

Eden Refound(ed): Post Civil War Literary Gardening

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The Civil War transformed American society profoundly on both the political and legal level as it secured the union, brought an end to slavery, and established basic political rights for African Americans. With these changes new problems emerged: early Reconstruction was marked not only by tumultuous scenes and clashes in Congress but also by a culture of denial. As David Blight has famously shown, sectional reconciliation was purchased through the marginalization of black veteran soldiers and by downplaying that the moral crusade against slavery was an important aspect of the War between the States (see Blight 2001). At the same time, the war set in motion a “mental adaptation process” (Butler 2006, 173) that was linked to the profound structural changes that governed American lives:

[T]he experience of the Civil War shaped the self-reliant nature of the American into a character more amenable to serving in large, hierarchic institutions. Total war spawned powerful, national systems of government, transportation, and industry that operated under centralized control, replacing former localized and individual power bases. When the war began, states issued their own paper currency; citizens and militias owned their allegiance to states. By war’s end both North and South had a national paper currency, a national definition of citizenship, and national conscription. The national military organizations served as models for large corporate structures of the future. [...]. The South was destroyed, and the Northern ideal of the independent craftsman, businessman, or farmer was eroded in the process of trying to assert it. Hierarchy, subordination, and obedience to political and economic institutions became the new American way. (Huddleston 2003, 5)

It was during this phase of national transformation and individual adaptation that Henry Ward Beecher, the famous abolitionist, Congregationalist minister, and reformer, became—as Clifford Clark mentions in the subtitle to his biography of Beecher—the “spokesman for a middle-class America” (Clark 1978). His rise to the status of the “most famous man in America” (which is the title Debby Applegate chose for her year 2007, Pulitzer Prize

winning book about Beecher) began in 1865, when President Lincoln asked the then fifty-three-year-old preacher to deliver a speech at the raising of the Union flag at Fort Sumter. Having seen the devastation along the route of Sherman's regiment, Beecher was the first to find words of consolation to the Southern population, thereby ushering in a new era of national reconciliation. When Lincoln was shot shortly before the minister's return to New York, Beecher's speech gained political weight. But by 1867 his influence was slowly deteriorating (Stout 2006, 165–178). His contradictory, wavering views were typical of the lack of orientation that ruled among his contemporaries, but he was expected to know better. Particularly confusing were his views on race. In the fall of 1865, Beecher's wife Eunice reported that Henry had claimed before a Charleston audience that "God was black," that Christ was "a mulatto," that the "Devil was white," and that he, Beecher, regretted he had not been born black himself.¹ In February 1866, however, the minister supported President Johnson's vetoing of the Freedmen's Bureau bill that advocated Black suffrage and citizenship. At the same time, he promoted moderate reform in the Southern states—an act that required him to differentiate his position from that of the president, whose ideas of states' rights and minimal federal involvement in the South he had publicly supported. In reaction to this criticism, he tried to establish himself as a moderate Republican, yet this move only spurred a new wave of attacks (see *ibid.*, 176). By 1867 the famous speaker from Fort Sumter had become a scapegoat for the press and was "forced to concede that he could no longer influence the reconstruction policies of the federal government" (*ibid.*, 178). This, then, is the situation out of which arose *Norwood*, a harmonious fantasy that helped stabilize his role as a moral guiding figure. For all its woodenness and thick didacticism, the book was the instant bestseller that Beecher's publisher, Robert Bonner, intended it to be when he asked the famous minister to write it.

Instead of lamenting the novel's obvious and often criticized aesthetic and logical flaws, this article takes the many positive reviews of *Norwood* as its starting point in order to show how the novel contributed to imaging the postwar nation as a future garden. William Dean Howells, for instance, praised the book's optimism in an 1867 review for the *Atlantic Monthly*. It was, he argued, "perhaps the most hopeful element in New York" and

1 Eunice's public statements are quoted in a letter by Calvin Stowe to Beecher, dated October 28, 1865. See Clark 1978, 172.

“the beginning of a social rather than a religious regeneration.” In Howells’s opinion the novel was “American and good,” possessing “sound sense and wholesome impulses” (Howells 1867, 637). Another unnamed reviewer classified *Norwood* as a family or community *event* when suggested that “the true way to enjoy ‘Norwood’ [was] to read it aloud in the home-circle” (Anonymous 1867, 5). The novel, in other words, was a welcome object for stabilizing mid-Victorian ideals of moral health, family, and community. This article reads *Norwood* as a ‘recreational trip’ designed to counter the ills of a still deeply divided, anxiety-ridden society. Set almost entirely in a picturesque New England village, the eponymous Norwood, the book celebrates a rural lifestyle far removed from heated government debates and from the scenes of wartime destruction found in many parts of the former Confederacy. By focusing on the representation of New England as national garden, this essay analyzes how Beecher brings together his critique of urbanization with a consoling vision of national progress, inter-regional connectivity, and a highly structured social order even as he actively acknowledges the mourning and suffering that overshadowed American postwar lives (see Faust 2008). Taking a close look at the novel’s uses of geographical imagery, this article shows how *Norwood* sought to shape not only postwar American minds but also the nation’s immediate landscape. The essay ends with a brief look at a female writer’s critical remapping of this profoundly nostalgic landscape. Viewed against the backdrop of Beecher’s fantasy of America as harmonious garden, Mary E. Bradley Lane’s *Mizora* (1889) emerges as a radical, feminist alternative set in a surprisingly similar yet ideologically even more troubling utopian landscape.

One of the *Norwood*’s central ideological strategies is its invocation of the republican era and American romanticism. Signaling a ‘Northern’ and therefore ‘natural’ agenda (“Nor” + “wood”), the book’s title reveals its transcendentalist New England heritage. Like many young Americans of the postwar generation, the novel’s hero, Barton Cathcart, is tortured by doubt, insecurity, and anxiety vis-à-vis an unclear future. Barton, however, goes through this crisis *before* the war, and he knows where he can find spiritual wholeness and self-reliance; on his strolls in the forest “a bird’s call at sundown” gives him “an intuitive apprehension of God’s love for him and by this means ‘a conception of *infinite* love” (Smith 1974, 62–63). By highlighting this central moment of conversion, Beecher reminds young readers of America’s antebellum cultural resources, including models of

meaningful American education: his characters engage in lengthy discussions that bear the stamp of Emerson's "The American Scholar" (1837) and other transcendentalist writings. Apart from that, the title of this novel, its didactic, domestic credo, and its tone all echo Sarah Josepha Hale's *Northwood* (1827, rep. 1852), a highly popular antislavery novel that advocated sending American blacks to Africa to secure a new beginning of an all-white nation.² As this article will discuss in more detail later, *Norwood* is not too far removed from this prewar solution.

And yet there are crucial differences between *Northwood* and *Norwood*. Unlike *Northwood*, Beecher's novel is set almost entirely in the North, in New England and promotes a multiracial albeit strictly segregated society. Spanning the time before, during, and after the Civil War, the book represents a village with the name of Norwood and its surrounding gardens and farmlands, as a representative, idealized nation. In line with Leo Marx's definition of a "middle landscape," this "picturesque rather than grand" (2000, 1) environment is "located in a middle ground somewhere 'between,' yet in a transcendental relation to, the opposing forces of civilization and nature" (*ibid.*, 23). "[S]pared the deprivations and anxieties associated with both the city and the wilderness" the novel's protagonists enjoy a way of life marked by family values, a strong sense of community, and an unchallenged acceptance of social hierarchies and divisions. After supporting the Union effort in the new roles of nurse and soldier, white women and blacks happily embrace their presumably natural positions as psychological helpmates and menial servants while Northern and Southern men enjoy lively political and philosophical debates among equals. In keeping with this "cosmic success story" (Smith 1974, 58), the novel follows a strict reconciling agenda: shot through with cross-sectional romance that climaxes with a dashing Virginian's wartime death in a Northern nurse's arms, *Norwood* insists on the superiority of Northern values while paying tribute to the suffering South.

Significantly, it is the New England landscape itself—displaying a "greater variety of scenic beauty than any other that I remember in America" (2)—that enables this fantasy of union, and gives it a quasi-natural grounding. In a highly symbolic move, *Norwood* places a prototypical Southern mansion at the center of a New England middle landscape, thereby contributing to what Susan-Mary Grant has called "the inclusive

² The novel condemns slavery as un-Christian and damaging to both slave and master. The subtitle of the 1852 edition of *Northwood* was *Life North and South*.

nationalism of the North" (2000, 154).³ Anticipating the prototypical home of late-nineteenth-century plantation romances, this mansion is inhabited by the benevolent Doctor Wentworth, his angelic daughter Rose (an adult, postwar version of Harriet Beecher-Stowe's Little Eva), and a faithful 'negro.' It is these three, and their role in the novel's miniature nation, that determines the ideological development of *Norwood* and its vision of the future nation.

In order to understand the roles of these three characters we must distinguish Beecher's idealized geography from the hierarchical structure of American plantation culture. *Norwood*'s grand Southern-style mansion is not the jewel on top of an otherwise inferior environment but a sort of entry gate to an extremely balanced, Edenic landscape. Created with the help of neither slaves nor machines, the world of *Norwood* is unabashedly artificial, a vision rather than a realistic portrait of New England. In line with this concept as literary fantasy, the reader is led (by the narrator) toward the aforementioned mansion "through an avenue of elms." It is in the course of this imaginary, spatial experience that "our homely story" discloses itself (5). The New England that unfolds behind the mansion is a harmonious, simple, and nostalgic ensemble, complete with quaint settlements, well-maintained agricultural areas, and lush forests. "Since the introduction of railways," the narrative informs us, this pastoral fantasy land has been the point of destination for "thousands of curious travelers" who "have thronged New England" (1) to admire the peace and order of this pastoral gem. Suffice it to say that—in keeping with Emerson's vision of the "unifying powers of technology" and his belief in the railroad as "carrying America straight to the pastoral ideal" (Kasson 1977, 122)—this technological interconnection suggests that the 'spirit of *Norwood*' can be both experienced on site and exported—via word of mouth but also in book form—to other parts of the country, if not beyond. Contrary to Leo Marx's famous view of the machine as powerful interruption of a peaceful pastoral, the railroad becomes an integral part of a national geography that relies on the rural as "brood combs" (5) of an idealized state of innocence and friction-less harmony. Confirming what Leo Marx has said about America's antebellum obsession with the railroad, what is announced in *Norwood* is a "new sort of fate" that remains, in keeping with the novel's

³ Grant refers to early reconciliation novels like William DeForest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty* that seek to merge what is best in both cultures. Contrary to DeForest's novel, *Norwood* incorporates certain Southern 'traditions' into northern ones.

soothing message, “confined by its iron rails to a predetermined path” (2000, 191).

Generally speaking, *Norwood* turns what Marx has described as the American myth—regeneration in a garden that can be accessed by a train ride (see *ibid.*, 228, 238)—into an experience that can be had simply by reading about it. The novel, in other words, presents *itself* as an alternative to urban, postbellum America by staging itself as a recreational realm that is equivalent to an actual weekend trip to the countryside. From its opening pages *Norwood* takes up the cultural fad of postwar rural tourism, casting the reader as visitor to an imaginary “landscape of the psyche” in Marx’s sense (*ibid.*, 28) where communal bonds are intact, thriving, and perfectly suited to evoke a “brimming future” (Wood 1991, 37). The textual village, in other words, suggests a facile shift “from an age of reform to an age of complacency, from an age of egalitarian simplicity to an age of conspicuous consumption and the leisure class,” but it also provides a refuge from the political and social tensions of early Reconstruction American (McLoughlin 1970, xi–xii).

Interestingly, the glossing over of that profound rupture that the Civil War brought about accompanies an ideology that promotes acceptance of more rigid structural control and hierarchical organization within the newly centralized, postwar nation that has been described earlier. What this 550-page-long “homely story” (5) suggests is that by embracing these new structures, Americans will reconnect with their past ideals, perfect them, and make an even happier future.

For all its obvious nostalgia, then, *Norwood* is a decisively post-Civil War novel that celebrates the presumably agrarian “brood-combs” (5) of a glorious “Second Founding,” a term used by Radical Republicans to emphasize the republican roots of America’s post-1865 democratic renewal, and the legacy of the ‘city upon a hill’. As the historian David Quigley has pointed out,

[b]ack in 1787, America’s first founding had produced a constitution profoundly skeptical of democracy. James Madison and his coauthors in Philadelphia left undecided fundamental questions of slavery and freedom. All that would change in the 1860s and 1870s. Decided at this second founding were the rules of the democratic game. Though lasting only a few short years, Reconstruction involved countless Americans fighting over who would be able to play in that game, and on whose terms. A century and a quarter later, the democracy that emerged at Reconstruction’s end remains our inheritance. (2004, ix)

Norwood participates in this rhetorical battle by projecting an ideal village that is all but isolated from modernity: located on a middle ground “between the rugged simplicity of mountain towns and the easier life in the cities” (4) it represents a veritable postwar pleasure fantasy based upon the antebellum ideal of an “ideological fusion of technology and republicanism” that John Kasson attests to the planners of prewar manufacturing towns (1977, 85). Driven by “their fathers’ sense of republican mission and distrust of aristocratic Europe” with its “oppressed, ignorant, and debauched working class” (*ibid.*, 61), American prewar manufacturers sought to supplement the nation’s “agrarian commitment” by building factories in rural areas where—in line with what Kasson calls “the new republican industrial order”—the “purifying influences of nature” and “the beneficial discipline of the factory” would go hand in hand (*ibid.*).

In *Norwood* of course, factories are called “manufacturing villages” (1), and form a constitutive part of an essentially *rural* landscape that merges republican values and a democratic compromise after slavery: in line with the more general ideal of a middle landscape this very conservative republican environment promises *more* participation *without* full citizenship rights. The Norwoodites merge the notion of individual self-realization with the eighteenth-century ideals of social service, industry, and frugality, leaving aside, significantly, the notion of restraint that was so central to realizing a “harmonious society, whose members were bound together by mutual responsibility” (Kasson 1977, 4).⁴ Mirrored on the very material level of the novel’s middle landscape, this imaginary garden resembles a harmonious mixture of “manufacturing villages” and neatly kept fields and forests—a Jeffersonian ideal that derives its moral legitimacy from its presumably direct contact with nature (see *ibid.*, 19). This vision ignores the technological developments that set in around this time with enormous speed, replacing more traditional methods of farming with improved technology and machinery while traditional manufacturing made room for processes of standardization and mass production (see Hounshell 1985, 167). The novel’s denial helps connect the Second Founding with the first one, lending legitimacy, moral grounding, and a sense of historical continuity to the essentially conservative prospect that is sketched out in *Norwood*. Interestingly, the frugal Norwoodites never seem to actively cultivate their agricultural surroundings by either manual labor or with the help of

⁴ See also Kasson 1997, 18–19, and Marx 1964, 15 and 204.

those improved machines that David Hounshell has described in his chapter on the McCormick reaper and American manufacturing technology. Rather, thriving on the proverbial inventive skill of its Yankee heritage, the community seems to spend most of its time in the village library and its adjacent garden engaging in lively debates about the norms and values of their happy little republic.

Beecher, it seems, wanted to exclusively concentrate on healing the wounds of the Civil War instead of overburdening readers with worrisome speculations about the costs of modernization, acceleration, and social transformation. Inhabiting a radical fantasy of a leisurely, enlightened community, the Norwoodites harvest the fruit of their traditional thrift in the absence of shrieking machines and discontented laborers that were a very real aspect of the age. Only by ignoring the decreasing need for skilled workers and the increasing pressure caused by a growing workforce that preoccupied thousands of Americans at the time can the novel fully celebrate a way of life that it identifies with New England. Class divisions among the Norwoodites do exist, but they are only represented to emphasize the human diversity that makes the village a site of individual self-realization: everybody here makes the most of his or her individual talents and capabilities, and happily contributes those to the harmonious, social organism of Norwood. The novel fashions the region as the Second Founding's model 'city upon a hill' since "no where else in the nation are men so differentiated," so "original, contrasted, and individualized in taste, manners, and opinions" (1). Miraculously freed from the drudgery of work, this New England "*species*" (1, emphasis in original) engage in quasi-Emersonian exchanges among "thinking" men who rely on books as mere inspiration, not instruction, to cultivate an "active soul" (Emerson 1965, 67). Individual, active reading, not manual labor or machines, lies at the heart of the new postwar republic.

It is in this context of a garden without machines that *Norwood* represents a new type: the leisurely farmer. Contrary to the traditional concept of the peasant as a worker of the land who is excluded from the increasingly leisurely lifestyle of post-Civil War urban dwellers, Abiah Cathcart enjoys the 'good life' of a 'cultured' person because he knows how to effectively manage time:

He loved to take his book (he was ever and always a reader) at noon, after his frugal meal was done, and sit by his team, while the horses ground their oats, or

cracked and crunched their Indian corn. Do you wonder, reader, at such pleasure? Then you know little of some scenes of life. (8)

The image of the reading farmer is an old favorite of Beecher's; he sketched it out first in his *Plain and Pleasant Talk about Fruits, Flowers and Farming* (1859), which contains a chapter on "Educated Farmers" as well as the "Portrait of an Anti-Book Farmer." Yet while those texts were written to promote scientific methods in agriculture, and while in the 1850s he had also warned against the threat posed by "evil" books, plays, and other amusements (Beecher 1844, 182), in *Norwood* Beecher depicted a self-aware and disciplined yet leisurely way of life that did not preclude the reading of fiction. (*What* the farmer reads is significantly left open: contrary to Beecher's earlier concern with 'dangerous' literature the farmer may in fact be reading a novel).

More importantly still is the way the protagonist is staged: in keeping with the novel as recreational experience, this scene—which is one of the book's most memorable ones—turns the farmer into a constitutive element of the landscape, thereby producing a harmonious tableau vivant of a pastoral scene.⁵ Far removed from the daily bustle of American postwar lives, it advertises the healthiness and beauty of reading as a tranquil alternative to the urban entertainment industry that Beecher himself by that time had learned to enjoy (Applegate 2007, 354) but that resists flexible integration into an individual's working day.

The image of the elderly farmer who contently harvests the fruit of his own frugality may be a figure of the past, but its purpose is clearly future-oriented: with his inner peace and contentedness, Abiah could not be further removed from the war veterans that in 1867 made up most of this older generation, among them many men who never found inner peace and salvation in postwar society (see Faust 2008). It is all the more important, then, that he is staged as a blatantly artificial figure, a sentimental, antebellum ideal, exhibited for the sole purpose of being meditated upon.

Few readers today understand how strongly scenes that call for contemplation rather than attentive reading respond to the psychological needs of a society suffering from memories of violence and destruction. Even William G. McLoughlin, the one scholar who has written extensively about *Norwood*, considers it mainly a "key work" for anyone interested in

⁵ Augustin Daly's stage version of the novel relies heavily on the tableau as a memorable scene at the end of each of the play's four acts.

the mid-Victorian (1840–1870) American mind (1970, xi–xii), a negotiation of that “great shift from Calvinism to Liberal Protestantism, from rural to suburban living, from transcendentalism to Social Darwinism, from belief in the omnipresence of the average man to the hero worship of the Horatio Alger captain of industry” (ibid., 6).

In a more immediate context, however, *Norwood* also responded to the traumatic imagery of the war that lingered on for decades after it ended. Only one year before *Norwood*'s publication, Alexander Gardner had published his *Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War* (1866), a two-volume opus that combined fifty photographs of camps, battlefields, and postwar rubble with text (written by himself) that either described or commented on the images. While the expensive *Sketch Book* itself was a commercial failure, its individual pictures came into wide circulation, defining, as Anthony W. Lee reminds us, “how viewers, then and in subsequent generations, came to know the Civil War” (2007, 1). Set against the iconographic photographs of blood-soaked battlefields, dead corpses with grotesquely dislocated limbs, and heaped up human skulls and bones excavated by a postwar “burial party,”⁶ *Norwood*'s tranquil dreamscapes symbolically replace the killing grounds of Antietam and Gettysburg.⁷

Yet *Norwood* advocates a pastoral retreat not only from the immediate past but also from the present. Even in the postwar North, Americans could not escape the daily sight of amputated and mutilated veterans whose injuries were also meticulously documented in medical photography and other visual forms. As Silas Weir Mitchell, who worked on nerve injuries during the war, asserted in 1864, Civil War survivors would carry the war with them for the rest of their lives, suffering both physically and mentally.⁸ *Norwood* seeks to normalize this thoroughly abnormal situation by turning the past into a matter of perspective. This is why Tommy Taft,

6 For a discussion of the *Sketch Book* see Lee and Young 2007.

7 Beecher himself was clearly aware of the gruesome reality behind these pictures. In 1865, after spending most of the war in Europe stumping for the Union cause, he traveled to Fort Sumter and was shocked to witness the scope of the destruction and suffering that Sherman's march had brought to the former Confederacy. It was under this impression that he made his speech of consolation before the Southern population at Fort Sumter. See Stout 2006, 422.

8 In *Gunshot Wounds*, an 1864 medical work on the treatment of Civil War veterans, Mitchell wrote that nerve injuries often disturbed the “correspondence between the visible wound and the interior pain,” a “hysterical” symptom that was taken as a feigning of roles and that often led to lasting insanity. See Long 2004, 31.

another sentimental father figure and a representative of the less educated village working class, emerges in *Norwood* as a figure for comic relief. Like thousands of Civil War soldiers he has lost one leg. But unlike the majority of these amputees, who were between 18 and 45 years old (see Huddleston 2003), Tommy lost his leg *before* the war. For him “a wooden leg is a good thing” because he never has “to cut [his] toe-nails on that leg.” Says Tommy “with a chuckle”:

Not much paid out for shoes neither. Go to a blacksmith for my shoes – ho! Ho! Ho! Never have rheumatism in that leg either. Don’t catch cold when I git it wet. [...] Sometimes I think legs were a mistake; ain’t worth as much as it costs to keep “em up.” (151)

Tommy is a classical ‘local yokel’ who makes the best of his situation. Sitting on a pork-barrel, eating hickory nuts, he derives his humor and vitality from his upbringing in rural America. According to the novel, his way of dealing with what for others is a traumatic experience is to apply the stamina and resilience best acquired in the healthy atmosphere of countryside living. A typical sidekick figure and stock character of rural comedy, Tommy was reportedly a favorite among the readership of *Norwood*; his jolly reaction to disfigurement was not seen as a disproportionate comment on that atmosphere of despair and mourning that still preoccupied American society. His message, in other words, hit a nerve, and is central to the novel. Time and again *Norwood* insists on the absolute power of the mind:

Sickness is very largely the want of will. Everything is brain. There is thought and feeling not only, but will: and will includes in it far more than mental philosophers think. It acts universally, now as open mind, and then just as much upon the body. It is another name for life-force. Men in whom this life or will-power is great, resist disease, and combat it when attacked. (29)

Borrowing from the military jargon war veterans were well acquainted with, the passage targets the veterans among the novel’s readers. *Norwood* thereby *masculinizes* the act of reading itself: by addressing a male audience, and suggesting that what today is known as trauma can be overcome by an act of will, the novel makes *imagination* key to individual change and male reinvigoration. Beecher’s contemporaries seem to have understood this message very well. As the unnamed reviewer in an 1867 issue of the *New York Times* wrote enthusiastically, *Norwood* is a ‘reading trip’ with the power to heal a needy population:

[T]he careless flow of [the novel's] style is like the free discursiveness of its thoughts. [...] [I]t is luminous and living throughout with kindly and noble feeling, and with the contagious cheerfulness of a happy nature; it is a thoroughly healthy and healthful book [...]. (Anonymous 1867, 5)

Beecher's effort to strictly separate the immediate past from the present, and the way he spatializes experience as biologically determined and group-specific, is important aspects of the book's 'healthy' dimension: in the new republican garden there is a place for everyone and everything. If there are aspects that do not fit into its 'natural' pattern there are alternative realms and spaces to resort to that will keep the garden itself in its ideal pastoral shape.

"Gettysburg" is a case in point. Beecher cannot be accused of ignoring the war *tout court*, as he in fact reserves an entire eponymous chapter for the experience. Significantly, however, the event itself is symbolically neutralized. The novel accomplishes this by symbolically feminizing the war, thereby catering to younger, female readers who made up an important part of that varied audience that Beecher needed to address if he was to secure his role as spokesman for middle-class America. In the "Gettysburg" chapter we are introduced to Rose, the novel's female protagonist whose floral name was the inspiration for the rambler rose pattern that decorated the cover of the 1867 edition of the novel. During the war Rose tends wounded soldiers and—contrary to a woman's historical options at the time—even performs surgery. Rose, in other words, is a superior healer who during times of national crisis becomes God's deputy on earth. Yet her power to heal and soothe also has strong symbolic dimensions: focalized through this morally pure and intellectually strong mixture between a true and a new woman, the wartime landscape of destruction becomes a meaningful, sublime battlefield in America's holy war. In the course of this spiritual compensation, Gettysburg takes on the proportion of a nineteenth-century panoramic painting. Never losing visual control over the scene that unfolds before her, Rose "obtains a free view" of the battle as it is carefully framed by "the blue mass of the South Mountains banked up against the horizon" (473). After encapsulating Gettysburg as part of a landscape that is 'bigger than life,' the novel lets Rose find her *real* destination in the concrete, local environment of Norwood. When the war is over, this angelic woman—who has been introduced as the village doctor's exceptionally intelligent, highly educated daughter—happily embraces the

role of a wife and mother: shaped by the changing needs of her respective environments, she follows the call of a woman's nature.

Rose's carefree, unregretful return to a conservative model of femininity is just one instance of the novel's investment in the concrete political issues of the postwar period. Published during the tumultuous phase of Constitutional Reconstruction (1865–1869), *Norwood* thrives on earlier republican ideals, Christian values, and a transcendentalist-inflected belief in organic unity, but celebrates the postwar nation's mix of social classes, ethnicities, and racial backgrounds. Staged as the cradle of the new, democratic nation, the ethnically and racially mixed New England village with its educated elite and highly esteemed, down-to-earth common men (Tommy Taft is one of them) and women is cast as model for an ideal social organization to come.

One member of this celebrated multicultural mix is Pete Sawmill, a man whose name signals a worker's 'natural' destination. Supervised by Rose and her benevolent father, he is the symbolical heir of the antebellum house slave who "good-naturedly, and as a matter indisputable, [...] [does] as he [is] ordered." In marked contrast to the scholarly whites of *Norwood*, Pete is excessively physical and can "shoulder his [master's] horses" if told to do so (128–129). Interestingly, this postwar primitive is a defining member of the harmonious little community of *Norwood*: during the Civil War, readers are told, Pete saved the future village leader, Barton, from certain death in a Confederate military prison. Driven by "an instinct derived from his pre-existent state," the black soldier, Pete, lifted an unconscious Barton "off the ground with his teeth" and carried him safely across a "wild river" (511). This ape-like creature arrives at *Norwood* with the "gurgles and laughing" of a witless child. By representing the black soldier as absolute, primitive other, Beecher supports the efforts of white Veteran groups to ignore and marginalize the historical contributions of African American soldiers to the war effort. Resembling an animal from that threatening wilderness that is the defining other of the pastoral design, Pete receives a maximum of recognition from an old white woman who exclaims: "Why, you poor old soul, [...] we are all as glad to see you, Pete, as if you belonged to us." Pete immediately embraces this crude notion of belonging and identifies himself as a voluntary slave: "He, he, he! I guess I do. I don't b'long to nobody else, except the gin'ral" (472). In a maneuver of imaginary space-making that is typical for the novel as a whole, he eventually becomes the foreman of a group of freedmen who work as

farmhands for a Quaker family. The novel, in other words, reconstructs a racialized division of work and life in many ways reminiscent of that Southern plantation life which six years earlier had led to insurmountable tensions between the states, representing it as postbellum ideal for the nation at large. The role of the Northern 'negro', Pete, as accepted leader among his as yet 'untamed' Southern brethren makes slavery's methods of forced labor and corporeal punishment obsolete: in the harmonious community of Norwood *everybody* finds his or her 'natural' place—including the ex-slaves who stand "at a little distance" from the celebrating Norwoodites, "grinning and looking at Rose in the most extraordinary manner" (466). It is only logical, then, that in the end a fence separates the black community from the new generation of whites who eagerly plan the future of their village: in keeping with David Blight's central argument in *Race and Reunion*, the country's African American population pays the prize for white sectional reconciliation. Contrary to antebellum novels like *Northwood* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Pete and his group of farmhands are urgently needed to secure the pastoral life of the leisurely, enlightened white population: kept in a designated space behind a fence, they belong to a man-made, 'tamed' landscape whose sharply distinguished zones are the result of a capitalist, and racist, division of labor.

Importantly, however, the individuals who make up Norwood—including the ex-slaves—are entirely self-reliant, as they act in accordance with their own natures. Because they follow the predilections of their gendered or raced selves, they are independent of the forceful mechanisms of individual self-regulation and communal responsibility that had been a decisive part of the eighteenth-century republican contract: in *Norwood*, the *new* republican garden effortlessly regulates itself, creating a natural, Darwinian pattern of inequality that is based on the enlightened insight of each individual in his or her natural—and God-given—limitations.

As I mentioned earlier, the years following Beecher's Fort Sumter speech had damaged his initial reputation as moral leader and guide. With its lengthy parlor talks and philosophical strolls in the garden, *Norwood* offered him an alternative opportunity to explain his political and religious agenda in great detail without making any concrete political or legal suggestions. Eager to establish himself as spokesman of an ideal America, Beecher bases the effortless harmony of Norwood and the happiness of all its inhabitants on a crude mixture of postwar scientific racism, biological concepts of gender, and republican values, thereby smugly circumnavigat-

ing the historically concrete, racial, gendered, economic, and political tensions of the era. By dedicating chapters to the black man's life-saving qualities and the white woman's self-reliant decision to leave her post as Civil War nurse and doctor, he makes sure that there is space for everyone in the literary garden of *Norwood*—within the narrow confines of short chapters, and supervised by the controlling logic of a white, patriarchal worldview.

For all its proverbial “woodeness” (Ward and Waller 2000, n.p.) *Norwood* inspired the very real geography of New England (and elsewhere⁹): trying to attract new inhabitants, the second parish of Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1872 advertised itself as a material version of Beecher's fictional “village upon a hill” and renamed itself after the novel's title (Wood 1991, 41). Yet not all Americans considered Beecher's vision of self-regulating hierarchies desirable. White women from the Northern states in particular were frustrated by the antifeminist backlash of the Reconstruction period, as they were denied the vote while male ex-slaves could—at least theoretically—access the ballot beginning in 1868. This constellation, then, makes it seem worthwhile to end this paper with a brief outlook at *Mizora*, a white American feminist's response to neo-patriarchal ideas like Beecher's.

In 1881, one of the leading American feminists, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, recalls the time around which *Norwood* was first published as an era of severe gendered strife:

Woman must lead the way to her own enfranchisement, and work out her own salvation with a hopeful courage and determination. [...]. She must not put her trust in man in this transition period, since while regarded as his subject, his inferior, his slave, their interests must be antagonistic. (451)¹⁰

In 1880 and 1881, Mary Bradley Lane from Ohio seems to have come to a similar conclusion and published the first installments of her *Mizora* in the *Cincinnati Commercial*. The literary utopia, which came out as a book in 1889, challenges Beecher's fantasy of effortless subordination by introducing a radical alternative: a white, matriarchal society of the future. Inhabited exclusively by a tribe of beautiful, broad-chested blondes, this all-

⁹ There is at least one additional example that this was not the only renaming. See http://www.ridleytownshiphistory.com/norwood_history.htm. 10.07.2014.

¹⁰ Stanton's statement was a reaction to the Kansas referendum of 1867 that aimed to remove franchise restrictions on the grounds of both race and sex. The referendum failed. See Simon and Danziger 1991, 2.

female arcadia looks pretty much the same as Beecher's New England pleasure fantasy—except for the gender of its inhabitants:

Far, far as the eye could follow it, stretched the stately splendor of a mighty city. But all the buildings were detached and surrounded by lawns and shade trees, their white marble and gray granite walls gleaming through the green foliage. Upon the laws, directly before us, a number of most beautiful girls had disposed themselves at various occupations. Some were reading, some sketching, and some at various kinds of needlework [...]. A large building of white marble crowned a slight eminence behind them. Its porticos were supported upon the hands of colossal statues of women [...]. I supposed I had arrived at a female seminary [...]. (16)

Like the Norwoodites, the blonde Mizorans are entirely dedicated to perfecting themselves and their country. While the village of Norwood is construed around a library, the central building of Mizora is a college. If in Beecher's novel it is mainly the men who engage in philosophical debate, here it is only women who desire to learn and perfect their perfect little republic. Unlike the Norwoodites, the Mizorans work all the time; and unlike Rose they enjoy not subordination but teaching. While the latter eventually prefers pensive strolls in her well-kept flower garden to her successes as a female surgeon, they eagerly conduct experiments in one of the many laboratories; or they take care of other women's daughters with professional skill. But who, then, does the heavy work? Who plows the fields? Cleans the house? An unskilled, dependent workforce does not exist, and there are no slaves in this society of radically similar females: these women have done away with race as a step in self-purification and self-authorization as founders of their own nation. Men, too, are mysteriously lacking: as the novel reveals, men have become extinct in the course of a Civil War and its chaotic aftermath. In the book's revisionist version of Reconstruction, the surviving women managed to sever human reproduction from the heterosexual act. Additionally, they have managed to replace nature and automate work, thereby reconciling the pastoral ideal with the late nineteenth-century technological revolution:

[T]he products of the orchards and gardens surpassed description. Bread came from the laboratory, and not from the soil by the sweat of the brow. Toil was unknown; the toil that we know, menial, degrading and harassing. Science had been the magician that had done away all that. (21)

Contrary to *Norwood*, where machines are suspiciously absent from the bucolic fantasy, technology is the rallying cry of this feminist success story where machines take the place of 'the negro' and all men, reworking the

debris of 1865 into a republican garden. Bringing that celebration of technology that according to Leo Marx was a defining aspect of nineteenth-century United States popular culture at large (see *ibid.*, 375) to its radical, logical end, the Mizorans live in a world that is entirely artificial (even the apples are chemically produced), and have thereby found an answer to all the latent problems that Beecher's nostalgic dream of natural (and ultimately technology-wary) self-regulation was unable to solve. By "eliminating" both the men and the "dark races" through artificial selection and by reproducing chemically (92–93), the blondes have created a radically homogenous society that relies on technology to guarantee the harmonious beauty and peace of their superior lifestyle. While in *Norwood* the pastoral remains tied to a raced and gendered division of labor, the park-like country of Mizora is the work of machines that have replaced earlier definitions of unskilled labor as a woman's or a person of color's 'natural' occupation. Importantly however, neither *Norwood* nor *Mizora* describe their leisurely, education-hungry societies as the result of brute revolutionary force: both the African-American farmhands in Beecher's postwar fantasy, and the machines that make the Mizorans' lifestyle possible are the logical end result of 'natural' selection. In *Norwood* it is the 'natural' superiority of New England whites that authorizes their role as national 'gardeners'; in *Mizora* it is the equally inborn qualities of white women that guarantee the survival of their 'race' and allow them to develop an essentially posthuman society. And yet the Mizoran fantasy of genocide, social hygiene, and an army of perfect women is even more absolutist and antidemocratic than Beecher's gated landscape. Based in what Asha Nadkarni has termed "eugenic feminism"—a pseudo-Darwinian concept aimed at female self-purification for the purpose of furthering the national whole (Nadkarni 2006, 221)¹¹—the country of the blondes marks the triumph of (female, white) art over (male, 'black') nature. Barely able to gloss over its racist and anti-male implications, this utopian concept of the garden is essentially posthuman. Fortunately, no American developer chose the name "Mizora" for a new suburban settlement.

11 As Nadkarni has pointed out in her discussion of feminism in the US and India, there is an uncanny connection between feminism and racism: "I use the phrase 'eugenic feminism' to refer not only to U.S. and Indian feminism's historical engagement with the eugenics movement but also to the rhetoric of feminism itself. Eugenic feminism is a self-purifying and self-perfecting rhetoric that works to create a feminist subject who, free of race, guarantees the reproduction of the sovereign nation." (2006, 221).

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