 'duffer' and offering her own diagnosis of her father's rheumatism (168). Books and periodicals accompany her in her luggage, and 'a London newspaper' is something she cannot live without (169).

May's trajectory to independence and self-supporting work seems to fit what nineteenth-century feminists have always wanted for women, that they leave traditional domesticity and subservience through education, employment and active use of their intelligence. The role of London is crucial, as it offers wider possibilities for May's talents and enables her foray into a more publicly engaged role than her previous job as the domestically-bound governess. In this very evolution May is quite similar to another New Woman character Rhoda in Gissing's novel *The Odd Women* (1893). Rhoda works first as a shopgirl and then through education and hard work raises herself to become the managing partner of a feminist typewriting school in London, which trains women to be 'invaders' in the traditional men's sphere of office work.²⁸ Both in appearance and temperament May is similar to the severely-dressed, self-disciplined and intellectually keen Rhoda. And like Rhoda, May also towers above the traditionally weak, passive, feminine women represented in the story in the figure of May's stay-at-home sister, who helps her mother around the house and waits passively for possible marriage with the new gardener so she doesn't have to go into domestic service. To simple folks like her parents, long ruled by 'loyal subordination' to their 'feudal' masters ('Daughter' 168), May does seem to have forged a new, elevated identity that has transcended the limits of her family circumstances, an identity marked not by birth but by education, work and manners, qualities categorizing her as a New Woman.

Such disruptions of traditional categories of class and gender that May seems to embody are very much contingent on a plethora of complex structural changes like

the escalation of urbanization, the spread of compulsory education, and the entrance of educated women into the urban public sectors opened up by mass commodity culture. These changes, as many critics point out, have contributed significantly to the rise of the New Woman as well as the overall improvement of prospects for women in general.²⁹ Among these, the expanding commodity culture in large urban centers, particularly London, plays a crucial role in providing a livelihood for women working as journalists for the blossoming mass press, clerks or typists in the business sector or, for many lower-middle-class women, shopgirls in the burgeoning department stores. Not all of them are the traditionally defined New Women, but by the *fin de siècle* period the concept of New Woman itself has taken on a more expansive and variegated meaning than the emasculating Shrieking Sisterhood or the privileged, over-educated Bluestocking portrayed and ridiculed by popular humor magazines. The New Woman has also evolved to refer more generally to wider sections of educated women, many of lower-middle-class origins, who pursue self-supporting work in big cities like London and equate this with self-autonomy and female independence. Work and autonomy are very much the hallmarks of this definition of the New Woman, and in this regard the New Woman's links to the modern commodity culture cannot be ignored, because the latter has enabled her entrance into the workforce. In fact, Gissing's and Allen's writings on the New Woman represent a new strand in New Woman literature because they start to shift from marriage, a traditional concern in earlier New Woman literature, to market and self-autonomy, and locate women's struggles for independence through self-supporting employment in the commodified urban space of the great cities.

Participation in modern commodity culture helps the New Woman to transcend and disrupt traditional boundaries, but it does not lead to outright democratization and instead opens up new hierarchies and new differentiations. In Gissing's story, Mrs. Lindley is a distinguished lady who 'in social position stood on an equality with Sir Shale's family,' but she also claims a new identity as a progressive woman with a professed interest in women's movement ('Daughter' 172). On this basis she welcomes 'healthy, high-spirited' young people not conventionally her social equal. May is received immediately by Mrs. Lindley who does not initially know May's exact background, because May can name persons 'whose acquaintance sufficiently recommended her.' Mrs. Lindley is a woman with 'no prejudices' and a 'lively interest in everything 'progressive,'' but this progressiveness seems to be predicated less upon genuine dedication to or work for the women's cause than upon a pursuit of whatever is fashionable and at the forefront of trends. Everything 'progressive,' whether a new religion or a new cycling-costume, 'stirred her to just the same kind of happy excitement.' Mrs Lindley, in a sense, wears her 'progressiveness' like a fashion

statement. May is welcomed because, coming directly from London, she could offer 'first-hand information' about the movement and helps Mrs. Lindley to possess the latest news and gossip, as she would the latest fashion or hottest commodity (172).

For herself, May shows a no less marked tendency to wear her New Woman identity as fashionable display, a show and appearance woven of bits and pieces of names, topics and chatty gossip that dazzles more for its style and manner than substance. Naming the right people is more than enough to admit her into Mrs. Lindley's drawing room, and May's talk woos the crowd there and appeals exactly to the taste of Mrs. Lindley, because it 'glanced at innumerable topics of the 'advanced' sort, was much concerned with personalities, and avoided all tiresome precision of argument' (172). This 'advanced' talk, together with May's books and clothes, act as crucial accessories and contribute to May's weaving of a new elevated, New Woman identity that seems to transcend her original social status. And it does seem to work in London and, for a while, in Mrs. Lindley's drawing room. This suggests that, in big cities like London and New Woman circles, a new set of markers is at work where appearance, manners and the consumption and conspicuous display of the right objects/commodities are of mounting importance. Olive Schreiner, a key New Woman writer, could not have put it more succinctly when she claims in her stories that a silver cigarette case and London lodgings are the two essential marks of New Womanhood.³⁰ The New Woman, in other words, is much defined by the spectacle she gives, constituted through objects and a London air.

Schreiner should probably have added the bicycle as the third marker. And it is exactly the lack of this prominent commodity, the inability to consume and use the bicycle as the most importantly constitutive display of New Womanhood that leads to the collapse of May's performance. In the middle of her fascinating talk, where she is 'showing to great advantage,' May is interrupted by the entrance of Sir Shale's daughter Lady Hilda who is dressed in a cycling costume comprising a 'short skirt, easy jacket, and brown shoes' ('Daughter' 172). This turns the conversation immediately to the bicycle, and May is forced to admit that she does not cycle because she never finds time to learn. Lady Hilda, however, insinuates in an 'abrupt and rather metallic voice' that it must have been the prohibitive costs of bicycles. She laments over such 'awfully hard lines' since a 'great many people who would like to cycle don't feel able to afford it' (172). This is enough to expose and humiliate May, who then takes a hasty leave in great vexation.

It is significant that May's humiliation is not a result of immediate exposure of her humble family status by her father's employer Lady Hilda, who chooses not to recognize May, but rather of her inability to consume the all-important bicycle. That Hilda decides to use the bicycle to bring about her downfall suggests that, rather than

the old status marker of birth, the status and identity of the New Woman seems more dependent on commodified displays and the ability to participate in modern commodity culture. In this new competition Hilda proves to be the winner and the real New Woman. She is energetic and athletic, shakes hands with a downward jerk, moves about with a stride, sits down with crossed legs and generally fits the popular image of the New Woman as set out in *Punch* and other mass journals. But the most visible marker of her New Woman status is still her bicycle costume and her 'trilling' bicycle, the ultimate commodity that denies May and exposes her as an imposter. In this scene, the bicycle is physically absent but it announces its powerful symbolic presence through Hilda's costumed and energetic body. It is as if the bicycle is made to come to life and speaks through Hilda as the ultimate victor, turning the direction of the conversation, dominating the talk, exposing and excluding May.

At the end of the story, the bicycle again strikes the final blow that pulls May down from her imagined elevation. Coming back from Mrs. Lindley's to her father's lodge, May arrives at the gate of Sir Shale's Hall at the same time of the bicycling Lady Hilda. When imperatively ordered by Hilda's shrill voice and the equally imperious ringing of her bicycle to open the gate, May refuses point blank and forces Hilda to dismount and open the gate herself. Hilda and her mother then issue an eviction order for May's whole family, and only after May tearfully apologizes and fully acknowledges her servant status by entering through the servant entrance and addressing Hilda as 'my lady,' do the family get a pardon (176). May immediately leaves for London, citing to her family her 'false position' here in the country (174). But it is obvious that her imagined elevated position in London is very fragile and probably no less 'false,' predicated as it is upon a new set of hierarchy that is as much invested with exclusions and differentiations.

Biking and Conspicuous Leisure

Gissing's May represents a would-be New Woman who rises from humble backgrounds to new opportunities of self-autonomy through education and work. In *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897), Grant Allen features a privileged, Girton-educated, New Woman character Juliet Appleton who has fallen on hard times after the death of her father and is forced to take up self-supporting work as a typist. This difference in their backgrounds points to the more variegated nature of the New Woman and her expanding ranks. Allen's treatment of the New Woman, as in *The Woman Who Did* (1895), is often less complex or nuanced than Gissing, but it is not shorn of sympathy toward these women's day-to-day 'struggle for life.'³¹ Published in 1897 at the height of the 'bicycle craze,' *The Type-Writer Girl* mainly deals with the typewriter and its

critical importance in ushering in self-supporting employment for the New Woman protagonist Juliet, but it also portrays the crucial role the bicycle plays in her life. Like many other Girton-educated New Women, Juliet is in possession of a bicycle, the 'nicest machine in England,' an 'undaunted' 'iron steed,' 'a scion of the iron age' (*Type-Writer Girl* 24, 19). In fact this bicycle is even more importantly constitutive of her status as the New Woman than the typewriter, for Juliet has been riding the bicycle in her more privileged days, but it is only after she loses that privilege with the death of her father that she is forced to take up typewriting as a possible livelihood. As she soon finds out, 'every girl in London' (6), many of much lower social standing than herself, have taken up typewriting, and competition for work is really intense. Very few of these lower-class girls, however, could afford a bicycle as its prohibitive cost still ensures its status as a distinctly upper and middle-class pursuit.

Allen's novel describes two female cyclists, and both come from privileged backgrounds. Apart from Juliet, the other female cyclist is the very feminine, weak but rich Michaela who is engaged to the young publisher whom Juliet works for and later falls in love with. Michaela has been riding in the country with her fiancé but loses her way after stopping to talk to some acquaintance. Juliet, on the other hand, has been riding her way back to London after a short stay at an anarchist farm in the country. The two are then involved in a bicycling accident as Juliet, charging rather recklessly down a slope, runs straight into Michaela's bicycle, bruising herself and wrecking both of their bicycles. The accident brings the two rivals into each other's acquaintance, and though both are united by their ownership of expensive bicycles, they could not have been more dissimilar.

Both in physique and personality Michaela is right the opposite of the New Woman Juliet and has none of her independence and rationality. While Juliet is 'dark and modern,' 'well-trained' at Cambridge and could even labor 'like a man' when tilling the land at the anarchic farm, Michaela is 'insipidly fair,' 'mediaevally shrinking' (41), with 'a wisp of a figure,' blue eyes and 'a fluff of amber hair' (35). '[A] timid small atomy,' she is helpless, easily frightened and prone to crying when Juliet, putting on an air of stern aggression, tries to blame her for the accident. Michaela's bicycling does not seem to break or challenge established social norms nor widen her public mobility independent from men, benefits the New Women have always claimed for women. Juliet in an earlier passage may chant the typical New Woman praise of bicycling when she declares that '[a] woman on a bicycle has all the world before her where to choose;' 'she can go where she will, no man hindering' (18). But Michaela's bicycling is right the opposite, and merely extends and reinforces the traditional boundaries gendering women's physical and social space. She reveals, for instance, that she dare not even travel alone on a train, 'as though London were in the

heart of Africa' (37), and that she has been riding with a gentleman until somehow losing her way. Her helplessness without the guidance of her fiancé suggests that she probably never rides her bicycle alone. And her hasty addition that that gentleman is her fiancé implies that she would never ride with any other man and would therefore be immune to any moral impropriety that unchaperoned male company might entail. Michaela's very proper and conservative bicycling does not make her stronger and more confident, does not expand her independent *flanerie* of unexplored physical and social spaces nor challenge conventions of courtship or chaperonage, and it does not lead to greater sexual autonomy or even equality in her interaction with men. Michaela takes up bicycling obviously because it is *de rigueur* among the rich and well-off, and her bicycling only serves to underline its fashionable, trendy and privileged nature.

Even for a New Woman like Juliet, her bicycling may make her feel free and, in the words of the 1895 *Lady Cyclist*, 'unhampered by chaperon or even more dispiriting male admirer' (Davidson 224), but it is also imbued with class privilege and status. After three days of claustrophobic, enslaving and dehumanizing typing work in a stuffy, dusty London law office where she would 'click, click, click, like a machine that I was' (*Type-Writer Girl* 10), Juliet could no longer bear its 'dullness and monotony' (12) and decides to leave London for the anarchic farm in the countryside on her bicycle. The farm consists of Continental anarchists, 'artisans, sempstresses, laborers' sworn on principles of utter equality and individual disobedience against the government, the conventions and any form of authority (21). These principles appeal greatly to Juliet in her now penniless and disillusioned state. But when Juliet arrives in her bicycle and her pretty brown rational cycling costume, two things that speak for her New Woman status and her iconoclastic rebelliousness which should have stricken a chord with the anarchists, they instead interpret these as indicators of her gentility, her higher social status and her membership of 'the bourgeois' whose aid they 'do not desire or court' (21).

It is also significant that despite the working-class anarchists' claimed contempt for all the trappings of 'bourgeois' capitalism, and despite their worship of a pre-capitalist farming life of simplicity and basic needs, they are immediately drawn to Juliet's bicycle, which plays as much a role in their final acceptance of Juliet as her avowed belief in anarchism. The anarchists, 'undersized town-bred workingmen' 'of the skimpy order,' 'formed a high idea of the new comrade herself and more especially of the property she brought into the community.' Juliet 'trembled as I saw how many awkward youths desired to ride my precious cycle' (25). The enthusiasm for the bicycle is so great that a half-day holiday is declared 'by universal suffrage.' The bicycle is of course still an object of novelty, but it is also an expensive

commodity normally beyond the means of these anarchists. When Juliet eventually decides to leave the farm after a week's trial because the anarchists have turned out to be just another 'mass of conventions' (32), significantly they are more sorry to let go of her bicycle than herself, and insist that she leave it behind. In a way both Juliet and the bicycle are engaged in a tug of war for the evaluation and affection of the anarchists, and the bicycle wins outright, as it does when they first arrive at the farm and ask for admission. When the anarchists have to decide on whether they could do without Juliet and her bicycle, the bicycle proves the more attractive because it is productive of status, pleasure and fun while incurring little extra costs. Juliet, on the other hand, is more disposable because she incurs more costs in food and shelter, and is not that productive as a female laborer despite her own belief in her gardening skills. In the marketized cost-benefit calculations of the anarchists, Juliet is reduced to a less desirable commodity and loses out to her own bicycle.

This episode also underlines another key function of the bicycle in the mid-1890s, its association with recreation, exercise and leisure, and the class privileges all this entails. The textual reference to the anarchists, 'undersized town-bred workingmen' 'of the skimpy order,' and their irrepressible fondness for the bicycle, bring to mind mid-1890s writings celebrating the bicycle as offering much-needed leisure and escape for urban people suffering from the tolls of industrialization and sedentary urban living. The bicycle as rational leisure and the social perceptions of its benefits taps into long-held Victorian anti-machine anxiety over industrial alienation and human stultification, as well as Darwinian-inflected and Christian concerns that linked sports and exercise with redemptive building of the character as well as the nation.³² Yet while the bicycle as rational leisure was enthusiastically courted by the middle class, the working-class section of the urban population that seemed to need it most was in dire deprivation. In the 1890s, there were increased social concerns, after the publication of Charles Booth's survey of the London poor, over the rapid increase of the urban working population, 'a new race' of 'street-bred,' 'stunted,' unfit, 'easily wearied' Cockney 'city type' with narrow chests and fickle excitability, brought up in squalid cramped urban alleys and denied the fresh air and physical health of open countryside living.³³ While this 'city type' aroused dire concerns for the British race in the evolutionary fight for survival and threatened the viability of the nation and the Empire, they were largely excluded, because of long working hours and lack of means, from the mostly middle-class forms of rational exercise. Drinking, gambling, prostitution and visits to the newly popular music hall became the poor's recreation, which many deplored as offering excessive, excitable releases of bodily urges without the prospects of physical and moral improvement.³⁴

This context underlines the fact that bicycling at this stage is not just any form of

leisure celebrated for its physical and mental benefits, but also a class-differentiating, status-displaying form of conspicuous leisure. This is also evidenced in the short duration of the 'bicycle craze.' By the late 1890s and early 1900s, over-production and fierce competition led to the drastic reduction in bicycle prices. While new models sold for \$100 in 1895, by 1899 department stores were selling national brands for only \$13 (Rush 18). When the cheap price made the bicycle accessible for the first time to the working class, including 'laboring men in factories, clerks in city offices, carpenters, masons, and persons in similar vocations' as *Cycling Age* reported in 1900, the bicycle quickly lost its allure for the middle class, even though its recreational benefits remained unchanged. *Cycling Age* reported of one ex-rider who admitted that he had 'greatly enjoyed cycling, but that when the bicycle became within the reach of the common folk, or the gentleman of color, he felt that there was a danger of associating himself with a lower caste.'³⁵ The high visibility of the bicycle, formerly the every reason for its popularity among the well-off, now spelt its doom as one would be afraid of being seen riding this, by now, mass form of personal transport. By the early 1900s, the bicycle truly became a working-men's vehicle. The socialist workers' bicycling club *The Clarion*, established in Birmingham in 1894, saw its membership expand to 30,000 before the First World War.³⁶ By contrast, middle-class riders had largely abandoned the bicycle and courted the automobile as a new marker of status and fashionability. Magazines folded, shops closed and many bicycle manufacturers went bankrupt or did not pick up business until several years later when the industry started to manufacture cars and motorcycles on a large scale (Bijiker 97). As the *New York Times* reported in 1900, 'Society seems to have given it up altogether.'³⁷

In his 1913 prose work 'Common Sense Science,' Allen congratulates the modern British public for being more 'active' and appreciative of the values of 'open-air' exercise than their eighteenth-century ancestors who preferred their carriages and fireside at home. Allen particularly names the bicycle for having brought 'thousands and thousands of our young men to whom even the light fares of the cheap excursion-trains were before fixed at practically prohibitive prices,' to the pleasure and healthy benefits of open, 'hilly scenery.'³⁸ 'Anything that so brings large bodies of our population into closer intercourse with all that is grandest and loveliest in nature is in itself an immense boon to the whole of humanity' (121). This suggests that the bicycle is now cheaper and more accessible than the 'cheap excursion-trains' and has become the ideal form of rational exercise for the working class.

But in Allen's 1896 novel *The Type-Writer Girl*, written during the height of the 'bicycle craze,' the bicycle is still associated with privilege, status, and conspicuous leisure. Juliet and Michaela bicycle while Elsie only types; the former two for

pleasure and recreation, and the latter for work and subsistence. Elsie, the pale, colorless, poverty-stricken typewriter girl ‘with thin hair tied up in a knot the size of a nutmeg’ (*Type-Writer Girl* 66), is compared to a squirrel that ‘turns the unceasing treadmill of his cage’ because she has to ‘click, click, click’ ‘like a machine’ and ‘reproduce each word with mechanical fidelity’ (*Type-Writer Girl* 66). The repetitive typing work debilitates Elsie’s already fragile health and timid spirit, turning her into a typical sample of the passive, non-agentic, rhythmically shaking and thus machine-like body of the nineteenth-century Machine Age worker. Elsie is certainly in dire need of refreshing recreation and outdoor fresh air to escape from mechanizing typing work, but she does not have the means to own a bicycle nor actually the time or energy, after her day-long toil typing ‘like a machine’ (67). Bicycling may be celebrated in the 1890s as offering ‘God’s gift of health, and the memory of childhood’s delight in out of door activity’ to ‘a cramped and warped woman’s life’ and allowing her to ‘rejoice in the feeling of liberty and delight in her own strength,’³⁹ but it was still largely denied to those who most needed it, urban workers like Elsie most subject to the mechanizing impact of indoor work.

In an earlier passage, Juliet the New Woman could still take advantage of the privilege left over from her earlier days when she could no longer bear the monotonous typing work and escapes to the country on her bicycle. Here Allen taps into the feminist rhetoric that the bicycle has liberated women and brought them unprecedented freedom:

How light and free I felt! When man first set woman on two wheels with a pair of pedals, did he know, I wonder, that he had rent the veil of the harem in twain? I doubt it; but so it was. A woman on a bicycle has all the world before her where to choose; she can go where she will, no man hindering. I felt it that brisk May morning as spun down the road, with a Tam O’Shanter on my head, and my loose hair travelling after me like a Skye terrier.

‘This,’ though I to myself, ‘is truly my Odyssey. To play at being a latter-day Ulysses in London, among those crowded streets, is like a child’s game, too much make-believe. But mounted here on the ship of the high-road, scudding gayly down hill, or luffing against headwinds on a steep upward slope, I feel myself the heroine of a modern sea epic. (18)

Here bicycling is set up not just as liberating for women but also as the much-needed alternative and relief to suffocating urban work. Juliet chooses to bicycle not just for reasons of transport, because the farm, located near Horsham, is more conveniently reached by a train ride. Rather, with its symbol of outdoor freedom, energetic release

and rebellion against mechanizing work, the bicycle offers mental and physical rejuvenation, turns the mere human into a latter-day god-like Ulysses, and extends and elevates human agency. But such relief and escape is obviously not available to everyone, nor does every woman, certainly not Elsie, qualify for this liberation from 'harem'-like confinement. When Juliet returns from the farm to London empty-handed and unable to pay her landlady, the mere mention of 'a bicycling trip' and 'tour in Sussex' is enough to convince her landlady that she 'had thousands at her banker's' and would pay later (*Type-Writer Girl* 44). Even as recreation and exercise, bicycling entails a conspicuous display of well-heeled leisure, fashionableness and status, as it is only affordable to well-off urbanites with the requisite leisure time and disposable income.

Conclusion:

In the middle years of the 1890s, the bicycle was at the center of an enormous fanfare and public enthusiasm that left few corners of British society 'untouched' (Rubinstein 71). In terms that echo the optimistic predictions greeting many technological inventions including, for instance, the Internet, Victorian commentators hailed the bicycle as leading to 'a social boon' and even 'a social revolution' that promised to break down class and gender boundaries.⁴⁰ Feminists claimed the bicycle 'has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world.'⁴¹ But as this article has demonstrated, this optimism over the bicycle's democratizing potential may be overstated. It is the bicycle's simultaneous image as conspicuous display, whose possession would be essential to one's modishness and a commodified form of progressive modernity, that is behind the public embrace of the bicycle and their later acceptance of women's bicycling. The New Woman has utilized and manipulated the bicycle's bourgeois consumerist construction to further their political cause, but this is predicated upon the erection of a new set of hierarchy and differentiation that excludes poorer, less privileged men and women, and denies them the ability to use bicycle consumption to articulate new identities.

Notes

1. H. G. Wells, *The Wheels of Chance: A Bicycling Idyll* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2009), 112.
2. H. G. Wells, *The Correspondence of H. G. Wells. Volume I. 1880-1903*, ed. David

- C. Smith (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), 257.
3. Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1990), 184.
 4. Phillip Gordon Mackintosh and Glen Norcliffe, 'Flâneurie on Bicycles: Acquiescence to Women in Public in the 1890s,' *The Canadian Geographer* 50.1 (2006): 17-37 (25).
 5. Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel* (The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1.
 6. Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford UP, 1990), 35.
 7. Quoted in Geoffrey Cantor, *Religion and the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 105.
 8. Anita Rush, 'The Bicycle Boom of the Gay Nineties: A Reassessment,' *Material Culture Review* 18 (1983): 1-12 (2).
 9. Some aristocratic women and older men took to the tricycle, which was safer but rather expensive. Queen Victorian gave it a royal seal of approval in 1881 when she ordered two tricycles for her daughters.
 10. Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 37.
 11. Lillias Campbell Davidson, *Handbook for Lady Cyclists* (London: Hay, Nisbet, 1896), 11.
 12. According to Bella Bathurst, the bicycle would cost almost the same as a carthorse and several times the price of a mule (103). Even at the tail end of the 1890s 'bicycle craze,' a new British-made model could cost three months of a schoolteacher's salary (28).
 13. *The Queen* (21 March 1896), 514.
 14. Robert A. Smith, *A Social History of the Bicycle: Its Early Life and Times in America* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972), 13.
 15. Sue Macy, *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 2011), 88.
 16. H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)* (London: Gollancz, 1934), 543.
 17. George Gissing and H. G. Wells, *George Gissing and H. G. Wells: Their Friendship and Correspondence*, ed. Royal A. Gettmann (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 106.
 18. Sarah Tooley, 'Women of Note in the Cycling World: A Chat with Mdme. Sarah Grand,' *The Hub* (17 October 1896): 419.
 19. Russell Price and Francesco Badoletto, 'Social Subordination and Superiority in

- Gissing's 'A Daughter of the Lodge,' in *A Garland for Gissing*, ed. Bouwe Postmus (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 237-246 (241).
20. Ellen Gruber Garvey, 'Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women,' *American Quarterly* 47.1 (1995): 66-101 (76-7).
 21. Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York: Doubleday, 1929), 411.
 22. Gijs Mom, 'Civilized Adventure as a Remedy for Nervous Times: Early Automobiism and Fin-de-siècle Culture,' *History of Technology* 23 (2001): 157-190 (159).
 23. Sarah Overbaugh Hallenbeck, *Writing the Bicycle: Women, Rhetoric, and Technology in Late Nineteenth-Century America*, PhD dissertation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2009), 90.
 24. David Rubinstein, 'Cycling in the 1890s,' *Victorian Studies* 21.1 (1977): 47-71 (49).
 25. 'Parisian Cycling Modes.' *The Cycling World Illustrated* (16 September 1896): 9-11 (9).
 26. *Cassell's Family Magazine* (May 1895), 456.
 27. George Gissing, 'A Daughter of the Lodge,' in *The Day of Silence and Other Stories*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (London: Dent, 1993), 167-78 (172).
 28. George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (London: Virago, 1980), 135.
 29. See Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and Urban Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), and Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, eds. *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
 30. Quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Daughters of Decadence: Woman Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle* (London: Virago, 1993), xvi.
 31. Grant Allen, *The Type-Writer Girl* (Danvers: General Books, 2009 [1897]), 5. See also his *The Woman Who Did* (Oxford University Press, 1995 [1895]).
 32. J. A. Mangan, 'Introduction,' *A Sport-Loving Society: Victorian and Edwardian Middle-class England at Play* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-10 (5).
 33. C. F. G. Masterman, ed. *The Heart of the Empire* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1901), 7-8.
 34. Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945* (Machester University Press, 2005), 90.
 35. Quoted in Daniel London, 'Cycles of Fashion' (May 14, 2013) <<http://narrative.ly/stories/cycles-of-fashion>> [accessed 2 May 2014].
 36. Bella Bathurst, *The Bicycle Book* (London: Harper Press, 2001), 33.
 37. 'The Decline of the Bicycle,' *New York Times* (13 September 1900), 38.
 38. Grant Allen, *Common Sense Science* (Boston: D. Lothrop and Company, 1913),

121.

39. Quoted in David B. Perry, *Bike Cult* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995), 160.
40. Quoted in Rubinstein, 71. Also see Sarah Wintle, 'Horse, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move,' Richardson and Willis, 66-78.
41. 'Champion of Her Sex,' *New York Sunday World* (2 February 1896): 10.