

# 1

## The New Woman in American Stereoviews, 1871–1905

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If we could name a topic over which publishers, artists, and writers of the nineteenth century never seemed to tire, gender may well be it. Across diverse published and visual media, the question of the nature of men and women, as well as the polemics of separate spheres and “woman’s rights,” occupied the attention of the reading and picture-viewing public. What we call “gender,” the typical nineteenth-century person called woman’s or man’s “nature.” Meaning anything biological, *nature* also summed up, in one overfreighted word, human sexual difference. This difference was thus thought to be a biological matter, but, more significantly for society, it carried the consequence of dividing humanity against itself by gendered possessives (“woman’s” or “man’s”). To be human at that time necessarily carried an inherent opposition, as all qualities were given to one sex or the other. One was as much *not* a representative of the other sex’s qualities as one was to embody those characteristics proper to one’s own side of the biological divide. This division manifested itself in one of its most dramatic forms through a late-nineteenth-century comic character called the New Woman, who reinforced gendered difference by inverting its terms—all for a joke, of course.

“Woman’s Rights” topics in comics and stereoviews first appeared in the 1870s with signs that would be adopted under a variety of “New Woman” stereoview titles that emerged in 1895. As the difference between them is scarcely more than titular, I have included “woman’s rights” titles under the New Woman concept. Preceding her appearance by two decades was the popular reception of the stereoview in the 1850s, an object that was, like gender, split.<sup>1</sup> The viewer found that such divisions were united in the stereoscope in one binocularly unified field, three-dimensionally solid and photographically detailed. Also known as the stereograph, stereoscopic

photograph, or simply the “view,” the stereoview was universally popular, evoking in its constructed homogeneity the divided human with naturalistic volume and obsessive regularity.

In the making of a stereoview, the subject is photographed on two negatives exposed 2.5 inches apart to mimic the distance between the eyes. The two prints from these negatives, when laterally transposed, mounted on cardstock, and viewed through a stereoscope or “free-viewed,” replicate with photographic detail the subject in stereoscopic and binocular space. The pair of stereoscopic photographs and stereoscopes’ lenses are highly effective at stimulating the natural neurological operations of “stereopsis,” or stereoscopic vision.<sup>2</sup> It is not, therefore, illusory depth that we see in the stereoscope but depth that is *perceptually* real according to the brain’s processing of retinal information. More accurately stated, stereoscopic photography is a replication of three-dimensional experience. Such replication in photographic detail was one of the most definitive visions of the nineteenth century, and it captivated the Victorians and spurred a vast industry with hundreds of millions of prints in circulation.

Stereoviews seemed to the nineteenth-century viewer magically reconstructive of reality. They offered a unified ocular field of visual adventure, volumetric and particularized, an environment whole and waiting for entry, and this was particularly seductive for a century positivistically focused on distinctions and divisions.<sup>3</sup> Topographical or constructed scene, it scarcely mattered—viewers couldn’t say enough about feeling in medias res with the depicted actors or places. Stereoview addicts were readily supplied with scenes from every corner of the globe and site of interest, as well as *tableaux vivants*, or staged narrative scenes, which were the most popular.<sup>4</sup> By the late 1880s, the United States led the world in mass marketing stereoviews, and practically no American home in the late 1890s was without them.<sup>5</sup>

Among the *tableaux vivants*, the New Woman revealed the Victorian opposition between the sexes conjoined by the happy neurologic of stereopsis within one unified, three-dimensional view. I will focus on how from these divided states—two “natures” and two photographs—came an environment that, particularly in the New Woman stereoview, brought to consciousness the artifice of unitary constructions based foremost on division. By so accentuating its divided natures, the New Woman stereoview rendered the fiction of its construction unstable (instability, after all, being the operation of the comedy). By doubling that precariousness in an awareness of the workings of the medium itself, it laid bare the social landscape of the stereoview, founded on concepts of nature, division, and difference.

In order to understand gendered division and difference, let me discuss how stereoviewing occurred, first in the home and second on an individual basis. Since the advent of the Holmes-Bates stereoviewer in 1869, viewing took place as a person picked up a stereograph, glanced at the title printed beneath the photographs, and set them on a sliding rail that held the paired pictures. He or she then placed the head against a hood, which focused the eyes through lenses that crossed the vision and produced a fused, three-dimensional, and singular image from what were indisputably two separate, flat pictures. For the average Victorian this produced a deep sinking into space while looking at volumetric forms in a scene filled with photographic detail and the experience of a hovering “thereness”; these were magic and hypnotic effects. Now, on lowering the viewer, suddenly there was a deconstruction—one little card with two small, flat photographs. The viewer became acutely aware that the volumetric figures in space were nothing but constructions of his or her own brain, something akin to a novel yet photographically credible. No one could deny that the perception of the scene in three dimensions was just that—perceptual—and not a property of the respective, monocular photographs, but how exactly this happened seemed as much shrouded in mystery to the average viewer as the gestation of a child. Public, exterior volume and private, cranial space crossed the bridge of the stereoscope, and in the act of stereoviewing we witness a historically liminal space, a place where the romantic imagination in all its leisurely sensuality meets modern divisions, for example, character types, seriality, and text-image relation.

When it came to those modern divisions, the New Woman was born of them. The nature of the sexes had been pushed to the farthest extreme until the divide came together in comic inversion. Male and female roles were reversed in the New Woman stereoview, but, unlike her tropes in other media, the stereoview revealed that those roles, however spatially conceived and inviting, flattened out after viewing to what they at bottom were—flat. The message could not be ignored: space is a difference we mentally construct. The inverse message also begs attention: difference is a space we construct. The split, divided, and reconstructed stereoview and worldview eventually force on the viewer an awareness of the underpinnings of their logic. The stereograph fused the diametrical oppositions of its age, and otherness became a spatial entity only by means of mental gestation no matter how profoundly its objects seemed real and present.

From such a blurring of the interior and exterior, the stereoview allowed an intense proximity, a reminder of narrative’s harbor within the

imagination, and it could, as a book, remain in the control of the hands. The narrative stereoview, sentimental, comic, and erotic, became the analog for Victorian relations, especially the convention of marriage. The triumphs and comic disasters of marriage were overwhelmingly favored in stereoviews, with the New Woman (definitely in the disaster category) permitted to volumetrically appear only to be flattened in one sequence of gestures. Three dimensional, she invited fantasy; two dimensional, she was just another marketing “title” (topical genres were called “titles” by stereo publishers). The gender divide that she so emphatically emphasized in her comedic inversion of the nature of the sexes became, thus, a matter of individual leisure and construction, appearing with less certainty than natural law and more closely related to fiction. Such fiction appeared when the ideology of dividing and reconstructing genders in the institutions of courtship and marriage seemed to reach a late-century crisis, signing with a nervous laugh the malleable artifice of the divide.

The New Woman literary character stood in stark contrast to misogynistic assumptions regarding women’s limitations, dependence, and suitable roles, and thus she can be thought of as feminist, or protofeminist, for demanding a different set of circumstances than the constraints under which real women labored and to which these heroines often succumbed.<sup>6</sup> By the century’s end, though, the words *New Woman* had mushroomed beyond literary characterizations, cropping up in popular culture as a catchall term for women who defied feminine convention: collegians, bicyclists, sports enthusiasts, professionals, divorcées, and any woman who didn’t marry. It was also applied to feminists, who were at the time called “woman’s righters” or suffragists. The New Woman was a harbinger of sweeping changes in gender conventions perceivable on the horizon for society but seldom realized in the lives of average women of the time.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has used the term *New Woman* to describe real women on the social vanguard such as members of the new, female collegiate and professional class.<sup>7</sup> Although I am indebted to her historical work, I am concerned with the appearance of a character who was usually a caricature in mass media. Actual women with serious intentions in the nineteenth century would have been unlikely to call themselves New Women, as one could find cartoons lampooning the audacity of such unconventional females on a regular basis in popular comic magazines such as the British *Punch* and the American *Puck*. What I am discussing, then, is no real woman nor any group of particular individuals; the New Woman in stereoviews is strictly a comic construction. A laughable curiosity, she

was capable of easing the pain of change by injecting it with levity. Thus, she became another incarnation of the theatricalized or extreme individual and a real boon to marketers on the lookout for modish styles to sell. And sell she did. There are over seventy different American stereoview titles related to or named “Women’s Rights” or “The New Woman” from 1871 to 1907.<sup>8</sup> The late-nineteenth-century public was ripe for gender farce and the deflation of the overblown concept of “true womanhood.”<sup>9</sup> As the century came to a close, it was in America especially that one found acceptance of topics with outlandish characters, a tendency this country developed with its tradition of the trickster character and the tall tale.

The first New Woman type of stereoview was issued by Littleton, New Hampshire, publisher F. G. Weller.<sup>10</sup> In *Woman’s Rights—The Rehearsal*, 1872 (fig. 1.1), the husband is at the washtub, doing his wife’s chores, while she, in fine street clothes, is practicing a lecture hall speech in front of the mirror. A second Littleton stereoview called *Woman’s Rights*, copyrighted 1875, has the same pair: termagant wife, dressed to leave, issuing orders to the husband busily sewing and tending the baby.<sup>11</sup> He has been reduced to the demeaning chores of the wife, while her “rights” are clearly ironic—his subjugation. In the same decade, the Chicago-based Melander and Brother (formerly Lovejoy and Foster) published a New Woman stereoview—*Who’s Running This House*, 1875—in which a top-hatted stranger



Fig. 1.1. F. G. Weller, *Woman’s Rights—The Rehearsal*, 1872. (Collection of the author.)

appears at the homestead where the husband labors at the washtub, the son hangs the wash, and the seated mother, master of the house, is accompanied by her idle daughter, broom lying across her lap. The antifeminist message in these stereoviews is that the reversal of gender roles will unsex the man and give governance to the women, who will have no better sense than to make speeches or remain idle.

Since the end of the Civil War in 1865, women's study groups had been steadily appearing alongside organizations convening for "woman's rights" or socially progressive goals.<sup>12</sup> Charismatic personalities such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Victoria Woodhull, and Annie Besant earned their living on the professional speakers' circuit, drawing standing-room-only crowds. Stanton and Susan B. Anthony led the National Women's Suffrage Association, which was active in a prolific series of state campaigns for the enfranchisement of women, while "Notorious Victoria" Woodhull scandalized the public with speeches on free love, prostitution, marriage law, and workers' rights, also addressed in editorials in her newspaper, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*.<sup>13</sup>

Temperance societies, too, behaved in an "unwomanly" fashion, filling lecture halls, advocating suffrage, and sometimes smashing saloons and disposing of liquor.<sup>14</sup> Such is the social context for the Weller and Melander stereoviews with wives who abandon their maternal duties for "masculine" politics or just plain laziness, as the censuring scenes imply.

The woman's rights and New Woman stereoviews were not necessarily responding directly to suffrage issues.<sup>15</sup> Rather, it is the much larger issue of power to which these stereoviews respond. Besides engaging in politics and activism, women sought education and work outside the home, as witnessed by steep rises in the number of women college students, graduates, and professions in the 1870s.<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Kilburn in 1871 photographed a cat as a "member of the sorosis," an organization of professional women journalists.<sup>17</sup> The bonneted, bespectacled cat with paws resting on an open book invites us to consider professional women as more "catty" than capable.

The "true woman," in contrast to the Sorosis member, appeared in countless early and midcentury texts, if perhaps less frequently among *real* women. She endeavored to limit her influence over men and public affairs to gentle suggestion and moral guidance. A literary invention mainly of the periodical press and the woman's novel, the idea of the true woman was a reaction to the impending sense of social breakdown between the male (public) and female (private) worlds. The hyperbole of the prose dedicated to her, however, created an emotive intensity equally threatening to those

vested in women's passivity. This prose, perhaps even containing a nascent feminism, derived power from the allegorical associations its proponents accrued to the home both as a site and as an ideological locus. While many have discussed the home as the place of women in the ideology of true womanhood, particularly with respect to its confinement, a new group of scholars argue that the rhetorical freight found liberally in the texts of its women proponents performed a different function than mere restriction. These scholars persuasively argue that such women writers looked to the separation of the domicile as a means of fostering solidarity and purpose and that they attempted to strengthen their readers' self-confidence and influence. By employing the home as a value and a protection, they astutely located the place not only where women found themselves but where power could be exercised and even increased without much social scrutiny. Some have termed this "domestic feminism," others "social sentimentalism." Whichever term is used, the concept of separate spheres, central to the role-playing of true womanhood, is best thusly understood.<sup>18</sup> Most important to the analysis of New Woman imagery is that separate sphere ideology fostered a heated prose with an intimidating influence through the aggrandizement of concepts of femininity.

It was in part in response to this fear that the New Woman stereoview arose. In the ideology of separate spheres, male and female realms were bifurcated into two halves, with the rule over each remaining proper to its gender: business, government, the military, and the public to men; and all home-associated persons and things, including the development of moral, religious, and affective values, to women. The question of the degree of the social reality of the separate spheres versus that of its fantasy in contemporary prose matters less than the positioning and extremity of the language surrounding it. Among the sentimental separatists (as I call them), none was so vociferous as the writers of what has been called "woman's literature," Catherine Beecher, Augusta Evans, Susan Warner, Sarah Hale of *Godey's Lady's Magazine*, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among others.<sup>19</sup> These writers advocated the separate sphere precisely to validate women through a tactic of raising the sentimental and allegorical valuation of women's placement in the home and work there (a strategy similarly employed by 1970s feminist artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles). To the separatists, women were *superior* to men because their realm was the domicile and family and not the commercial and political world. Feminine modesty notwithstanding, the prose of these women encouraged anything but passivity or retiring attitudes. In their widely read literature, the nineteenth-

century woman at home held a largesse of power and an almost divinely moral status because she remained unsullied by traffic and commerce.

Domestic feminists such as Hale, Stowe, and Beecher strategically used pulpit-style emotionalism in a bid for covert power that was deployed through the populist, periodical press and its genres, topics considered at the time normative to feminine gender roles (housekeeping or home study). It has been a pitfall of some to judge these separatists as insufficient feminists or antifeminists. After all, women should stay at home, they repeatedly asserted. Yet, when one decloaks the purple prose, it becomes clear that for these women writers the home functions as an “operations central” for expansive influence and intensified status, an empire of mothers, as one writer has put it.<sup>20</sup> A Thomas Nast cartoon of 1869 even depicted the mother as an empress.<sup>21</sup> A foundation of sentiment antithetical to (but dependent on) capitalism, women’s domestic power posed a threat of too great a feminine influence on the public realm. Club women were speaking, organizing, founding museums, and becoming public in the name of separate-sphere virtues extended to society.<sup>22</sup> Some temperance women and feminists became violent in the name of equality, home, and family, while women working for social progress employed a similarly unassailable rhetoric of sentiment-home-motherhood.<sup>23</sup> The sainted homemaker might ultimately control more than private quarters; the home radiated her influence, challenging the precepts of the public world of capital and masculine identity and its “natural” gender divisions.<sup>24</sup> Women’s sentimental authority and home domination began to be interpreted as outright power, and those who generated cultural images freely indulged in imagery that expressed what we in the twenty-first century tend to call “castration anxiety.”

An icon made to this order in the 1890s was the stereoview topic of the New Woman—pants wearing, bicycle riding, neglecting the laundry. The washtub became an especially revealing symbol, evolving away from the province of the lower classes that we see in French stereoviews and the art of Edgar Degas to become in America the very threshold of power. Water was the element of subordination, and the person wetted up to the sleeves, a trope that had previously signified the difference of the laboring class, now marked the difference of gender. In the fear over the flip-flop of the sexes and the contamination of mixing public and private, water became—on a man—the dirtiest trick of all. Piled-high sinks could also suffice in this signification.<sup>25</sup> Class, sex, and sexual exposure were conflated here, and the wash or dish tub was no more the place of laundering but a womblike basin for unmanning men.





Fig. 1.2. R. Y. Young/American Stereoscopic Co., *Woman's Rights*, 1901. (Collection of the author.)

R. Y. Young's *Woman's Rights* (American Stereoscopic Co., 1901) presents a leisurely lady reading a magazine called "TRUTH" while her laboring husband reads over her shoulder (fig. 1.2). The two bathing beauties on the wall picture with cruel irony a different order of wetness—sans clothes and sans laundry. Likewise, Benjamin Kilburn's stereoview of a laundering husband and comfortable, newspaper-reading wife has the protagonist whine with embarrassment: *And Me Old Chum's at the Door* (Kilburn Brothers, 1892). Another New Woman barks, *Don't Get the Clothes too Blue!* shaking her finger at her soaked and disgruntled man (Kilburn Brothers/James M. Davis, 1897), while the 1905 title *The Twentieth Century Washerwoman*, by C.H. Graves, makes clear who is the woman now, as the wife departs for the public sphere, leaving her damp husband behind.

In case male resistance is encountered, an 1897 Benjamin Kilburn/James M. Davis sequential stereoview pair reveals the consequence. A foot-propped, reading New Woman in the first stereoview responds to her washman's pleas in the second view of the series, *Don't Tell Me You Won't Wash!* (fig. 1.3), a beautifully stereoscopic scene of battery. Clothes on the floor and sheets spilling from the wringer add depth cues, and the straining muscles on the husband's neck and arm pop out, accentuated by shadow. An embroidered wall decoration, a frequent technique for introducing text



Fig. 1.3. Benjamin Kilburn/James M. Davis, *Don't Tell Me You Won't Wash!* 1897. (Collection of the author.)

in stereoviews, sarcastically reads, “What is Home without Mother,” while the caged bird and hanging rolling pin remind us of sequestered home life and more traditional female weapons. The husband, here, is pinned, caged, battered, and feminized. His grimace, clenched fists, and tight muscles make the stereoview a (painful) success. Another pair by C. H. Graves/Universal Photo Art Company in 1900 also shows a husband’s mutiny. *Maria, I Won’t Wash Another Dud!* is the narrative title of a stereoview featuring a man who shakes his fist at his foot-propped wife, who is reading the comic magazine *Puck*. In the second title, *Don’t Tell Me You Won’t Wash!* Maria spansks him for his insubordination.

That there were feminist ideas twisted into perverse interpretations in these parodies is revealed in a six-view, cinema-inspired series by Strohmeyer and Wyman/Underwood and Underwood from 1900. The titles are the monologue of an irate bluestocking type—severely dressed, badly coiffed, bespectacled—in whom New Woman ideas have taken hold. The six sequential views show the New Woman accosting her husband, with the titles (1) *Yes, Mr. Caught-a-Tartar! The time is coming when* (2) *Woman will no longer be the mere slave*. She threatens him with (3) *Of brute Man, Sir!* (fig. 1.4), then proceeds to step on and beat him in (4) *No longer the poor, down-trodden:* (5) *Oppressed.* and (6) *Weak and helpless being she*



Fig. 1.4. Strohmeyer and Wyman/Underwood and Underwood, *Of brute Man, Sir!* 1900. (Collection of the author.)

*is now is!* In the last view, she hides her face in her hand and dissolves into tears. The New Woman, here, has turned the tables, made her ideas absurd, and exhausted herself in oppressing her oppressor, although he appears to be more bewildered than harmed. Even within its lampoon of feminism's argument, this view series manages to signal an ideological basis for bad behavior.

The New Woman idea was the first popular stereoview type in which feminist history appears, even if in reactionary form. Women's independent actions helped to shape her, and, although she was yet another female fiction born of "hysteria," she comes with a hardy breath in the lung, which of course she needed to ride her bike. Besides reforming clothing by dooming the corset and giving license to women to wear pants, the bicycle in the mid-1890s induced women to exercise and gave them personal freedom. The bicycle became a chief means for women to get to work and to pay calls, and the comic press found a subject to occupy the pens of its artists for years, with entire almanacs devoted to "wheelers" and "scorchers" (fast riders).<sup>26</sup> Stereoview publishers, however, tended to use the bicycle as one more satirical weapon with which to throw the New Woman "off balance."

One popular title repeated by several publishers is *Sew on Your Own*

*Buttons, I'm Going for a Ride*, as seen in a 1901 version by George W. Griffith (Griffith and Griffith). The bloomed wife in shirtwaist and tie authoritatively thrusts a shirt back to her husband, who is holding a broom and sitting defeatedly in his apron. She *will* ride—hang the buttons! The New Woman refusing to sew anymore in favor of the newfound freedom represented by her bicycle was delivering the message that feminists had been trying to impart—though to a far greater purpose—that men could no longer automatically expect women to be subservient to their needs.

Not only the bicycle but pants were the trouble here. An article of clothing exclusively reserved by general opinion for the male, pants were allied with power, sexuality, and privilege, while women who wore them were “castrating,” out of control, licentious, silly, or any combination thereof. This prejudice had stood for several centuries, dating at least to the Reformation and a genre of woodcut prints known as “the battle of the breeches.”<sup>27</sup> Through the nineteenth century, pants remained associated with the phallus and patriarchal privilege in spite of brief flirtations with bloomer outfits and “rational dress.”<sup>28</sup> By 1895, however, these divisions were rapidly dissolving. It would be a tidy matter to give someone the credit for the liberation of legs. More than any one person, however, it was a machine—the bicycle—that steered pants into the realm of acceptability for women’s dress, as bloomers greatly facilitated pedaling. It proved difficult, however, to overcome centuries of aversion to women in pants so that any object, such as a bicycle seat or a saddle, became subject to social suspicion if it separated a woman’s legs. Inflamed by the thought of women’s potential masturbation on bicycle seats, medical tracts of the 1890s attempted to dissuade the public from this sexual deviancy, especially censuring the “scorching,” or bent over the handle bars, position.<sup>29</sup> Happily, these earnest doctors were not at all successful in discouraging women from riding fast, nor bloomers from separating the legs. As they became more common, pants, whether worn or scorned, continued to signify physical freedom and self-direction, including the sexual, and it was commonly believed that women who wore them were in some manner trying to usurp the privilege of men.

In stereoviews there were wonderfully clownish bloomers—striped, flowered, plaid, and huge—on women in the classic “leg up” position. The New Woman props one leg on a chair, bicycle, or piece of furniture, her bloomed crotch spread in an unabashedly lewd manner. In Underwood and Underwood’s *New Woman—Wash Day*, 1901 (fig. 1.5), the trousered wife props a leg over the back of a chair in a sportsmanlike posture, which



Fig. 1.5. Underwood and Underwood, *New Woman—Wash Day*, 1901. (Collection of the author.)

would have been considered positively vulgar. The trousers, boater hat, gloves, and men's style shoes suggest the immorality associated with cross-dressing, while the widely split legs and theatrical, plaid stockings would have signed the indecent by calling on stereoviews' common function of giving titillation with just a glimpse of a booted ankle. By contrast, the laboring husband is in the "castrated" position of wearing an apron and getting soaked. The husband bends to the washboard, a position that suggests penetration, while the wife stands erect, towering over him with a jaunty, arrogant expression. The rail that forms the back of the chair is positioned phallically between her legs, and the cigarette jutting from her lips carries its own symbolism of sexual license, which the bicycle in the doorway shares with the common sexual associative thread of "fast."

Dominating, bike-crazed wives—these images were meant to insult, but they soon lost their sting and settled into a wry domesticity. With baggy bloomers in bulging plaids, dangling cigarettes, and henpecked husbands, this new termagant and her crossed daughters must have provided quite a diversion for women buried in diapers and laundry, as well as sexual allure for men, with women in leg-up positions, displaying their well-turned calves. The New Woman was unnaturally bigendered, of "indeterminate sex."<sup>30</sup> In one variant with views entitled *New Woman Barber*, *The Fair*,

*Young Barber*, or *Hubby's Sunday Morning Shave*, women's desires were simultaneously threatening and alluring. These stereoviews received suggestion from British cartoons, which first appeared in the 1870s, depicting bloomer-clad feminists bearded or getting a shave.<sup>31</sup> The woman asserting her rights was not only copying men, these cartoons implied, but she would become a man, beard and all.

We see these tropes combined in the New Woman barber stereoview titles. William H. Rau/Griffith and Griffith's *New Woman Barber* stereoview of 1897 (fig. 1.6) presents a sexual object with her exposed petticoat and gartered knee indecently revealing. The razor blade in her hand is altogether a different matter, though, as it looms like a lethal bird in the foreground and flies out at the viewer in the stereoscope. Smiling, she leans over her husband, who protects his neck and grimaces. Notice how the rear mirror provides depth cues and visually advances the couple into the viewer's space. A version by Sterro-Photo, *The New Woman Barber*, 1898, repeats the same code, but the actor sadomasochistically offers up his stretched-backward neck. In spite of their comic vein, traditional femme fatale associations—Judith, Salome, and Delilah—enter these stereoviews.<sup>32</sup> The New Woman barber has taken the germ of a feminist idea and grafted it onto the old codes of the femme fatale via the newer tropes of bearded ladies and the “demon barber of Fleet Street.”<sup>33</sup> Genders flip-flop dizzily with masculine, seductive women coded as erotic, amusing, and dangerous.

A great deal of social distance has been traveled from the “true woman” and the cult of the home to the New Woman and sex appeal. The New Woman mother, the true woman's evil twin, sped away from vaunted domesticity as fast as she could on her bicycle, leaving her husband upended in her wake. Pants wearing and leg flashing, the New Woman also became the matron of commodified sex appeal and thus helped to usher in the hypersexualized twentieth century. Of indeterminate gender, male and female, sexy and demonic, she was emblematic of the anxiety over women's new roles and renegotiated public and private spheres, and she played double with codes. For the misogynist, she was more confirmation that women were trying to become men and badly botching the business of the sexes, while for others she may have represented audacity, a fantasy of defiance, revenge on men, plural identification, or sadomasochistic desires.

A fictional character spun to release male frustration, the New Woman stereoview was certainly never intended to express support for feminism but stumbled and crashed in that direction by default. Consider that women



Fig. 1.6. William H. Rau/Griffith and Griffith, *New Woman Barber*, 1897. (Collection of the author.)

were “demeaned” by being in a domineering position, which means that the satire designed to keep them subordinate contradicted itself, for these were stereoviews that pictured women as victors, men as the vanquished. The implied dig was that husbands ought to reeducate their wives, but that, of course, suggests that gender is a process of education not nature. The *New Woman* stereoviews make clear the anxiety that no one could much rely on “nature” anymore to do its job with respect to the sexes. The viewer was continually reminded every time he or she lowered the stereoscope of the artifice it took to split the world into two parts only to reassemble it again into a lifelike environmental replication. So, too, the *New Woman* stereoview brought home the awareness that gender was a divide continually replicated in its simulations, and, through the stereoscope, viewers were reminded of this private, subjective, constructed nature, for the lenses of gender were crossed, and the artificial divides blended and converged, as do the eyes in a stereoscope, making this business of so many fine distinctions one amusing trip.

### Notes

1. The popularization of the stereoview occurred at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in Hyde Park, London.

2. Theodore Brown, *Stereoscopic Phenomena of Light and Sight* (London: Gutenberg Press, 1903; facsimile ed., Culver City, CA: Reel 3-D Enterprises, 1994), 8; N. A. Valyus, *Stereoscopy* (London and New York: Focal Press, 1966), 51.

3. Mary Panzer, "Romantic Origins of American Realism: Photography, Arts, and Letters in Philadelphia, 1850–1875," PhD diss., Boston University, 1990.

4. George Hamilton, *Oliver Wendell Holmes: His Pioneer Stereoscope and the Later Industry* (New York, San Francisco, and Montreal: Newcomen Society in North America, 1949).

5. William C. Darrah, *The World of Stereographs* (Gettysburg, PA: William C. Darrah, 1977; reprint, Nashville: Land Yacht Press, 1997), 45. Linda McShane, *When I Wanted the Sun to Shine: Kilburn and Other Littleton, New Hampshire, Stereographers* (Littleton, NH: Sherwin Dodge, 1993), 52.

6. A. R. Cunningham, "The 'New Woman' Fiction of the 1890s," *Victorian Studies* 17, no. 2 (December 1973): 177–86; Linda Dowling, "The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 33 (1979): 434–52; Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820–1870* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, [1978] 1993).

7. Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis," in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245–96.

8. Melody D. Davis, "Doubling the Vision: Women in Narrative Stereography, the United States, 1870–1910," PhD diss., City University of New York, 2004, 89–90, appendix.

9. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, pt. 1 (summer 1969): 151–74.

10. To view the images in 3-D from books, a stereo-lorgnette is helpful. See 3D stereo.com, Inc., [www.3dstereo.com](http://www.3dstereo.com).

11. The dates, printed on the card mounts, refer to the copyright date, not the time the photographs were made, likely all at the same sitting.

12. Gale Collins, *American's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Help-mates, and Heroines* (New York: William Morrow), 247–48.

13. William L. O'Neill, *Everyone Was Brave: A History of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), 74–76; Catherine Clinton, *The Other Civil War: American Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), 199; Miriam Schneir, "Introduction," in *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, ed. Miriam Schneir (New York: Random House, 1972), 133. Also see O'Neill, 131; and Mary Gabriel, *Notorious Victoria: The Life of Victoria Woodhull, Uncensored* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1998), 219.

14. Clinton, 58–59.

15. O'Neill, 147.

16. "Senate Report: Women and Child Wage Earners in the United States, 1908–1911," reprinted in Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (New York: Random House, 1972), 257.



17. Karen J. Blair, "Sorosism and the New England Woman's Club," in *The Club-woman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868–1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980), 15–38.

18. Daniel Scott Smith, "Family Limitation, Sexual Control, and Domestic Feminism in Victorian America," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, ed. Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1974), 119–36; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs* 1 (autumn 1975): 1–29; Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9–39; Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 124, 163; Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imaging Self in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 59.

19. Hale was the editor in chief and the editorial writer for *Godey's Lady's Magazine*, the most popular American periodical of the nineteenth century. Augusta Evans, *St. Elmo* (1867; reprint, New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1960); Susan Warner, *Wide, Wide World* (1851; reprint, New York: Feminist Press of the City University of New York, 1987); Catherine Beecher, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1977); Christopher Crowfield, Harriet Beecher Stowe, *House and Home Papers* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865; reprint, University Press, Cambridge: Welch, Bigelow and Co., n.d.).

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21. Thomas Nast, "Woman's Kingdom Is at Home," *Harper's Weekly*, October 2, 1869, 640.

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23. Aggressive revolt is a theme of Lisa Tickner's study, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

24. Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 581–606.

25. C. H. Graves/Universal Photo Art Co., *Mr. and Mrs. Henpeck Wash the Dishes*, 1908.

26. Robert A. Smith, *The Social History of the Bicycle: Its Early Life and Times in America* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972), 35. See *Puck's Library*, 95 (May 1895), *Wheelers*; no. 106, *Scorchers* (May 1896); no. 122, *Punctures* (September 1897); and no. 130, *Pedal Pushers* (May 1898).

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28. Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 86–87; John Woodforde, *The Story of the Bicycle* (New York: Universe Books, 1971), 132–33.

29. Ellen Gruber Garvey, *The Adman in the Parlor: Magazines and the Gendering of Consumer Culture, 1880s–1910s* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 105–34.

30. Smith-Rosenberg, 265.

31. Frank Bellew Sr., “Woman Asserts Her Rights,” *Punchinello*, September 10, 1870, 380; C. J. Taylor, “Natural Advantages,” *Puck’s Library* 124 (November 1897).

32. John R. Reed, “Destructive Women,” in *Victorian Convention* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), 44–58.

33. Sweeney Todd, a character from an 1846 “penny dreadful,” has reappeared in numerous stage plays and other media. See Robert L. Mack, *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).