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RESISTANCE TO THE GILDED AGE: ROBERT HERRICK'S RADICAL MIDDLE CLASS

Robert Herrick is certainly not a proletarian novelist or a Marxist writer in any strict sense whatever; but he has never been a literary "progressive"; he has never been in the camp of the political or ethical liberals. On the contrary, his studious and inclusive chronicle of American society in his time has been solidified, tempered and edged by an inherently radical criticism of its ascendant morality; a criticism in whose dry light liberalism appears in very much its true proportions.
— Newton Arvin, "Homage to Robert Herrick," *The New Republic*, March 5, 1935

Often overlooked, Robert Herrick (1868–1938) was an experimental novelist who produced a sustained and critical engagement with the economic, political, and aesthetic effects of unregulated capitalist expansion in the late nineteenth century. Focusing on *The Web of Life* (1900) and *Together* (1908), this essay argues that Herrick's novels forcefully document a radical middle-class political position and demonstrate how the middle class was capable of apprehending and resisting the functionings of capitalism—especially its fragmentation of lived experience and its foreclosure of any practical exterior to the social totality. Given how recent economic trends toward deregulation and privatization have resulted in a precarious situation for the middle class worldwide, Herrick's depiction of the emergence of the modern middle class in 1890s Chicago also presents a dynamic foil from which to view our present moment. Though his genre-bending and politically ambiguous literary and political experiments have long contributed to critical confusion and even dismissal of his work, today Herrick's novels are a powerful tool for rethinking the long-accepted understanding of the relationship between literary realism, the struggles surrounding the emergence of corporate capitalism, and the political standpoint of the professional middle class.

Newton Arvin's defense of Robert Herrick's early novels appeared just two years after Herrick's last book, and by then he already seemed destined to obscurity. In fact, Herrick has never been completely forgotten, but his singular stance as a realist whose critique of modern capitalist society could not, as Arvin points out, be defined as either Marxist or liberal has frustrated attempts to situate him within the dominant narratives of American literary realism.[1] Arvin was not alone in his support of Herrick. Widely read and reviewed during his time, Herrick's early novels, especially *The Web of Life* (1900), *The Common Lot* (1904), *The Memoirs of an American Citizen* (1905), and *Together* (1908), stood out in the critical and popular press.[2] In 1909, William Dean Howells

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promoted Herrick as one of the best novelists of the first decade of the twentieth century, claiming that he was "quite sensibly part of what is alone vital in our imaginative literature."[3] Thirty-three years later, Alfred Kazin described Herrick as "one of the most serious and neglected pioneer realists of the Progressive era" who, while "neither a Socialist nor a muckraker" was "one of the most distinguished moral intelligences in the early history of twentieth-century realism."[4]

Past critical confusion over Herrick's aesthetic position can be linked to a long-running bias against the political orientation of literary realism, and the middle class more generally.[5] Kazin notes that "ironically enough," Herrick "has too long been neglected and penalized for those very qualities of mind that make his work the most sensitive analysis of the middle-class life of his time."[6] In *What America Read*, Gordon Hutner points out that novels about the middle class have often been ignored because of "the anti-bourgeois prejudice permeating literary academe for decades." For most of the twentieth century, Hutner says, "the great question of many critics was to determine the revolutionary potential of modern culture" and "critics … believed it was necessary to choose one radical position or another."[7] Recent challenges to long-held beliefs about the political orientation of the middle class provide an opportunity to reevaluate the political status of literary realism. Robert Weimann argues that realism responded to the events of the late nineteenth century by describing the social, moral, intellectual, and material effects of modern capitalism. Realism focused on how "to repudiate hitherto largely unchallenged and broadly accepted norms of social ideology and sexual morality."[8] Similarly, Amy Kaplan notes that American realism of the 1880s and 1890s "is not a seamless package of a triumphant bourgeois mythology but an anxious and contradictory mode which both articulates and combats the growing sense of unreality at the heart of middle-class life."[9]

Recently, historians and political scientists have challenged assumptions about the political orientation of the middle class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, uncovering a middle class that was particularly resistant to the concentrated economic and political power inherent in the development of corporations and trusts. The political identifications that emerge from these studies stand in stark opposition to the common understanding of the middle class as conservative defenders of modern capitalist organization. Historians like Robert D. Johnston and Mark Kann and political scientists such as Victoria Hattam and Gerald Berk convincingly document the presence of a radical middle class at the turn of the century that actively resisted the consolidation of political and economic power.[10] Lawrence M. Lipin argues that middle-class radicalism emerged from the "fear that future economic development might lead to the rise of an impoverished and dependent population that would be at the mercy of the rich."[11] Citing middle-class support for labor actions in New Albany, St. Louis, Portland, Brooklyn, and Chicago, these historians describe a broad-based, middle-class resistance to the Gilded Age economic elite that runs counter to more common depictions of the middle class as self-protective liberals or elitist progressive reformers.

Throughout the twentieth century the political standpoint of the middle class has been closely connected to the progressive movement, but what the progressive movement meant, or if it was progressive at all, has been the object of a long, ongoing debate.[12] In *A Fierce Discontent*, Michael McGerr defines progressivism as "the creed of a crusading middle class" that "offered the promise of utopianism" but delivered "unrealistic

expectations" that still haunt "our contemporary political predicament."[13] According to McGerr, middle-class activists can be defined by their antipathy to the American tradition of individualism that animated the richest 1 or 2 percent of the population and those who worked in an "emerging factory system … built on individual workers' free exchange of their labor for wages."[14] For McGerr, the most radical aspect of progressivism was its intention "to transform other Americans, to remake the nation's feuding, polyglot population in their own middle-class image."[15] In his depiction of middle-class progressives as self-satisfied, elitist liberals bent on overturning the American ideals of independence and self-reliance, McGerr's book is part of a long tradition that depicts the middle class as politically repressive. But progressives have also been the object of intense critique by historians who often depict them as elitist and ultimately conservative. The failure of the progressive movement to address social justice issues, and its perceived capitulation to corporate capitalism, has led many on the left to dismiss the progressive movement and the middle class more generally.[16] A more moderate position emerged in the 1980s with the rise of social history, and by the late 1990s Steven J. Diner, for example, used political and social history to argue that "Americans in very different circumstances shared common aspirations for economic security, autonomy, and social status."[17] In his focus on the "unorganized actions" of a diverse set of American workers, Diner reveals how a majority of Americans struggled against the forces of industrialism and the reforms of middle-class progressives. For Diner, the "struggle for autonomy and security" was not "limited to those on the bottom," but affected "how millions of Americans resisted the new order in their daily lives."[18]

The reevaluation of middle-class politics by recent historians can also be linked to an earlier generation of labor historians, such as E. P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman, who focused on, in Gutman's words, "the frequent tensions between different groups of men and women new to the machine and a changing American society."[19] Though Gutman and Thompson primarily document the ways in which artisans and preindustrial workers confronted new models of factory work discipline, the industrialization and corporatization of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century eventually affected "the relationship between settled work habits and culture" of the vast majority of Americans.[20] Johnston points out the irony in contemporary historians' resistance to claims about a radical middle class given the fact that "Gutman plainly demonstrated the depth of community—indeed solidly middle-class—support for strikers during the Gilded Age" as early as 1966.[21] Lipin cites Gutman to support his claim that the "tradition of producerist republicanism" was connected to an idea of independence and equal rights that motivated a broad resistance to industrial and corporate models of work. Large-scale capitalist enterprise posed a similar threat to many different types of workers, as both immigrants and native-born workers shared the "fear of dependence, proletarianization, and the centralization of power."[22] That this fear was also shared by the middle class becomes clear when we consider that, as Lipin points out, Gutman's study of labor disputes "found numerous instances of broad-based support by shopkeepers, professionals, and small manufacturers for unions engaging in strikes against large employers."[23] These historians document a broad and complex relationship between class and politics in the Gilded Age that affected much of the working population.[24]

Historians and political economists have transformed the understanding of middle-class politics, but literary study has not wholly misunderstood these tendencies. Major

critics such as Kaplan successfully argued for a more politically radical understanding of American literary realism by overturning the prior "reevaluation of realism's political stance, from a progressive force exposing social conditions to a conservative force complicit with capitalist relations."[25] Along with Kaplan, the theoretically oriented work of Eric Sundquist and the historically focused criticism of June Howard stand out in their attempts to promote realism as a literary form capable of expressing "the dynamic relationship between changing fictional and social forms in realistic representation."[26] Since the 1990s, this critical reevaluation has successfully broadened the political and social implications of literary realism, but has failed to fully address the political position of the middle class. Herrick's novels give us an opportunity to rethink the experience of middle-class professionals who struggled against the emergence of modern capitalism.

Each of Herrick's early realist novels offers a forceful critique of the economic transformations of the late nineteenth century. Herrick works from within the domestic, middle-class conventions of the realist tradition in order to present a political critique of the personal and spiritual cost that skilled professionals and their families paid for the money, consumption, and leisure that their positions offered them. Louis J. Budd points out that Herrick's "architects, engineers, attorneys, editors, and physicians" make up "the earliest galaxy of 'professional' men in our fiction."[27] Many of Herrick's realist novels focus on the workings of a particular professional field: the medical profession in *The Web of Life*, architecture and the construction industry in *The Common Lot*, the organization and management of a corporate trust in *The Memoirs of an American Citizen*, real estate speculation and wealth management in *Clark's Field* (1914), and the experience of the wives and daughters of the professional class in *Together* and *The Gospel of Freedom* (1898).[28] In these novels, Herrick describes how professional labor was transformed by the emergence of the modern, fully deregulated form of the corporation.[29] Herrick describes professional life as an unstable and precarious existence that, in the last instance, forces his characters to confront the fact that they share more with the embattled working classes than with corporate titans, bankers, and financiers.

In this unusual preoccupation with the middle class and the corporation, Herrick's novels forcefully demonstrate that a radical middle-class mentality was, in fact, singularly capable of apprehending the functionings of capitalism—especially its fragmentation of lived experience and its foreclosure of any practical exterior to the social totality. The confusion produced by Herrick's complex political position is compounded by his formally experimental realism. He often pushes the limits of conventional realist depictions of the economy, employing metafictional devices and a careful attention to historical events and space, among other tactics, to produce and criticize a specifically middle-class knowledge of modern capitalism. And these genre-bending and politically ambiguous experiments—having long contributed to critical confusion and dismissal of Herrick—today reveal a powerful reason for rethinking the long-accepted understanding of the relationship between literary realism, the political struggles surrounding the emergence of corporate capitalism, and the experience of the professional middle class.

In what follows, I focus on the two novels, *The Web of Life* and *Together*, which most successfully present Herrick's complex vision of middle-class politics. *The Web of Life* represents a direct confrontation with the limits of personal protest by describing a young doctor's failed attempt to resist the corporatization of the medical profession. *Together* is primarily noteworthy for its formal inventiveness, as Herrick's critique emerges within a

complex dynamic between the narrator, the characters, and the implied reader of realism. In both books, Herrick focuses his narrative on middle-class characters that experience, what Gutman calls, the "profound tension … between the older American preindustrial social structure and the modernizing institutions that accompanied the development of industrial capitalism."[30] These characters do not experience this transformation in the factory, but they are nevertheless transformed by the expanding influence of the corporation and the efficient, scientifically organized models of work it brought to professional labor. Thompson describes industrialism as a process that "entailed a severe restructuring of working habits—new disciplines, new incentives, and a new human nature upon which these incentives could bite effectively."[31] Herrick's professionals and their families may not be the traditional object of this description, but they similarly experience industrial capitalism as a destabilizing force that transforms the experience of work; introduces new forms of discipline and incentive; and demands a new, and foreign, type of subjectivity. In his depictions of characters struggling against these changes, Herrick implicitly creates and endorses a vision of middle-class political, social, and economic life that stands in direct opposition to the economic events of his time.

THE WEB OF LIFE

Three of Herrick's novels (*The Gospel of Freedom, The Web of Life*, and *The Memoirs of an American Citizen*) are set among the major labor disputes of the 1890s in Chicago: the Haymarket riot and trial, the 1894 Pullman strikes, and the packers' war, as well as the economic depression following the World's Fair. But *The Web of Life* is Herrick's most powerful description of the political and economic changes facing the professional middle class at the end of the nineteenth century. Focusing on a young doctor who experiences the cutting-edge of the modern health-care system, *The Web of Life* documents how the corporatization of the medical profession transformed the independent doctor into a mechanized, scientifically managed worker.

At the beginning of the novel, having just finished his residency in a large Chicago hospital, Howard Sommers is confronted with the fact that to be a doctor in 1894 is also to be a worker. On his first night free of the hospital, Sommers attends a society dinner at the home of an old friend of his father, Alexander Hitchcock. Well within the tradition of domestic realism, Herrick sets the scene for the young doctor's ascension into a comfortable life among the professional middle class: a life that would include a job in a highly profitable "office" doing "commercial medicine," connections to financial speculators, and a romantic interest with a solid inheritance. But Sommers is ambivalent about these relationships. Having just finished his professional training, Sommers has yet to comprehend how modern capitalism has transformed his profession, but he already feels a strong emotional resistance to the intermingling of professional work with the financial world. During the evening, a conversation about the Pullman strike forces him to seriously confront the ethics and implications of his burgeoning career.

At the dinner, Sommers is seated with two financiers who are on the board of Pullman. When Hitchcock brings up a "humorous" story about an uneducated Swedish immigrant who had mistaken him for a member of the board and pressed him to be reinstated at Pullman, Sommers asks if it was true that "the men who had been thrifty enough to get homes outside of Pullman had to go first because they didn't pay rent to the

company?"[32] Sommers has not taken a side on the labor dispute, but his question is earnest: He objects not so much to the working conditions or low pay that have instigated the strike, but to the control that Pullman is wielding over the lives of its workers. Though far from a radical political stance, his question is met with a series of rebuttals by the two financiers, and one sums up their position this way: "'That's a minor point,' Carson added, in a high-pitched voice. 'The real thing is whether a corporation can manage its own affairs as it thinks best or not.'"[33]

Herrick subtly lays out the irony of this position, that a worker's independence from the company town, his ability to manage his own affairs, is a "minor point" when compared to the same question in regard to a corporation. Sommers does not publicly object, but after dinner confides to Louise Hitchcock that he "had a vision" that "'these people—I mean your comfortable rich—seem to have taken a kind of oath of self-preservation. To do what is expected of one, to succeed, you must take the oath. You must defend their institutions, and all that.'" Later he tries to clarify his position: "'I don't know anything about the Pullman matter; but I hate the—successful. I guess that's about it.'" When asked by Louise if his reaction was specifically about those at dinner, he reveals a broader perspective: "I feel that way pretty much all the time in America … it isn't this house or that, this man's millions or that man's; it's the whole thing." Sommers protests the fact that to be "successful" he will be forced to forgo his independence. To be a successful doctor means treating the wealthy, and this, he quickly infers, means accepting their vision of the world. Though a protest against the attitudes displayed at a society dinner seems banal when compared to those striking for their very existence, Sommers's reaction reveals conditions under which the middle and professional classes would resist. Specifically, Sommers's ideal of an independent professional class is impossible when his economic subsistence depends on his capitulation to the political and social views of corporate titans and financiers. After the dinner party, Sommers is confused by how much the scene had affected him: "he had never before had the inner, unknown elements of his nature so stirred; had never felt this blind, raging protest." But this protest is neither the beginning of a political awakening in favor of the striking workers, nor simply a pause in his ascension to the upper class. Instead, it lays the ground for an examination of how wage labor serves to connect the professional class to the traditional working class, even if the benefits each receives for their work are vastly different.[34]

After "a brief vacation had served to convince him of the folly that lay in indulging a parcel of incoherent prejudices at the expense of even that somewhat nebulous thing popularly called a 'career,'" Sommers accepts a job in Dr. Frederick H. Lindsay's modern medical office. He realizes that his resistance to a relatively easy, high-paying job makes little sense when compared to how the majority of those in Chicago are struggling at the time, but he secretly acknowledges that he is not "committed to his 'career,'" and would instead "be merely a spectator, a free-lance, a critic, who keeps the precious treasure of his own independence." Before he takes the job, Sommers is primarily resistant to the affective requirements of this new form of the profession. The dinner parties, friendly chit-chat at work, and strict adherence to certain political opinions that are required for a job serving the upper class strike him as oppressive because they are not directly related to his professional labor.[35]

Sommers comes to fully understand his initial resistance to the modern form of his profession when he meets Alves, the wife of a patient he treated in the hospital. Alves is a

teacher, and she vividly describes her job in a public school to Sommers: "Its routine, its spying supervision, its injustices, its mechanical ideals. … There were the superintendents, the supervisors, the special teachers, the principals—petty officers of a petty tyranny." Sommers is moved, not simply by her struggle to stay afloat in a profession rigged against those without connections, but by how the labor of the teacher has been transformed by institutional and disciplinary practices more common to factory labor. As Sommers reflects on their discussion, he notes the industrial connotations of her description: "The terms 'special teachers,' 'grades of pay,' 'constructive work,' discipline,' etc., had no special significance to him, typifying merely the exactions of the mill, the limitations set about the human atom." Both Alves and Sommers are native-born Americans who were raised outside the city: Alves a daughter of a farmer in Wisconsin and Sommers the son of a small-town doctor in Ohio, and they each experience the requirements of their professional labor as a clear loss of a prior independence. Herrick's description of these privileged wage laborers stands in stark contrast to the experience of first-generation immigrant workers who came to Chicago in the 1890s, such as Jurgis and his family in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), but Alves and Sommers also experience the "grievances that accompanied the transformation of Old America into New America" that Gutman locates as the source of the labor disputes of 1877.[36] After meeting Alves, Sommers identifies a clear relationship between her struggle with the material requirements of her work as a teacher, the striking workers at Pullman, and his work at Lindsay's medical offices.[37]

Phillip Barrish argues that *The Web of Life* "stages a competition between two contrasting possibilities for what the U.S. healthcare model would, or should, look like in the new century."[38] He suggests that Herrick's young doctor leaves his residency believing in a democratic, independent model of his profession that is "unregulated by any external authority" and implicitly associated "with both the labor movement and certain aspects of the New Woman movement," but he is confronted by a "health-care system that is centralized, rationalized, and directed from the top down" and, moreover, allied "with powerful banks, trusts, and corporations."[39] Barrish convincingly shows how *The Web of Life* documents the consolidation of the U.S. health-care market by the American Medical Association. This organization was not itself a corporate entity, but by regulating medical schools, hospitals, and laboratory science it took "decisive steps toward achieving a virtual monopoly over the organization, delivery, and financing arrangements of U.S. health care" that "would give it a degree of control unmatched by other professions over the terms, conditions, and payment structures under which the bulk of its members worked."[40] Herrick's young doctor is as an example of how professionals, like the artisanal and agrarian workers of the nineteenth century, were dramatically affected by emergent models of work associated with corporate capitalism, and how this experience could lead them to an oppositional, and even radical, political position.

After meeting Alves, Sommers begins to see his work at the medical offices in a new light, and he begins to not only recognize the material reality of his labor but to actively resist, as Barrish puts it, "how Lindsay's mechanized practices of scientific management discipline not only the office's clientele but also the medical staff."[41] Lindsay's medical offices "were ingeniously arranged" on a high floor of a modern office building in order to regulate the flow of patients, doctors, and staff. The patients are separated according to their class. The wealthy and connected gain direct access to Lindsay, some arrive for

appointments made by telephone, and others wait for the chance to pay the ten dollar fee to see a doctor: "It was a busy, toiling, active, subdued place, where the tinkle of the telephone bell, the hum of electric annunciators, as one member of the staff signaled to another, vibrated in the tense atmosphere." The office, or "shop" as those who worked there called it, operated on a tight time schedule that was regulated by a mechanical clock: "an improved device, something like a cash-register machine, that printed off the name opposite a certain hour that was permanently printed on the slip." This machine regulates both money and time as it organizes the doctors' day into fifteen-minute appointments.[42]

Herrick describes the office on a day that Sommers arrives late and witnesses a woman being refused service because she cannot afford the office fee. Sommers admits the woman against policy and takes her to "one of the little compartments on the inner corridor, which was lined with strange devices: electrical machines, compressed air valves, steam sprays—all the enginery of the latest invention," for an examination. Later, Sommers's boss disciplines him for breaking office rules. Lindsay reasserts the fact that there are "free dispensaries for those who can't pay," and using language more fitted for a description of a factory than a medical office, says that he "cannot afford to maintain this plant without fees. In short, I am surprised at such a breach of professional etiquette." That Lindsay considers the act of treating a destitute person without taking a fee a "breach of professional etiquette" is a strong commentary on how the financialization of the medical profession had replaced professional ethics with an economic model of professional etiquette.[43]

Sommers's knowledge of the interconnectedness between his professional work and more common forms of wage labor is complete when he realizes the similarity between his office and the department store across the street: "Sommers could see the clerks moving hither and thither behind the counters. It did not differ materially from his emporium: it was less select, larger, but not more profitable, considering the amount of capital employed, than his shop. Marshall Field decked out the body; Lindsay, Thornton, and Co. repaired the body as best they could. It was all one." In what follows, Sommers rejects both class and profession by quitting his high-paying job and breaking off his relationship to Louise. Eventually he takes up with Alves after her husband dies and they attempt to live an independent existence: first in her native Wisconsin, and later (in an original representation of what will become a common image of the bohemian urban experience) in a rough, warehouse-like building that was originally built for the World's Fair.[44]

After his principled rejection of "office" work, Sommers and Alves descend quickly down the economic ladder. Sommers eventually confronts the hard reality of not having connections, and though he originally bristled at the commercial aspect of his office job, he soon learns that the lower he goes on the economic ladder, the more crassly economic his profession becomes. As unable to fit in the working class as the upper class, Sommers finds that confronted with economic necessity, "a good deal of the importance of his revolt against commercial medicine disappeared" and with this "some dim idea of the terrible spectre that haunts the days and nights of those without capital or position confronted him." Sommers comes up against the reality of economic necessity in its most basic form when he gets his wish to start from scratch, and then comes to understand the more common wish held by those around him "to be rich, to

have put yourself outside the ranks of the precarious classes." Eventually his original objection to attending society dinners to bolster his career is ironized when an acquaintance explains that he needs to "work" his social life if he wants to develop a practice: "You ought to get connected with a good church, and go to the meetings and church sociable. Join the young people's clubs and make yourself agreeable." With this, Sommers is forced to see the reality of his position: "'In different circles, different customs,' thought Sommers. 'Lindsay frequents dinners, and I must attend church sociable!'"[45]

The political position that Herrick develops here is, in many ways, unresolvable, but the depiction of Sommers's unsuccessful resistance to industrialized forms of professional labor, and the affective requirements of upper-class life, allows Herrick to make a more realistic comment on the implications of modern capitalism. Unlike the immigrant laborers who fought the factory system throughout the nineteenth century, Sommers does not experience his revolt as a collective or cultural endeavor. True to his identity and status as an elite native-born American, he experiences his resistance through the framework of individualism.

Herrick foregrounds the tension between the individual and the collective, and Sommers's eventual capitulation, in the way he negotiates the geographical space of Chicago. Throughout the novel Sommers is drawn to the liminal, undeveloped spaces in the city, especially the "disfigured Midway, where the wreck of the Fair began." The "desolate ruins of the Fair" and the platted, but undeveloped, blocks of the south side provide a spatial metaphor for Sommers's attempt to resist the scientifically planned and economically organized form of professional labor. While Sommers is drawn to empty spaces like the lake front and the undeveloped city blocks, the narrator makes it clear that these spaces are not open at all, but merely the residue of financial speculation that has already come and gone:

> Even in the geniality of the April day, with the brilliant, theatrical waters of the lake in the distance, the scene was gaunt, savage. To the north, a broad dark shadow that stretched out into the lake defined the city. Nearer, the ample wings of the white Art Building seemed to stand guard against the impieties of civilization. To the far south, a line of thin trees marked the outer desert of the prairie. Behind, in the west, were straggling flat-buildings, mammoth deserted hotels, one of which was crowned with a spidery steel tower. Nearer, a frivolous Grecian temple had been wheeled to the confines of the park, and dumped by the roadside to serve as a saloon.

When Sommers first meets Alves, she is living in a solitary house in empty land between the city, the fairgrounds, and the lake, and he identifies this space with his desire to escape the confines of the structured capitalist labor he experiences in the developed part of the city. But, unlike the narrator, he is unable to see that these spaces are not outside of capitalism. Later, after he and Alves fail to sustain their position in a working-class boarding house, they return to the liminal space surrounding the burned fairgrounds. Again, while Sommers sees potential for independence and autonomy in this space, the narrator makes his mistake clear to the reader. After walking to the edge of the city, to "a spot of semi-sylvan wildness that they were fond of," Sommers and Alves see

> a little stucco Grecian temple, one of those decorative contrivances that served as ticket booths or soda-water booths at the World's Fair. This one, larger and more pretentious than its fellows, had

been bought by some speculator, wheeled outside the park, and dumped on a sandy knoll in this empty lot. … Strange little product of some western architect's remembering pencil, it brought an air of distant shores and times, standing here in the waste of the prairie, above the bright blue waters of the lake!

The narrator, deploying Herrick's typical irony, reveals the building to be a tacky and romantic representation of another world and time—a sad attempt to signify exactly what it is not. Sommers does not see what the narrator describes, and exclaims, "That's the place for us!"[46]

The realization that resistance to modern forms of professional life is not a viable political option for the middle class is part of the power of Herrick's novel, and of his work more generally. There is no easy solution to the very real problems he describes. Like Gutman's artisans who have few good options once the factory model has been reorganized, Sommers's revolt will not reverse the changing nature of his profession. Eventually, after many dramatic events, including accusations of murder and Alves's suicide, Sommers realizes that there is no outside to the world he has revolted against. In the end, he marries Louise Hitchcock under the stipulation that they refuse the majority of her estate and live a common, middling existence. Like so many of the rebellious sons and daughters of the middle class to come after him, his resignation is accompanied by the painful understanding of just how limited his options are. What he comes to realize is that refusing a middle-class life, with its offensive commodification of ethics, morals, and the professions, does not free him, but instead relegates him to a world of material deprivation that is no less morally or ethically corrupt. In this way, Herrick reveals that the middle class is capable of radical anticapitalist sentiment, as well as the limits of that protest; as a result, the novel is as deeply concerned with what it means to live a meaningful life as it is with providing a critique of the limits that modern capitalism places on that goal.

TOGETHER

Herrick combines anticorporate political commentary with experiments in realist form most successfully in *Together*, a novel that assembles a diverse set of characters in order to critique the structural relation between emergent corporate capitalism and the professional middle class. The novel introduces six upper-class women, but focuses primarily on Isabella Lane, the daughter of an established St. Louis merchant who marries a promising young railroad executive at the beginning of the novel. Following the conventions of the domestic novel, Herrick's description of Isabella's early married life focuses on the strict separation of the economic and the domestic world. John's job creating "traffic" for the railroad and Isabella's "business" of keeping a constant flow of the right people circulating through the house are described in parallel ways.[47] Herrick foregrounds how in a novel, as in the everyday experience of middle-class life, it is difficult to uncover the structural connections between the personal and the economic when they are defined and experienced as distinct realms of existence. Having grown up the daughter of a merchant, Isabella brings an older conception of business and economics to the marriage, but her husband is operating in a corporate and financial world that is, at least at first, outside of her understanding. In *Together*, Herrick works against the political

orientation of the domestic novel, what Lora Romero calls the "long-standing critical legacy [that] has made domesticity and the status quo virtually synonymous," by describing Isabella's eventual political resistance to economic forces outside the home.[48]

At the beginning of the novel, Herrick introduces the condition of separate spheres to show how limited is the possibility that Isabella will reflect on the relationship between the business and the domestic world, or on her husband's unethical business dealings. While returning from a dinner party, Isabella and her husband pass a sign for a regional coal company owned by a "puffy-faced German-American." After noticing the sign, Isabella asks how John can stand socializing with the "common" and unsophisticated Frekes. Her husband responds to her with blunt, economic logic: "'I stand him,' he explained, smiling, 'for the reason men stand each other most often,—we make money together.'" In response, Isabella asks, "Why, how do you mean? He isn't in the railroad?" before realizing "that she was trespassing on that territory of man's business which she had been brought up to keep away from." This exchange sets up a dramatic metafictional intervention—an explanation of how the railroad, coal, and hardware corporations are ignored by the characters (and presumably by the reader as well) even though these businesses are essential factors in the unfolding of the story. The narrator begins by proposing that

> If Isabella had been curious about her husband's interest in the Pleasant Valley Coal Company, she might have developed a highly interesting chapter of commercial history … The Atlantic and Pacific railroad corporation is, as may easily be inferred, a vast organism, with a history, a life of its own, lying like a thick ganglia of nerves and blood-vessels a third of the way across our broad continent, sucking its nourishment from thousands of miles of rich and populous territory. To write its history humanly, not statistically, would be to reveal an important chapter in the national drama for the last forty years, —a drama buried in dusty archives, in auditors' reports, vouchers, mortgage deeds, general orders, etc. Someday there will come the great master of irony … who will make this mass of routine paper glow with meaning visible to all!

Clearly, Herrick imagines himself to be that master of irony, and he is both describing and deploying a form of realism adequate to this particular form of "drama." Despite the conventional naturalist description of the corporation as a biological entity feeding on the nation, Herrick is not arguing that humans are helpless in the face of a metaphorical octopus. Instead, Herrick proposes that a mundane model of archival analysis could transform the concrete data of everyday life into a meaningful, politically imaginative drama. He proposes "to write [the corporation's] history humanly," and thus to represent these large social forces at the common level of everyday life. To do so successfully, he suggests, would entail not only describing surface dramas, but also uncovering the structural form of power and influence that is expressed in mundane "dusty archives" of tax forms and corporate charters. Herrick uses this method to document both the subtle and dramatic ways in which the emergent mode of financial—and, specifically, corporate—capitalism transform and deform lives. And Herrick's framing of this short chapter conveys his belief that his readers have as much difficulty seeing beyond the seemingly distinct spheres of experience as his characters do.[49]

Herrick's narrator attempts to overcome this conceptual limit by describing a scene at John's office that Isabella witnesses but does not comprehend, in which a coal company is put out of business because her husband and other railroad executives are profiting

from their illegal ownership of a competing company. The problem Herrick raises in this chapter is not simply the graft between railroad and coal executives, or the fact that women are kept from the realm of business, but that Isabella, like the implied reader of realism, has been trained to avoid thinking about the "serious" world of her husband's business dealings. Though troubled by the scene, she goes on afterward to think of "proper" things for a woman's contemplation, such as her "riding-skirt," "summer gowns," and upcoming travel. Here, the narrator tells us, the assumption is that "Isabella [could not] trace the well-linked chain of cause and effect that led from [this financial relationship] to her husband's check-book and her own brilliant little dinner, 'where they could afford to offer champagne.'" Herrick's dismissive account of Isabella's intellectual abilities at the beginning of the novel sets up an eventual conversion in which she painfully discovers these connections and their real costs, and thereby becomes more knowledgeable and capable than her husband and other men in the novel who are too invested in the spoils of the system to engage in self-reflexive critique. But at this point, Isabella, like the reader, is clearly uninterested in the minutia of corporate finance. The narrator points out that domestic realism does not often present a complicated analysis of the structural relationships among economics, dinner parties, and gender roles. The narrator ironically asks if:

> this tiresome chapter on the affairs of the Atlantic and Pacific railroad,—will it never be done! So sordid, so commonplace, so newspapery, so just what everything in life is—when we might have expected for the dollar and a quarter expended on this pound of wood pulp and ink, —something less dull than a magazine article. … Or at least if one must have a railroad in a novel (when everyone knows just what a railroad is), give us a private car and the lovely daughter of the President together with a cow-punching hero. … But an entire chapter on graft and a common dinner party with the champagne drank so long ago—what a bore!

After this highly sarcastic commentary the narrator assures us he will get back to "something more intimate and domestic," and he delivers, beginning the next chapter with the short sentence: "The child was coming!"[50]

The narrator's commentary reveals not only that Herrick sees political and aesthetic potential in the description and critique of the economic elite, but that he is sensitive to the experience of those who are experiencing the dramatic economic transformations affecting the professional middle class. Unlike Thorstein Veblen, his colleague at the University of Chicago, Herrick shows a deep understanding of the profound irony in the position of the leisure class—namely, that their reward for striving for money and position rarely covers the personal, moral, and ethical debts that they accrue in the process, and that those who realize this could be the core of a powerful political standpoint. Herrick simultaneously produces and parodies the conventions of domestic realism in order to expose the benefits and the costs of succeeding in a corporate economy, and the strength of his critique emerges in his descriptions of wealthy women like Isabella.

The women in Herrick's realist novels often take on a complex role: the social, cultural, and economic expectations of wealth literally dictate their experience, while women also embody the most passionate resistance to the culture that has determined them. Herrick's focus on the experience of women also reveals the structural contradiction inherent in the relationship between professionals and corporate capitalism. For

example, by the time Isabella's husband ends up as the fall guy for a price-fixing scheme that has attracted national attention, she realizes that her social trajectory has paralleled her husband's success. The difference between husband and wife is that Isabella, at least, had bristled against her designated role almost from the start, and her resistance is expressed in a "modern" form of mental instability. At first, Isabella finds a society doctor who prescribes pills to both pick her up and bring her down—she discusses the different drugs and their effects in a way that is startlingly similar to contemporary discourse surrounding psychopharmacology. But she eventually leaves the city for a "clinic" run by a charismatic doctor who, diverging from S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure, prescribes work and counsels her to live a life defined by production rather than consumption. This simple shift in her economic role reflects the potentially radical position of which she is capable, and to which the middle class more generally might aspire. Consumerism defines a sensibility that reflects the dominant understanding of the middle class—one which identifies with elite, corporate power in order to reap as many benefits as possible (and Herrick describes many individuals who aspire to elite status in this way), while a productive position reflects a striving, not simply for material gain at any cost, but for work that expresses independence and autonomy. The result of Isabella's transformed understanding of her relationship to the contemporary economic system is revealed when she returns to her husband, and to the city, as a savvy critic of both contemporary business practices and consumer culture.

At a fancy hotel in New York, Isabella reenters society in a complex and jarring scene in which her observations are intertwined with contrasting descriptions from the narrator. Immediately upon entering the lobby, Isabella and the narrator remark upon a newsstand. The narrator ironically proclaims that it demonstrates "a great age … and a great people, that has standardized its pleasures and has marketed them in convenient packages for all tastes!" Isabella's response to the onslaught of popular culture, however, is much more subtle. She purchases a "patriotic" magazine that is published by a friend and reflects on how, with sentimental romances losing readership, he has moved on to publishing muckraking articles in a series entitled "Our National Crimes." Though the narrator has offered pointed and at times blustery attacks on corporations, graft, and commodity culture throughout the novel, Isabella delivers a more nuanced critique. Even though this type of journalism has cost her husband his career and threatened her economic and social stability—and it is her friend's magazine that is filled with the scandalous reports of his trial—Isabella concludes that, given the requirements of the market, her friend is not betraying her husband by publishing these articles. In the end, they are no different than the romantic stories he previously printed. The publisher was "himself an investor in corporations," not politically committed to the content of the articles, but merely responding to the market: "And just now [people] wanted to be shocked and outraged by revelations of business perfidy," while in "six months … the editor would find something sweet, full of country charm and suburban peace to feed them."[51]

Herrick's narrator continually breaks into the story with fiery indictments of corporate power and shocking details of the government's collusion, yet Isabella calmly dismisses exactly this type of progressive critique. She describes the narrator's position and the muckraking articles as commodities rather than political acts. In this way, muckraking articles are presented as merely one of an infinite number of exchangeable topics that popular magazines and newspapers (and also novels) use to fill their pages, once

news, like every other aspect of life, has been turned into a commodity to be profited on by trusts and corporations. Isabella's critique operates as a metaphor for middle-class politics more generally, as she is capable of seeing through the narrator's position without having the agency to significantly change the political or economic situation. By projecting the position of an implied outside onto a gendered other, Herrick reiterates the contradiction underlying middle-class resistance: namely, that the middle class is capable of understanding the functioning of corporate capitalism but is structurally limited in their ability to act on that knowledge.

CONCLUSION

At the end of *Together*, John and Isabella have both been broken by their rise and fall in the railroad business and in society. They stay together, however, and in the final scene of the book they leave the East to take over a small railway in Texas. Critics have pointed to Herrick's endings as evidence that his novels are ultimately unsuccessful, but his odd, and at times unsatisfying, endings can also be read as complex and ironic commentaries on both the potentials and limitations of a radical middle class. Read through the lens of traditional realism, the endings of *Together* and *The Web of Life* are implausible. It is hard to believe that giving up *most* of his wife's large inheritance absolves Sommers of the moral and ethical effects of his capitulation to a career, or that John will be a "better man" and Isabella will become satisfied with her wifely duties once they get to Texas. But if, as Kaplan points out, "the strange amalgam of romance and realism in Dreiser and Norris" can be read "not as a failure of form, but in relation to the unstable language of financial speculation," then Herrick's endings, which often depict a resigned reconciliation to love, to work, or to family, may also be understood as more than a failure of form.[52]

The endings of Herrick's novels push the political limits of realism exactly because they are realistic depictions of the ways in which the middle class negotiates its relationship to economic and political forces. If the endings of both novels are in some way unsatisfying, it is not because they are romantic or unrealistic, but because they take seriously the irony of middle-class resistance. Herrick's characters are capable of a radical critique of capitalism, but, as Arvin points out, Herrick is neither a Marxist nor a liberal. As such, his characters do not renounce their class position and become socialists, nor do they become progressive activists and set out to reform the social, political, or economic system. But their resistance transforms them. Sommers and Isabella are not capable of removing themselves from a totalizing and claustrophobic economic system, but they are able to comprehend the potentials and limits of that system. In this way, Herrick's novels reveal how the limitations inherent in the political position of the middle class can, in fact, provide the standpoint for a radical form of political critique, even if they also make it abundantly clear how difficult it is to transform that critique into political action.

Herrick's careful dissection of the relationship between individual revolt and the collective nature of political action gives us an opportunity to rethink the experience of those in the middle class who struggled against capitalism in his time, as well as in our own. Reflecting on the long-term effects of the resistance to industrialization that occurred throughout the nineteenth century, Gutman cites Fernand Braudel to remind us that

"'victorious events come about as the result of many possibilities' and that 'for one possibility which actually is realized, innumerable others have drowned.'"[53] The failures of collective resistance to industrial capitalism by artisans and preindustrial workers are, in this way, reinscribed into a larger, hegemonic understanding of historical change. But the individual actions of Herrick's middle-class radicals cannot be understood in the same way. Isabella and Sommers do not seek a collective expression for their protest, but their resistance to a delimited and circumscribed experience within a precarious middle class still resonates today.[54]

In both Herrick's time and our own, the difficulty of thinking about middle-class politics arises from a bifurcation of class that conflates professional and managerial labor with capital, even though, as Marx pointed out as early as 1863, in a corporation "the manager's salary is or should be simply the wage for a certain kind of skilled labour, its price being regulated in the labour market like that of any other labour."[55] Herrick documents a more complex version of class, one in which even the professional middle class experiences a form of capitalist exploitation and domination. And yet, Sommers and Isabella do not seek a collective identification with labor. Their discontent does not emerge from dissatisfaction with what they get for their professional and domestic labor, but from the fact that they are supposed to accept and enjoy their privilege. This form of revolt does not seem to belong to the political sphere, but by refusing the affective requirement to identify with capital, Sommers and Isabella reveal the larger conditions through which the middle class could attain a radical political standpoint.

In a recent analysis of contemporary radical politics, Frédéric Lordon notes that individual affects are absorbed into the political realm as soon as the middle class is forced to identify with capital: "From the moment when, despite being 'capital's men,' top executives became employees," a simple binary between capital and labor "is blurred by the employment relation's gradient of commitment, which in the final analysis is an affective gradient of the employee's joy (or sadness) at living the life of an employee."[56] Reflecting this sentiment, the radical nature of Herrick's political standpoint emerges in his description of the affective requirements of middle-class labor. Isabella and Sommers both revolt against the requirement that they not only acquiesce to their position within capitalism, but enjoy it. For Isabella, this would mean finding her domestic responsibilities not only tolerable, but the natural expression of her abilities, while for Sommers it would mean accepting the economic requirements of his profession and embracing the ideology of the wealthy people he treats. In both cases, rejecting the affective identification with capital reveals the scope of middle-class protest, as both Isabella and Sommers confront, and retreat from, crossing a limit that would transform their class status. As a result, Herrick's characters necessarily fail to remove themselves from the affective and material requirements of modern capitalism, but these accounts of radical middle-class revolt are neither resentful nor hopeless. Herrick documents a version of middle-class politics that is not bound to the antagonism between capital and labor, but, instead, reveals a complex web of life, a "clash between," as Lordon puts it, "the joyful who want nothing changed, and who want more of the same, and the discontented who want something else."[57]

But, as we saw in the 2016 presidential election, affect can also be a powerful tool for reactionary politics and capitalist domination. The election has been described by many as the result of an historic shift in the political standpoint of the working class, but this

claim ignores the demographic transformation of the working class since the 1980s and, instead, primarily reveals the stubborn popular image of the working class as composed of white industrial laborers. The truth of who voted for Trump will have to be sorted out by future sociologists, but it is hard to imagine that they will find large numbers of votes coming from those in the Service Employee International Union (SEIU) or the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

More astute analyses have located Trump's success in his ability to harness the negative affects of those who feel dispossessed and resentful. As Cornel West put it,

> White working- and middle-class fellow citizens—out of anger and anguish—rejected the economic neglect of neoliberal policies and the self-righteous arrogance of elites. Yet these same citizens also supported a candidate who appeared to blame their social misery on minorities, and who alienated Mexican immigrants, Muslims, black people, Jews, gay people, women and China in the process.[58]

It is important to note the conflation of the working class and middle class in this description, as well as the focus on negative affects. West describes Trump's victory as the beginning of a neofascist tendency in the United States. and he outlines a political standpoint that replaces the traditional distinction between the working class and the middle class with a politics of identification based on race and the affective experience of losing economic and cultural privilege. What West does not recognize is that though fascism plays off of negative affects such as fear and hatred, it is primarily experienced as a form of emancipatory pleasure. Angry voters who supported Trump did not do so simply out of a sense of class or race-based solidarity, but because he provided them with the liberatory pleasure of identification with power.

Contrary to this, Sommers and Isabella reject the affective, identificatory requirements of professional labor and upper-class life, and in this way Herrick provides a strong counterexample to the form of politics we have recently witnessed. Neither character successfully transcends their class position or solves the dilemma of middle-class radicalism, but each is an example of how the traditionally privileged middle class could come to recognize that their primary relationship to capitalism is one of exploitation and domination. The affective politics of neofascism will only work if people, of any class, invest in the individual pleasure of identifying with power. Interestingly, this form of identification is also the basis for a contented worker, and further, it undergirds the traditional distinction between the worker who is antagonistic to wage labor and the manager who identifies with their labor and the firm.

Herrick's novels stand out today then because he creates professional middle-class characters that refuse the primary forms of affective identification that are at the root of both capitalism and fascism. His characters do not identify with work or with those who wield class privilege, and they do not identify with the corporate titans who determine their social and economic position. As a result, Sommers and Isabella come to understand that they are as bound to capitalism as any employee is bound to the system of wage labor. In the first Gilded Age, Herrick described the affective conditions through which the middle class was rendered politically complicit with capital and the limitations of revolt. But in the second Gilded Age his novels have become a diagram of the functioning of power, affect, and resistance that demands that those of us in the

professional middle class make an essential choice between the ease of identification and the challenge of indignation.

NOTES

[1]Herrick wrote twenty-one novels and three collections of short stories between 1897 and 1933. Only two of his novels have been reprinted, and only one has been widely available in a scholarly edition: Robert Herrick, *The Memoirs of an American Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard/Belknap Press, 1963); Herrick, *The Web of Life* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Literature House, 1970).

[2]Robert Herrick, *The Web of Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1900); Herrick, *The Common Lot* (New York: Macmillan, 1904); Herrick, *The Memoirs of an American Citizen*, ed. Daniel Aaron (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1963); Herrick, *Together* (New York: Macmillan, 1908).

[3]William Dean Howells, "The Novels of Robert Herrick," *The North American Review* 189 (1909): 812.

[4]Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 94.

[5]Looking back over Herrick's reception throughout the twentieth century, one is struck by the disharmony among critics: In 1930, V. L. Parrington called Herrick a naturalist because of the strong political stance of his novels, while in 1933, Granville Hicks disparagingly called Herrick a liberal because his characters did not take a direct stand against industrial capitalism. In 1947, Malcolm Cowley makes the opposite claim, that Herrick, like Edith Wharton, allowed his characters too much moral freedom to be a naturalist. In the postwar period, Blake Nevius successfully recast Herrick as a conservative humanist, describing him as someone longing for a more authentic (and more culturally and racially homogeneous) past. This reading is reflected in others, like Walter Fuller Taylor and Kenneth Lynn, who read Herrick as a nostalgic humanist whose political position was an implicit endorsement of moral individualism against Marxist, or collectivist politics. More recently, Herrick has been described as a failed realist by Christophe Den Tandt, as a surprisingly good novelist by George Carrington, and as a mean-spirited sexist by Paul Lauter. Gordon Hutner summarizes Herrick in *What America Read* as a "reputable novelist" whose books never sold well because readers where just not that interested in his focus on "the dilemmas faced by the modern professional man in a culture not nearly as accommodating as the first phase of the Gilded Age." See V. L. Parrington, "Naturalism in American Fiction," reprinted in *Documents of American Realism and Naturalism*, ed. Donald Pizer (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1998), 213; Granville Hicks, "Robert Herrick, Liberal," *The New Republic* 47 (June 17, 1937): 129–30; Malcolm Cowley, "'Not Men': A Natural History of American Naturalism," *The Kenyon Review* 9:3 (1947): 429; Blake Nevius, *Robert Herrick: The Development of a Novelist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Walter Fuller Taylor, "The Humanism of Robert Herrick," *American Literature* 28 (1956): 287–301; Kenneth Lynn, *The Dream of Success* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1955); Christophe Den Tandt, *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998); George C. Carrington, "Robert Herrick, *Clark's Field*, and the Underlying Farce," *Literary Realism 1870–1910* 23:1 (1990): 3–19; Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Gordon Hutner, *What America Read: Taste, Class, and the Novel, 1920–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 110.

[6]Kazin, *Native Grounds*, 95.

[7]Hutner, *What America Read*, 6.

[8]Robert Weimann, "Realism, Ideology, and the Novel in America (1886–1896): Changing Perspectives in the Work of Mark Twain, W. D. Howells, and Henry James," *Boundary* 2:17.1 (1990): 191.

[9]Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9.

[10]See Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). Johnston notes that Mark Kann traces how "a powerful radicalism grew out of—not in antagonism to—traditional middle-class American visions and desires" that were "deeply rooted in the American tradition, nurtured [by] dreams of independence, decency, self-respect, and community" and was "at least as subversive of the relentless market orientation of modern corporate society as any socialist vision" (Johnston, *Radical Middle Class*, 7). See Mark Kann, *Middle Class Radicalism in Santa Monica* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Victoria Hattam, *Labor Visions and State Power: The Origins of Business Unionism in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Gerald Berk, *Alternative Tracks: The Constitution of American Industrial Order, 1865–1917* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

[11]Lawrence M. Lipin, *Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians: Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850–87* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 40.

[12]The historiography of this period documents a long and vigorous debate about the relationship between the middle class and the progressive movement, and the social and political effects of political reform during this period. For a recent discussion about the continued difficulty in defining the progressive movement, see Glen Gendzel, "What Progressives Had in Common," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 10:3 (Jul. 2011): 331–39. For an overview of the debates concerning the democratic nature of progressive reform, see Robert D. Johnston, "Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era: The Politics of Progressive Era Political Historiography," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1:1 (Jan. 2002): 68–92. Steven J. Diner's method of combining political and social history without losing sight of the power and influence of economic and political organizational forces is particularly helpful for understanding how diverse individuals resisted both economic oppression and progressive reforms. See Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Diner, "Linking Politics and People: The Historiography of the Progressive Era," *OAH Magazine of History* 13:2 (1999): 5–9.

[13]Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiv.

[14]McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 8.

[15]McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, xiv.

[16]Johnston, "Re-Democratizing the Progressive Era," 71–76.

[17]Diner, "Linking Politics," 7.

[18]Diner, "Linking Politics," 7.

[19]Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 12.

[20]Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 32.

[21]Johnston, *Radical Middle Class*, 76.

[22]Lipin, *Producers*, 2–6.

[23]Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, qtd. in Lipin, *Producers*, 2. See also Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society, 234–*60. The relationship between the middle class and the development of the labor movement is reflected in the "intensely ideological" split within the American labor movement of the time. Hattam describes the emergence of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the 1890s as a victory over the "producers' vision" embodied in organizations such as the Knights of Labor. The AFL "ended up accepting a class structure with corporate capitalists at the top and a proletariat below" while "republicans such as the Knights of Labor sought to unite those who could maintain a middling propertied independence (whether in the form of skilled trade or petty productive capital) against the emerging corporate elite" (Hattam, *Labor Visions*, qtd. in Johnston, *Radical Middle Class*, 75). Thus, allied with the ideals of those who developed the labor movement throughout the nineteenth century, middle-class politics in the Gilded Age expressed a standpoint between the traditional idea of the independent merchant and the more recognizable ideals of market socialism. William H. Simon claims that "it would be a difficult task to disentangle" the standpoint of the middle class "from socialist rhetorics in the many political movements [of] the middle- and late-nineteenth century" and describes the middle class as a major actor in the fight against emerging corporate capitalism. See William H. Simon, "Social-Republican Property," *UCLA Law Review* 38 (1991): 1338.

[24]In 1910, Rudolph Hilferding argued that the development of the corporation had transformed much of the bourgeois class by absorbing and combing previously independent capitals. In a corporate organization, formally independent bourgeoisie and professionals became a privileged class of wage laborers. Hilferding defines this "new middle class" as the managers and professionals that organize production as well as design and develop the corporate systems in which they work. Though this class will tend to identify with the corporation and with capital more generally, over time the mechanization of the process of production will extend to managerial and professional labor with the result that this highly paid work will become a more mechanized form of wage labor that requires less qualified workers. Rudolph Hilferding, *Finance Capital: A Study of the Latest Phase of Capitalist Development*, trans. Morris Watnick and Sam Gordon (London: Routledge, 1981), 337–50. For a commentary on how the development of the corporation in the nineteenth century transformed the work of the professional into a form of wage labor, see Brynnar Swenson, "'From the Prostitute to the King': The Corporate Form, Subsumption, and Periodization," *Cultural Critique* 89 (Winter 2015): 61–82.

[25]Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 7.

[26]Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism,* 8.

[27]Louis J. Budd, *Robert Herrick* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 125.

[28]Phillip Barrish also points to Herrick's fascination with the changing nature of professional life at this time, claiming that this focus "makes him a remarkable and, as yet, largely unplumbed resource for scholars interested in literary engagement with the inner workings of turn-of-the-century U.S. professional formations." Phillip Barrish, "The Sticky Web of Medical Professionalism: Robert Herrick's *The Web of Life* and the Political Economy of Health Care at the Turn of the Century," *American Literature* 86:3 (Sept. 2014): 608n3.

[29]The corporation emerged in its modern form in the 1890s in the United States. At this time the corporation was transformed from a public entity established and strictly regulated by the federal government into a free, private organization that was regulated primarily by business practices. Prior to this time, a corporate charter was, at least in theory, only to be granted to organizations that provided a benefit to the public. As such, early corporations were granted for "improvements" such as canal building and the rail and communication industries that dominated the economy from the 1840s to the 1890s. The most dramatic proof of the corporation's effect on U.S. society is the "corporate revolution" of 1893–1903, when the New York Stock Exchange's capitalization grew from thirty-three million in 1893 to seven billion in 1903. See William G. Roy, *Socializing Capital: The Rise of the Large Scale Industrial Corporation in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Adolf A. Berle and Gardiner C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1968); Harry F. Dahms, ed., *Transformations of Capitalism: Economy, Society, and the State in Modern Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); and James Willard Hurst, *The Legitimacy of the Business Corporation in the Law of the United States 1780–1970* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970).

[30]Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 13.

[31]E. P. Thompson, qtd. in Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 12.

[32]Herrick, *Web of Life*, 33.

[33]Herrick, *Web of Life*, 33–34.

[34]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 35, 39, 40, 40–41.

[35]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 53, 54.

[36]Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 54.

[37]Herrick, *Web of Life*, 63, 64.

[38]Phillip Barrish, "The Sticky Web of Medical Professionalism," 587.

[39]Barrish, "The Sticky Web of Medical Professionalism," 587–88.

[40]Barrish, "The Sticky Web of Medical Professionalism," 587.

[41]Barrish, "The Sticky Web of Medical Professionalism," 594.

[42]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 116, 117, 124.

[43]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 119, 122.

[44]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 92.

[45]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 244, 259, 247.

[46]Herrick, *Web of Life,* 56, 56–57, 264, 264–65, 265.

[47]Herrick, *Together*, 47.

[48]Romero provides a necessary correction to traditional understandings of the political potential inherent in domestic fiction. Reading domesticity and the home as fluid categories within larger economic and political struggles, Romano provides a model for reading domestic fiction as representative of larger "theoretical assumptions about power and resistance underlying contemporary debates about dominant and oppositional cultures." Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 4.

[49]Herrick, *Together*, 82, 83.

[50]Herrick, *Together*, 89, 87, 89–90, 91.

[51]Herrick, *Together*, 521.

[52]Kaplan, *Social Construction of American Realism*, 6.

[53]Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society*, 67.

[54]Neoliberal economic policies have eliminated a significant portion of the middle class in the United States since the 1980s, and contemporary studies by economists and sociologists clearly show that the middle class is particularly threatened by similar economic policies in emerging markets around the world. For examples of scholarship on the relationship between neoliberalism and the global middle class, see Peter S. Cahn, "Consuming Class: Multilevel Marketers in Neoliberal Mexico," *Cultural Anthropology* 23:3 (2008): 429–52. Cahn outlines how the recent emergence of multilevel marketing companies reveals how the Mexican middle class has responded to the negative economic impact of neoliberal policies. Sara Dickey, "The Pleasures and Anxieties of

Being in the Middle: Emerging Middle-Class Identities in Urban South India," *Modern Asian Studies* 46:3 (2012): 559–99. Dickey argues that "For each positive aspect of a middle-class identity that emphasizes security and stability, there is a negative ramification or consequence that highlights the precariousness and potential instability of middle-class life." Amy Bhatt, Madhavi Murty, and Priti Ramamurthy analyze the impact of neoliberal policies on middle-class women in "Hegemonic Developments: The New Indian Middle Class, Gendered Subalterns, and Diasporic Returnees in the Event of Neoliberalism," *Signs* 36:1 (2010): 127–52.

[55]Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume III*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1981), 567–68. Marx is a much more nuanced reader of the economic and political position of the professional middle class than most of those writing in the Marxist tradition. Stanley Aronowitz's reading of the Homestead Steel Strike of 1892 is a good example of how leftist intellectuals have traditionally conflated the professional managerial class directly with capital. See Stanley Aronowitz, "The End of Political Economy," *Social Text* 2 (1979): 3–52.

[56]Frédéric Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Spinoza and Marx on Desire*, trans. Gabriel Ash (London: Verso, 2014), 147–8.

[57]Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital,* 149.

[58]Cornel West, "Goodbye, American Neoliberalism. A New Era is Here." *The Guardian*, November 17, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/17/american-neoliberalism-cornel-west-2016-election