

is less a vision of a utopia that can be resurrected today than a review of century-old futurism whose contemporary relevance is diminished by sexist, ethnocentric, evolutionist—and, in Bellamy's case, consumerist—historical baggage that cannot be easily shed at the time-travel gate. Doubts about Robertson's presentist mission, however, do not detract from his book's fundamental soundness. Carefully researched and balanced in its approach, *The Last Utopians* contains the most readable and reliable brief introduction to these late nineteenth-century utopian authors.

Writing Women into Progressive Education

Montgomery, Rebecca S. *Celeste Parrish and Educational Reform in the Progressive South*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2018. x + 237 pp. \$47.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-6978.

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doi:10.1017/S1537781419000318

We know that most teachers during the Progressive Era were women. We also know that progressive educators sought to transform the schools from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach during this period. Yet we know relatively little about women's role in this effort. Previous biographies of female progressive educators mostly focus on those women who worked directly with leading male progressive figures such as John Dewey.¹ Celeste Parrish, the subject of Rebecca Montgomery's fascinating *Celeste Parrish and the Educational Reform in the Progressive South*, also studied with Dewey at the University of Chicago. But her similarities with these women end there. Unlike these other better-known female educators such as Jane Addams, Ella Flagg Young, and Elsie Ripley Clapp, Parrish did not come from a privileged background. In fact, she was a Civil War orphan who was plagued by financial challenges her entire career. Although she studied with some of the leading scholars of the era such as Dewey and James Angell at the University of Chicago and Edward B. Titchener at Cornell, her career did not directly benefit from her affiliation with these figures. Parrish's professional appointments at Randolph-Macon Women's College, Georgia State Normal School, and Georgia Department of Education came solely through her own efforts, accomplishments, and, as Montgomery convincingly argues, "female networks of support" (16). Finally, and most significantly, Parrish conducted her impressive career in the public schools of the American South, which was riddled with reluctant constituents hesitant to raise taxes to fund education, residual and rising racism, entrenched and retaliatory gender discrimination, and a general aversion to reform. The fact that Parrish managed such an impressive career, while supporting several family members on a small salary, speaks to her perseverance, character, and intellect.

Parrish did not receive a bachelor's degree until she was forty-three years old because the educational opportunities for women were so limited. While studying, she faced an intellectual environment in which leading psychologists argued "scientifically" on behalf of the biological inferiority of women. When she sought an exception to the resident requirements for her degree at Cornell, the president required her to individually petition every single faculty member, a stressful process that led to a temporary decline in her mental and physical health. Furthermore, after an ongoing dispute with a male board member who found Parrish to be too egalitarian and outspoken, Parrish was forced to resign from Georgia State Normal School. And yet she persisted in the face of these obstacles.

Parrish was a pioneer in establishing laboratories at women's colleges, consistently advocated for improved education for women and African Americans, and "brought a scientific approach to the discipline of teaching" (15). She also co-founded the Educational Association of Virginia and the Southern Association of College Women. Nevertheless, calling Parrish a "progressive," as Montgomery does in the title, is a bit misleading. Much of her career took place during the Gilded Age. Parrish's autobiographical essay, "My Experiences in Self-Culture," reflects nineteenth-century values of individual initiative and self-help more than it does the cooperative values and contingent epistemological assumptions of progressive educators. Furthermore, Parrish's belief in child-centered instruction, her advocacy for the education for girls, and her religious faith in education as a means of moral uplift all predated her graduate work in "the new education" at Dewey's University of Chicago (9). I wished that Montgomery had parsed out more fully how Parrish navigated the social, political, and epistemological shift that took place between the 1890s and the First World War, because we know little about the intellectual world of Gilded Age educators who, unlike figures such as US Commissioner of Education William Torrey Harris, continued to stay relevant into the twentieth century.

Despite these minor omissions, Montgomery's well-researched study fills a significant hole in our understanding of how ambitious women like Parrish overcame social, political, and financial obstacles to carve out significant educational careers during this important era of educational expansion and reform. Drawing on archival sources from across the South, Montgomery meticulously reconstructs how male hegemony operated in overt and covert ways to obstruct the careers of the countless women who were doing much of the grassroots work of educational reform during this period.

NOTE

1 See Chara Haeussler Bohan, *Go to the Sources: Lucy Maynard Salmon and the Teaching of History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Anne Meis Knupfer and Christine Woyshner, eds., *The Educational Work of Women's Organizations, 1890–1960* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Janet Rule McGrath, *A School for Utopia: Marietta Johnson and the Organic Idea, Vol. 1* (unpublished PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1996); John T. McManis, *Ella Flagg Young and Half-Century of the Chicago Public Schools* (Chicago: McClure & Co, 1916); Susan F. Semel and Alan R. Sandovnik, eds., "Schools of Tomorrow": *Schools of Today: What Happened to Progressive Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Susan Semel, *The Dalton Plan: The Transformation of a Progressive School* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Joan K. Smith, *Ella Flagg Young: Portrait of a Leader* (Ames, IA: Educational Studies Press, 1979); Samuel F. Stack, *Elsie Ripley Clapp: Her Life and the Community School* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).