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From Transcendentalism to Progressivism:
The Making of an American Reformer,
Abby Morton Diaz (1821-1904)

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Cross-Disciplinary Studies
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by
Ann B. Cro
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Dr. Theresa Lloyd, Chair
Dr. Marie Tedesco
Dr. Kevin O'Donnell

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ABSTRACT

From Transcendentalism to Progressivism:
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Ann B. Cro

Author and activist Abby Morton Diaz (1821-1904) was a member of the Brook Farm Transcendental community from 1842 until it folded in 1847. Although critics have long recognized that Brook Farm played a role in Diaz's intellectual preparation, they have not attempted to demonstrate its influence through a study of her writings.

In this study I will examine in detail two of Diaz's novels and two long essays, with passing references to other works, that reveal how the utopian socialism practiced at Brook Farm influenced Diaz as a writer and reformer. In all her writings Diaz emphasized the importance of education for women so that they may successfully fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and their children's first teachers.

Her philosophy is reflected in the reform initiatives she supported: the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and the Nationalist Party.

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DEDICATION

To my husband
whose support and encouragement
were unfailing.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Abigail Morton Diaz (1821-1904) is best remembered today as an activist for women's rights and the author of *A Domestic Problem: Work and Culture in the Household* (1875).¹ She helped found and served as president from 1881 to 1892 of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston which still operates today as the Women's Union, providing support programs for women and children.²

There is no intellectual biography of Diaz's life. Short biographies are included in several reference works and she is mentioned in the memoirs of various members of Brook Farm.³ What I propose to do in this study is to examine, through a textual analysis of Diaz's writings, her development as a social reformer. I believe that the years spent at Brook Farm were pivotal to

¹ There have been two reprints in the twentieth century: *Liberating the Home* (New York: Arno Press, 1974) and *A Domestic Problem* (Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2004). Of her numerous children's stories, only one, *The William Henry Letters* (1870), has survived into the twentieth century (Abby Morton Diaz, *The William Henry Letters*. [Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co., 1870. Introd. Anne Carroll Moore. Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1930]). Another reprint has recently become available through Kessinger Publishing (2005).

² See their website at <http://www.weiu.org> (accessed March 19, 2006). "A Brief History" mentions some of the women who were active in the Union's history including Abby Morton Diaz, Louisa May Alcott, and Julia Ward Howe. <http://www.weiu.org/index.php?page=16> (accessed March 19, 2006).

³ "Mrs. Abby Morton Diaz," in *A Woman of the Century*, ed. Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore (Buffalo: Charles Wells Moulton, 1893. Introd. Leslie Shepard. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1967), 240-241; Lucy M. Freibert, "Abby Morton Diaz," in *American National Biography*, vol. 6, ed. John Arthur Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 542-543; Jane Bernardete, "Abby Morton Diaz," in *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Lina Mainiero (New York: Ungar, 1979. 1999), 495-497; Harriet A. Townsend, "Days with Abby Morton Diaz," in *Reminiscences of Famous Women* (1916). E-text ed. Jone Johnson Lewis (2000), http://womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_townsend_diaz.htm (accessed September 22, 2003). There are brief mentions of her in the various memoirs written about Brook Farm. The most important of these are Lindsay Swift, *Brook Farm. Its Members, Scholars, and Visitors* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1900. Introd. Joseph Schiffman. NY: Corinth Books, 1961) and John Van Der Zee Sears, *My Friends at Brook Farm* (New York: Desmond FitzGerald, Inc., 1912). The first is important because it has become a standard scholarly account of Brook Farm, the later because it devotes several pages to Diaz as a teacher at Brook Farm. Karen J. Blair (*The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* [New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980]) devotes a chapter to the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and to Diaz's work with this organization. There is a good chapter on "Creative Women of Brook Farm," by Lucy M. Freibert in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 75-88, which dedicates several pages to Diaz.

her maturation and development. Throughout her career, Diaz attempted to put into practice the ideals she had learned at Brook Farm. She emphasized the importance of education for women so that they may successfully fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and their children's first teachers. She supported women's suffrage and industrial reform. Her philosophy is reflected in the reform initiatives she supported: the Women's Educational and Industrial Union and the Nationalist Party.

The study is divided into five chapters including this introductory chapter. The second chapter deals with Diaz's youth and the Brook Farm years. The third chapter is devoted to her fiction through a textual analysis of two of her major novels, *The William Henry Letters* (1870) and *Lucy Maria* (1874). The fourth chapter looks at her role in the women's movement through her writings. In the fifth chapter I will examine her interest in the Nationalist Party as a solution to the social problems she confronted in her work.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY YEARS IN PLYMOUTH AND BROOK FARM

Abby Morton Diaz (1821-1904) was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, the daughter of Ichabod Morton, a shipbuilder with a taste for reform. Abby attended a high school for girls in Plymouth established by her father¹ and participated in a juvenile antislavery society with his encouragement. She deeply admired the early abolitionists, “especially the women,”² who organized the meetings and raised money to pay for them.

The nineteenth century was an era of reform that featured single-issue reformers who sought to remedy one problem, such as alcoholism, or one institution, such as slavery, as well as those who desired to reconstruct all of society. In this chapter I discuss Abby’s girlhood in Plymouth and her family’s commitment to reform that eventually took them to Brook Farm.

Abby’s father, Ichabod Morton, was active in the Temperance Movement³ and supported abolition and educational reform. Ralph Waldo Emerson described Morton as “a plain man . . . ,

¹ Freibert, *American National Biography*, vol. 6, 542.

² Abigail Morton Diaz, “Antislavery Times in Plymouth,” *The New England Magazine*, New Series, Vol. 20, Issue 2 (April 1899), 222. <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=AFJ3026-1020-29> (accessed September 29, 2004).

³ The American Temperance Society was founded in Boston in 1826 in an effort to stem the abuse of alcohol. Americans drank heavily, consuming an estimated seven and a half gallons per capita in 1823, up from four and a half gallons in 1810 (Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944; New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1962, 312). No social gathering was complete without alcohol as Horace Greeley observed: “In my childhood [in rural Vermont] there was no merry-making, there was no entertainment of relatives or friends, there was scarcely a casual gathering of two or three neighbors for an evening’s social chat, without strong drink” (Ibid., 310). A similar situation existed in the west where whiskey was used as currency: “It circulated like money, being readily interchangeable for all sorts of goods and services” (W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 80). Even church subscriptions were paid with whiskey (Tyler, 311). The Temperance Movement sought to create voluntary associations that would limit the consumption of alcohol. It believed that alcohol was responsible for all the problems of the country: poverty, crime, broken homes. The movement enjoyed an enormous success. Within ten years there were five thousand local chapters of the American Temperance Society and more than a million members had pledged abstinence (Ibid., 325).

eccentric, —with a persevering interest in education, and of a very democratic religion.”⁴

According to Abby, her father came by his interest in reform through a miraculous vision he had when he was a young man:

When away from home on business, his room in Boston was supernaturally lighted and he was given a vision of the state of the world as it would be when conducted on the plan of human brotherhood; and he then and there promised the devotion of his whole life to the work of making this vision a reality.⁵

Ichabod Morton hosted many of the day’s leading reformers at the family home in Plymouth: the educator Horace Mann, the Transcendentalist and teacher Bronson Alcott and the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison.⁶

At an early age Morton encouraged his daughter to take an active interest in reform. When she was only four, he enrolled her in the “Fragment Society,” founded by her aunt, Sally Morton Stephens, “its original design having been to gather up from garrets and elsewhere what could be well spared, and bestow as needed.”⁷

The Morton family early embraced the cause of antislavery. Although Plymouth was not directly on the Underground Railroad, the Mortons gave what help and support they could to escaping slaves. Abby recalled, “a tired, silent colored man, sitting one evening on the stairs leading down into my uncle Stephens’ kitchen, almost in darkness, for greater safety—waiting

⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England,” *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1883. Quoted in Henry W. Sams, *Autobiography of Brook Farm* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1958), 222.

⁵ Abby Morton Diaz, “Antislavery Times in Plymouth”, 217.

⁶ In “Antislavery Times in Plymouth,” Diaz reminisces about the famed reformers who were guests in her family’s home—Horace Mann, looking very tall in the low-ceilinged “keeping-room” (217), Bronson Alcott and his “transcendental talk” in the large front room of the house, and William Lloyd Garrison who enjoyed singing and displayed a playful streak in teasing the young Abby as they sang together an old song (220).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

until the night should be far enough advanced for taking him through town to Kingston, on the north.”⁸

As a teenager, Abby was already playing a role in public life as the secretary of a juvenile anti-slavery society, paying her dues by knitting cotton garters and doing without butter at home.⁹ The young abolitionists took advantage of every opportunity to make their views known:

The class recitations afforded now and then a chance for bringing in some harrowing tale of slaverydom, or to quote from Mr. Garrison and others and sound their praises. . . . We made our composition books of the antislavery writing paper. It came in the very large square sheets of the period, each being headed with a print of a slave in chains with the question, “Am I not a Man and a Brother?” or “Woman and a Sister?” We made the covers of black pasteboard tied with black strings.¹⁰

The heroes of the movement were William Lloyd Garrison and Lydia Maria Child. Copies of Child’s work were passed around to individuals whom Aunt Sally Morton Stephens thought might be converted to the cause. Meetings of the antislavery society were organized by Sally Morton and announced “by private notice” since, “The large majority of the people, including, of course, the wealthy and influential, held aloof in enmity or in contemptuous indifference.”¹¹

Abby, writing many year later, observed that if the young people of the day could not comprehend the animosity directed against the abolitionists, neither could they understand “the abiding enthusiasm, and the devotion of the early abolitionists, and their entire absorption in the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 219.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 218.

cause.”¹² She added that there was no thought of self-sacrifice in these efforts, that the individual became one with the cause:

This oneness was so real that doing for the cause was doing for self. Thus to dress in the extremes of plainness and economy, relinquishing pleasures of various kinds and giving to the cause the money thus saved, was not self-sacrifice, for the reason that the cause had so absorbed self that itself was self.¹³

This was particularly true in the case of the women: “They it was who were foremost in planning our Plymouth meetings, writing to the speakers, entertaining them, securing a place for an audience, devising means for raising the needful money.”¹⁴ They were also the ones who stirred up the men whenever a county or state convention was called: “Not that the men lacked in enthusiasm; but they had somehow had come to depend on the women,—as one does on an alarm clock, sure to *go off* at the right hour.”¹⁵ The women’s activities also made possible the Plymouth Antislavery Reading-Room and the social gatherings of the movements’ supporters that were eagerly anticipated by the young ladies of the movement:

There were gatherings, indoors and out, where our loved and honored guests discoursed on high themes and especially upon a regenerated human society, so that, listening, we were caught up, as it were, from all that is low and base in this earthly existence; and such exaltations are never merely for the moment; they affect the whole after life.¹⁶

Perhaps it was a search for this “regenerated human society” that sent Ichabod Morton in the spring of 1842 to visit the Transcendentalist community at Brook Farm with Abby, then 21, and two of his sons.

¹² Ibid., 221.

¹³ Ibid., 223.

¹⁴ Ibid., 221

¹⁵ Ibid., 221.

¹⁶ Ibid., 224.

The Brook Farm community, founded in April 1841 by the former Unitarian minister and social reformer, George Ripley (1802-1880), was a response to the sweeping economic and social changes of the period. In 1820, four out of five Americans made their living from agriculture; by mid-century, manufacturing accounted for forty-five percent of the labor force and one-third of total production.¹⁷ The new industrialization brought both benefits and problems. On the one hand, per capita income doubled in the first half of the century and living standards generally improved. By mid-century a new middle class had emerged. However, the gap between rich and poor increased significantly in the early years of the century.¹⁸ The working classes fared worst, often working long hours for subsistence wages.¹⁹ The Panic of 1837 rocked the American economy. State governments called a halt to all construction projects and nine states stopped making payments on their bonds. Bankruptcies increased, capital was unavailable and many workers found themselves without jobs. Theodore Parker, the Unitarian minister and member of the Transcendentalist Club, cautioned that, “if powerful men will not write justice with black ink on white paper, ignorant and violent men will write it on the soil in letters of blood. . . .”²⁰

Reform was called for but it was unclear what shape it would take. Ralph Waldo Emerson, addressing the Mechanics’ Apprentices Library Association in Boston in 1841,

¹⁷ David Goldfield, et al. *The American Journey* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 181.

¹⁸ In American cities in the 1840s eighty percent of the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the top ten percent of the population (Ibid., 192).

¹⁹ By the 1850s most urban workers were unskilled laborers earning on an average less than \$500 a year, less than half what a skilled worker could earn. They depended for their economic survival on each member of the family, including the children, working and contributing whatever they earned to the family’s finances. Women were at the bottom of the wage scale. Seamstresses in the garment industry often worked at home for fifteen to eighteen hours a day for piece wages of less than \$100 a year while being the sole support of their families. (Goldfield, 194)

²⁰ Henry L. Golemba, *George Ripley* (Boston: Twayne, 1977), 65.

declaimed: “The ways of trade are grown selfish to the borders of theft, and supple to the borders (if not beyond the borders) of fraud.”²¹ He issued a call to “begin the world anew”:

What is man born for but to be a Reformer, a Remaker of what man has made; a denouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life?²²

But ultimately Emerson’s conclusion was that social reform could only come about through individual reform: the “heavenly society” could only be accomplished by “men transfigured and raised above themselves by the power of principles.”²³

On the other hand, Orestes Brownson, writing in the *Boston Quarterly Review* in 1840, set forth a revolutionary agenda.²⁴ Comparing free labor to slave labor, he concluded that the system of slave labor was less oppressive since the slave, who has never known freedom, suffers less than the wage laborer: “The laborer at wages has all the disadvantages of freedom and none of its blessings, while the slave, if denied the blessings, is freed from the disadvantages.”²⁵ The vast majority of workers eke out a bare living, “toiling as so many slaves,” while the factory owner “revel[s] in luxury; or he is a member of our legislature, enacting laws to put money in his own pocket. . . .”²⁶ One fact is clear to him: “[N]o man born poor has ever, by his wages, as a simple

²¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Man the Reformer.” <http://emersoncentral.com/manreform.htm> (accessed October 31, 2005).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes,” *Boston Quarterly Review* 3 (July 1840). <http://orestesbrownson.com/index.php?id=158> (accessed March 3, 2006).

²⁵ Ibid., paragraph 21.

²⁶ Ibid., paragraph 22.

operative, risen to the class of the wealthy.”²⁷ Unlike Emerson, Brownson dismisses the notion that the changes necessary to alleviate the suffering of the working class must come from within the individual:

Reformers in general answer this question, or what they deem its equivalent, in a manner which we cannot but regard as very unsatisfactory. They would have all men wise, good, and happy; but in order to make them so, they tell us that we want not external changes, but internal; and therefore instead of declaiming against society and seeking to disturb existing social arrangements, we should confine ourselves to the individual reason and conscience. . . .²⁸

He then sets forth his agenda for society. The banks must be destroyed because “they represent the interests of the business community in opposition to the laboring community.”²⁹ All laws that do not favor labor must be repealed and there must be an end to hereditary property.³⁰ Because this last requirement is so revolutionary, he believes that it can only be accomplished by violence, “only at the conclusion of war, the like of which the world as yet has never witnessed....”³¹

George Ripley believed ardently that social reform was necessary in order to avoid revolution. He saw himself as “a peace man, a temperance man, an abolitionist, a transcendentalist, a friend of radical reform in our social institutions.”³² But he grew impatient with the lack of positive action on the part of the leading Transcendentalists. He believed that he

²⁷ Ibid., paragraph 28.

²⁸ Ibid., paragraph 30.

²⁹ Ibid., paragraph 60.

³⁰ Ibid., paragraphs 60-61.

³¹ Ibid., paragraph 60.

³² George Ripley, “A Farewell Discourse, Delivered to the Congregational Church in Purchase Street, March 20, 1841”; quoted in Golemba, 62.

must offer more to those in need than “moral messages to the poor.”³³ In 1841, he resigned his ministry and founded the Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education. Ripley hoped that Brook Farm would offer the example that would make social revolution unnecessary and undesirable:

If wisely executed, it will be a light over this country and this age. If not the sunrise, it will be the morning star. As a practical man, I see clearly that we must have some such arrangement, or all changes less radical will be nugatory. . . . I wish to see a society of educated friends, working, thinking, and living together, with no strife, except that of each to contribute the most to the benefit of all.³⁴

It is unclear when Ripley first became interested in association. Lindsay Swift, whose account of Brook Farm remains a classic, suggests that Ripley modeled his community on that of the Swiss educator and social reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827): “The germ of Ripley’s plan may have sprung from the “Neuhof” of Pestalozzi,—himself a genuine Transcendentalist,—concerning whom Ripley wrote an article for the *Christian Examiner* as early as 1832. . . .”³⁵ Neuhof, or New Farm, was Pestalozzi’s experiment in educating poor children through work so that they might become economically independent. Pestalozzi believed that a rounded education required manual training. He took in poor children and orphans and taught them how to spin and weave cotton. He believed that eventually what the children produced would pay for their education. Michel Soëtard explains Pestalozzi’s goal for Neuhof: “The Neuhof thus set out to achieve a dual objective: to introduce children to economic realities and at the same time to help each of them to develop his own independent personality within a

³³ Charles Crowe, *George Ripley, Transcendentalist and Utopian Socialist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), 126-7.

³⁴ George Ripley, Boston, to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Concord, November 9, 1840. Published in Myerson, 309.

³⁵ Lindsay Swift. *Brook Farm. Its Members, Scholars, and Visitors*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1900. Introd. Joseph Schiffman. NY: Corinth Books, 1961, 11.

free and responsible society.”³⁶ Unfortunately, the project, begun in 1774, ended in bankruptcy in 1780. Nevertheless, Pestalozzi’s ideas on education had a lasting influence both in Europe and the United States. In 1806 the first Pestalozzian teacher, Joseph Neef, established a school outside of Philadelphia through the patronage of William Maclure. In 1825 Maclure joined Scottish businessman and philanthropist Robert Owen in establishing the New Harmony Experimental Communitarian Society in Indiana. Maclure encouraged teachers trained in the Pestalozzian method to join the society. He believed that the purpose of education was to train the student to reason critically and that this was best achieved through a flexible curriculum that allowed the student to pursue his own interests. The Pestalozzian method achieved popularity among American educators in the nineteenth century for reasons that Karier explains:

Pestalozzian practices had a peculiar attraction in America during the nineteenth century. While transcendentalism called for greater respect for childhood, as well as more humane treatment of children, transcendentalism as a movement never developed a coherent educational reform program. The Pestalozzian movement tended to fill much of this need.³⁷

Ripley’s interest in association deepened after a visit to the west in 1838 took him to several Shaker and Zoarite communities. He and his wife, Sophia, were deeply impressed by the strong sense of community they experienced and the lack of class differences among the residents.³⁸ In a letter that was later published in the *Dial*, Sophia described the community of Zoar in a utopian light:

We may see fine scenery, but nowhere in our country such easy countenances, free from care, and so picturesque a population. Every individual gives a smiling

³⁶ Michel Soëtard, “Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi,” *Prospects*, XXIV, 1/2 (1994), paragraph 7. <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/publications/ThinkersPdf/pestaloe.PDF> (accessed December 20, 2005).

³⁷ Clarence J. Karier, *Man, Society, and Education* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), 224.

³⁸ Crowe, 136.

greeting, and even the young girl driving her team speaks in a gentle musical tone.³⁹

She was particularly impressed by the fact that though all were employed, no one seemed rushed or overworked. This was particularly true of the women who “are as much at leisure, so far as household affairs and tending children is concerned, as the most fashionable lady could desire.”⁴⁰ This was because all cooking was done in community kitchens and nurseries were provided for the children.

But Sophia Ripley also pointed out that the way of life in the community did not suit everyone and “all the young persons, who were bound to them, at the end of their apprenticeship prefer the risk of self-support with independence, to the safe and tranquil but contained mode of all life of the community.”⁴¹ George Ripley was also disturbed by the loss of individualism within such a society. Still, his growing concern about rising unemployment, poverty, and the slum living conditions of the working class forced him to the conclusion that institutions, not men, must be reformed.

In 1840 Ripley came under the influence of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837) through Albert Brisbane’s translation of Fourier’s *The Social Destiny of Man*. Fourier believed that industrialization was the cause of man’s suffering:

What good are industrial prowess and economic theory if the results they yield are always contrary to their promises and if they leave the people worse off than the savages who, even when poor, have a triple advantage over our wage-earners: liberty, freedom from worry, and the hope of abundance after a good hunt.⁴²

³⁹ Henrietta Dana Raymond, *Sophia Willard Dana Ripley, Co-Founder of Brook Farm* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 1994), 19-20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴² Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 124-125.

He argued that man's unhappiness could be eliminated through a complete reorganization of society based on a series of planned communes called phalanxes:

Liberty, unless enjoyed by all, is unreal and illusory. . .to secure liberty a Social Order is necessary which shall (1) Discover and organize a system of industry; (2) Guarantee to every individual the equivalent of their natural rights; and (3) Associate the interests of rich and poor. It is only on these conditions the masses can be secured a minimum of comfortable subsistence and enjoyment of all social pleasures.⁴³

Ripley came to believe that through associationism (Brisbane's term for Fourier's system), Christianity might ultimately attain its goals on this earth:

Americans must adopt the highest communal virtues without abandoning the best aspects of individualism, and the task of Boston reformers was to prove that communal and individualist values could be combined. The splendid example of one successful socialist community would mark the beginning of a transformation of American society.⁴⁴

Ripley presented his plan to the Transcendentalist Club in October 1840 where it aroused considerable discussion but produced no real commitment on the part of the other Transcendentalists. Emerson "wish[ed] to be convinced, to be thawed, to be nobly mad by the kindlings before my eyes of a new dawn of human piety," but concluded sadly, "not once could I be inflamed, but sat aloof and thoughtless."⁴⁵

If we regard Emerson as the philosopher of the Transcendentalist movement, the one who gave it shape through his essays and spread its visions through his public lectures, then Ripley must be regarded as the Transcendentalist who tried to apply the ideals of Transcendentalism in

⁴³ Charles Fourier, *Theory of Social Organization* (New York: C.P. Somerby, 1876), in *The Modern History Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1820fourier.html> (accessed November 16, 2005).

⁴⁴ Crowe, 136.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

the broader social context. Not content to simply talk about social justice, Ripley tried to formulate an experiment in communal living that he hoped would transform American society by putting into action Transcendentalist principals. Richard Francis, the author of *Transcendental Utopias*, calls Ripley “the essential figure in the history of American Transcendentalism as a whole” and adds that Ripley, “more than anybody else, gave it coherence and provided it with a succession of institutional manifestations...”⁴⁶

Ripley did not give up hope of convincing Emerson to join the Brook Farm community since the presence of such a respected Transcendentalist would insure that others would follow. In a letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson dated November 9, 1840, Ripley set forth the goals for his commune:

Our objects, as you know, are to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists; to combine the thinker and the worker, as far as possible, in the same individual; to guarantee the highest mental freedom, by providing all with labor, adapted to their tastes and talents, and securing to them the fruits of their industry; to do away the necessity of menial services, by opening the benefits of education and the profits of labor to all; and thus to prepare a society of liberal, intelligent, and cultivated persons, whose relations with each other would permit a more simple and wholesome life, than can be led amidst the pressure of our competitive institutions.⁴⁷

Ripley went on to propose that the community be made up of “various classes of men,” even those “with whom our personal sympathy is not strong” but “whose gifts and abilities would make their services important.”⁴⁸

The United States had always offered a fertile ground for social experimentation. European religious cults, like the English Shakers and the German Pietists, attracted by the

⁴⁶ Richard Francis, *Transcendental Utopias* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 39-40.

⁴⁷George Ripley, Boston, to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Concord, 9 November 1840. Myerson, 308.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 310-311.

promise of religious freedom and cheap land, established communistic societies that planned and built model communities.⁴⁹ Zoar, that George and Sophia Ripley visited in 1838, was one such community. Other communities were founded solely with the purpose of establishing a new social order.⁵⁰ This was particularly true during the period between 1820 and 1850 when the call for reform was at its height.⁵¹ Emerson wrote to Thomas Carlyle in 1840, “We are all a little wild here with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket.”⁵²

Brook Farm differed from earlier experimental utopias in that it was not a religious community. There were no prescribed religious tests for membership, nor any specific requirements for worship. John T. Codman believed that what gave meaning to Ripley’s vision was his profound conviction in the shared aims of the human race: “It was their religion that the human race was one creation, bound together by indissoluble ties, links stronger than iron and unbreakable. It was one body. It should be of one heart, one brain, one purpose.”⁵³

Many years afterwards in 1895, Charles Dana, who worked closely with Ripley, described Brook Farm to an audience at the University of Michigan, as a conscious effort to

⁴⁹ Tyler, 108. Tyler argues that these cults initially adopted communism as an expedient that allowed them to use the funds of the few wealthy converts to support the poorer members of the sect when immigrating and settling in new lands. The practice was continued by the leaders who discovered that communism had practical advantages: “This communism, adopted through necessity, often became an end in itself, for which religious sanctions were found. . . . There were decided advantages in the planned economy of cooperative enterprise. If well managed and carefully supervised, the religious community soon became a going concern with rapidly increasing assets. For many members security and plenty were prized above independence and the opportunity for individual gain” (109).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵¹ Dolores Hayden, *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1976), 9.

⁵² Quoted in Hayden, 9.

⁵³ John Thomas Codman, *Brook Farm. Historic and Personal Memoirs* (Boston: Arena Publishing Co., 1894). Project Gutenberg, Etext-No. 7932. 2005-04-01, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/brkfm10.txt> (accessed February 27, 2006), Chapter XIII: The First Break.

make social life consistent with democratic ideals: “If democracy was the sublime truth which it was held up to be, it should be raised up from the sphere of politics, from the sphere of law and constitutions; it should be raised up into life and be made social.”⁵⁴

Emerson praised Ripley’s plan, which he characterized as “noble & humane, proceeding, as I plainly see, from a manly & expanding heart & mind that it makes me & all men its friends & debtors.”⁵⁵ However, ultimately, he declined to join on the grounds that “the Community is not good for me.”⁵⁶ The other leading Transcendentalists followed Emerson’s lead. Theodore Parker was enthusiastic about the project but felt he could not leave his West Roxbury congregation. Margaret Fuller declined on the grounds that “We are not ripe to reconstruct society.”⁵⁷ Indeed, with its strong emphasis on individualism, many Transcendentalists felt that before society could be reformed, the individual consciousness must be transformed. Certainly, this was a point of contention between the Transcendentalists and the other reformers. In his article “The Laboring Classes,” Orestes Brownson complained that the emphasis the Transcendentalists placed on the individual caused them to disregard the real problems created by a social organization that allowed the laboring class to be exploited by the wealthy. He contended, “The system is at war with the rights and interest of labor, and it must go.”⁵⁸

The land where Ripley decided to establish his commune was a dairy farm belonging to Charles and Maria M. Ellis in West Roxbury, near Boston. Ripley and his wife had first boarded

⁵⁴ Charles Dana, “Brook Farm,” address given at the University of Michigan, January 21, 1895. Quoted in Francis, 49.

⁵⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Concord, to George Ripley, Boston, 15 December 1840, Myerson, 311.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Margaret Fuller to W. H. Channing, Boston, December 13, 1840, Crowe, 139.

⁵⁸ Brownson, paragraph 60.

at the farm in the summer of 1840 and had been enchanted with the beauty of the land. The following spring they returned to stay. In a letter to John S. Dwight, Sophia Ripley rhapsodized about the peace and seclusion of the setting: “Birds, trees, sloping green hills, and lazy fields as far as the eye can reach—and a brook clear running at the foot of a green bank.”⁵⁹ Ripley confided to Emerson that his personal desires would cause him to take a very different course:

Personally, my tastes and habit would lead me in another direction. I have a passion for being independent of the world, and of every man in it. This I could do easily on the estate which is now offered, and which I could rent at a rate, that with my other resources, would place me in a very agreeable condition, as far as my personal interests were involved. I should have a city of God, on a small scale of my own⁶⁰

But he was prepared to “sacrifice this private feeling, in the hope of a great social good.”⁶¹

The Farm was acquired on October 11, 1841 for \$10,500. According to the deed the purchase consisted of approximately one hundred and seventy acres of land, a farmhouse, and barn. Ripley also acquired a lot on the opposite side of the road consisting of an additional twenty-two acres and a small house. The land was unsuitable for cultivation. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, one of the Brook Farmers, later wrote in her memoirs,

It is proverbial that clergymen are ignorant on the subject of land and of horses. They should have called on some bent old farmer for an opinion, before purchasing that much gravel. But the mistake was not discovered immediately, and we,—the younger converts to association, found the pine-woods, the riverside, and brook a pleasant framing for the wealth of our social felicity, even though they were not profitable.⁶²

The property was mortgaged to Daniel Wilder and Josiah Quincy, commissioners of the Western Railroad Corporation in the amount of \$6,000 due in three years and twenty-one days. On the

⁵⁹ Sophia Ripley to John S. Dwight, Boston, May 18, 1841, quoted in Crowe, 143.

⁶⁰ George Ripley, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Boston, November 9, 1840, Myerson, 310.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Georgiana Bruce Kirby, “On Brook Farm”, from *Years of Experience: An Autobiographical Narrative*, 1887. <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/ideas/brkirby.html>. (accessed September 12, 2004).

same day, a second mortgage was made out to George R. Russell, Henry P. Sturgis, and Francis G. Shaw for \$1500 each, and to Lucy Cabot for \$500. Swift points out that, as a result, the trustees succeeded in mortgaging the property for \$500 more than they had paid for it.⁶³

The association was a joint-stock company. Each person holding a share of stock was a member of the association and could vote on how the funds were to be disbursed. Each stockholder was entitled to the tuition of one pupil for each share of stock held in lieu of interest. No stockholder had any claim on the profits other than the amount of interest accruing in his favor. Anyone who applied for resident membership was placed on two months probation. At the end of that period the established members would decide by a two-thirds vote whether or not the new member would be admitted. The cost of board could be offset by labor—a year’s labor, defined as three hundred days, for a year’s board—and entitled the associate to the equivalent of one share of the annual dividend.⁶⁴

In the spring of 1841, Ripley, his wife and about fifteen friends, took possession of the farm, establishing themselves in the large farmhouse on the property that they nicknamed “the Hive.” Across the road from the Hive was a small house they called “the Nest” that was set aside for the primary school run by Ripley’s sister, Marianne.⁶⁵

The cornerstone of the Brook Farm community was its school. Ripley had described Brook Farm to his friend Emerson as “a society of educated friends”⁶⁶ and, like many literary utopias that emphasized an ideal education in order to prepare the model citizen, the Brook Farm school aimed at preparing its young charges to embody the ideals of the community’s founder

⁶³ Swift, 20.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27, 29.

⁶⁶ George Ripley to Ralph Waldo Emerson, November 9, 1840, Myerson, 309.

who thought physical and intellectual labor complemented each other to create the perfect citizen. Ripley, writing in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* in November 1842, pointed out that “every community should have its leading purpose, some one main object to which it directs its energies. We are a company of teachers. The branch of industry which we pursue as our primary object, and chief means of support, is teaching.”⁶⁷ Considering the kind of men and women who were attracted to Brook Farm, it is not surprising that the school achieved success. Ripley was a graduate of Harvard College and the Harvard Divinity School. Both George Bradford and John Sullivan Dwight, who lectured in the preparatory program, also had graduated from Harvard and were respected scholars. Charles A. Dana, who was Ripley’s right-hand man, and later became the editor of the *New York Sun*, joined the community directly from Harvard College. The little community also attracted many prominent visitors, including Margaret Fuller, who offered a series of “Conversations;” Ralph Waldo Emerson; Bronson Alcott; William Henry Channing; Orestes Brownson; Horace Greeley; Albert Brisbane; and Elizabeth Peabody, who praised the school fulsomely, calling it an “Embryo University,”⁶⁸ in an article in the *Dial* magazine.

All children living at Brook Farm were entitled to participate in the educational programs offered. Charles Dana emphasized that the education was not “doled out to him [the child] as though he were a pupil of orphan asylums [*sic*] and almshouses—not as the cold benefice and

⁶⁷Sterling F. Delano, *Brook Farm. The Dark Side of Utopia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 79.

⁶⁸Elizabeth Peabody, “Plan of the West Roxbury Community,” *The Dial*, II (January, 1842): 361-372. Quoted in Henry W. Sams, *Autobiography of Brook Farm* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958), 62.

bounty of the world—but as his right—a right conferred upon him by the very fact that he is born into this world a human being—and here we think we have made great advances.”⁶⁹

Ripley, as stated above, had come under the influence of the Swiss educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and applied the ideas of the Swiss reformer in his own school. Pestalozzi believed that the whole child must be educated—not simply crammed full of information. Rather, the child must be allowed to develop his own abilities to observe, judge, and reason. Direct experience was important, so lessons took place in the outdoors. Manual labor was part of the training of the child.⁷⁰ But most importantly, the teacher must love and respect the child:

Here is the principle upon which I acted: Seek first to open the heart of the children, and, by satisfying their daily needs, mingle love and benevolence with all their impressions, experience, and activity, so as to develop these sentiments in their hearts; then to accustom them to knowledge in order that they may know how to employ their benevolence usefully and surely in the circle around them.⁷¹

The Brook Farm school offered three different educational programs according to the age of the pupil. The infant program provided education for children under the age of six. In 1844, a day nursery was added, perhaps one of the first experiments in day care in the United States. This program made it easier for women with young children to participate actively in the intellectual and cultural life of the community. The primary school taught children ages six to ten. And there was a six-year college preparatory program for young men and women who were preparing themselves for college. This program was so highly thought of that it attracted students from as far away as Manila in the Philippines and Havana, Cuba, “for Harvard College indicated Brook Farm as a fitting resort for young men whose consecration to extra-collegiate interests

⁶⁹ Charles Dana, “Address to the General Convention of the Friends of Association,” April 4, 1844, quoted in Francis, 95.

⁷⁰ Robert B. Downs, *Heinrich Pestalozzi* (Boston: G. K. Hall, Twayne Publishers, 1975), 64-65.

⁷¹ Quoted in Clarence J. Karier, *Man, Society, and Education* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1967), 222.

rendered them subjects for temporary seclusion, and preferably a country life.”⁷² Sterling Delano writes: “[T]he school was exceptional. It was really a prototype for the private boarding academies that were later established in Massachusetts and elsewhere in New England, except that it differed from them by not restricting education just to the wealthy and privileged.”⁷³

Every student at the school had to do his or her share of physical labor, even the kindergarten children were required to carry out simple everyday jobs on the farm. Young people in the preparatory school, however, were encouraged to spend less time on manual labor than in preparing for the difficult and demanding schedule of classes that included Greek and Latin, German, Italian, and English literature, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, and agriculture. Many science classes such as botany and geology were taught out of doors in the woods around the farm. These lectures were also popular with the Brook Farm community at large and many adult learners accompanied the students on these outings.⁷⁴

It is possible that Morton went to visit Brook Farm with the purpose in mind of enrolling his sons in its highly acclaimed school. And Abby would certainly have been welcome to attend the many lectures given in the evenings to adult learners. (Even in this Brook Farm was forward looking, anticipating the many programs for mature students that are found today at community colleges and universities around the country). At any rate Morton came away much impressed with the community and selected a building site for a house he proposed to build for himself and his brother. He named it Pilgrim House in honor of a pilgrim ancestor, George Morton, who

⁷² Swift, 72.

⁷³ Delano, 79.

⁷⁴ Swift, 72-73, Delano, 80-81.

settled in Plymouth in 1623 and wrote the first printed description of the Plymouth colony, *Mourt's Relation* (London 1669).

The Mortons also impressed the Brook Farmers favorably. Swift quotes a letter written by Georgianna Bruce to a friend in Boston in the summer of 1842, enthusiastically describing Ichabod Morton: “You would like Mr. M. He looks just as you can fancy the most loving of the Puritans looked, and really *is* one, divested of all their superstition and bigotry.”⁷⁵ Ora Gannett Sedgwick, who resided briefly at Brook Farm and remembered Abby, wrote in her memoirs that Abby’s “peculiar combination of liveliness and dignity, together with her beautiful singing, made her a favorite with all the members.”⁷⁶

Abby was assigned to work in the infant school for children four and five years old, perhaps one of the first kindergartens in the United States. John Van Der Zee Sears, a former student at the Brook Farm school, described the educational system:

Education at Brook Farm began in the kindergarten—only we did not know it. The word was not in the dictionaries of that period, and Froebel was yet to be heard of in Massachusetts; but the rudiments of the kindergarten system were devised and put in practice by our folk in response to a new demand. The little ones, too old for the nursery and too young for the school, demanded some adequate provision for their care while their mothers were at work.⁷⁷

Sears explains that one of the results of the organization of industry was that the person best suited to fill a particular job was “directed to the undertaking by natural selection:”⁷⁸ “Among

⁷⁵ Swift, 79.

⁷⁶ Ora Gannett Sedgwick, “A Girl of Sixteen at Brook Farm,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 85, Issue 509 (March 1900): 401. <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0085-54> (accessed November 1, 2004).

⁷⁷ John Van Der Zee Sears, *My Friends at Brook Farm* (New York: Desmond FitzGerald, Inc., 1912), 107.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

the many workers there was always one who could do whatever was to be done better than any of the others, and to this one, young or old, man or woman, full charge of the work was given.”⁷⁹

Sears adds that, “The one person best qualified to take charge of these toddlers was a charming young lady, Miss Abby Morton, whose sincere interest in children invariably gained their young affections. . . .Her understanding and her sympathies brought her in close touch with them. She knew their minds and their hearts, their likes and their dislikes and what she wrote of them and for them they accepted, knowing that every word was true to nature.”⁸⁰

She initially assisted Georgiana Bruce Kirby, but when Kirby left Brook Farm in 1844, Abby replaced her as director of the Infant School. She later wrote in her semi-autobiographical novel, *Lucy Maria*, of how deeply she felt her responsibility in teaching these little ones:

I took up school-keeping lightly, and with too much self-confidence (and also because we needed the money). Anybody would do for the small ones, they said. How can they think so? A sense of incapacity weighs upon me more and more each day of school-life. When one of these little children looks up into my face in such an innocent, confiding way, I feel, as it were, very close to its soul,--it really seems as if you could see the soul of a little child through its eyes,--and I think, “O you precious immortal! how shall such a bungler as I dare to try my skill on you?”⁸¹

Abby began her teaching day by putting her young charges at ease by telling them stories or teaching them songs. Sears writes of her method, “Her first object was to make them happy and contented,” but “Learning as well as teaching, she gradually gave a purposeful bent to her song-and-dance diversions, making them effective as well as pleasant pastimes.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid., 107-8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 108, 111-12.

⁸¹ Abby Morton Diaz, *Lucy Maria* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1874), 7-8.

⁸² Sears, 108.

She also made up games for physical exercise, taught the youngsters manners and basic English [“Polite manners, and the correct use of language were taught by precept and example.”⁸³], and rudimentary arithmetic. Making use of George Ripley’s approach to education, Abby came to regard content as less important than helping the children to develop attentiveness and observation. Sears wrote with emphasis of the importance of these gifts: “Whatever the community accomplished or failed to accomplish, the Brook Farm School rendered important service in educational progress by demonstrating the practicability of cultivating the habit of attention.”⁸⁴

But the days were filled with fun—with boat trips on the Charles River, singing in the parlor, and picnics. Mr. Morton eventually built his house at Brook Farm and christened it the Pilgrim House. It was a double house for Ichabod hoped that his brother Edwin and Edwin’s family would join him at Brook Farm. Swift describes it as a “very uncouth building. The barrenness of its appearance was the more marked because there were no trees about it; and standing, as it did, on high ground, it proclaimed, in its oblong shape and white paint, an austere New England origin.”⁸⁵ Ichabod only remained with the community for two weeks before returning to Plymouth and the ownership of Pilgrim House reverted to the Association.⁸⁶ But Abby remained with the community until it folded in 1847.⁸⁷

⁸³ Ibid., 109.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 110.

⁸⁵ Swift, 33.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lucy M. Freibert, “Abby Morton Diaz,” in *American National Biography*, vol. 6, ed. John Arthur Garraty and Mark C. Carnes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 542.

It was during her stay at Brook Farm that Abby met the man she would marry—a young Cuban student named Manuel Diaz. There were a handful of Hispanic students at Brook Farm in 1842. They were introduced into the community by James P. Sturgis, a businessman and the brother-in-law of Francis G. Shaw, one of the original financiers of the Brook Farm property. Returning from Puerto Rico in the spring of 1842, Sturgis brought with him four young Hispanics none of whom could speak English. There were two brothers from Manila, José and Lucas Corrales, Manuel Diaz, and a fourth boy.⁸⁸ Shaw advised Sturgis to place the young men at Brook Farm. On October 3, 1842, Manuel Diaz was elected to membership in the Association. In a letter written in the summer of 1842 to a girl friend in Boston, Georgianna Bruce Kirby described an early meeting between Abby and Manuel:

Three or four of the boys have clubbed together and bought a boat, painted it, fitted it up with sails, compass, etc., and especially a carpet (Paris they say) for the ladies' feet, in arranging which they have taken, as you may suppose, clear comfort, as well as kept clear of mischief of some sort, I dare say. And this afternoon was the first time that it was honored with our presence. Four of us girls,—Mary G.[annett], Abby Morton, Caddy Stodder, and myself, with five boys, —our Spanish Manuel being Captain *for the day*,—set sail in Charles River after having walked a mile through fields and woods, not to mention swamps. We sailed a good way up, passed under the Dedham bridge, then down, singing away, Abby and I.⁸⁹

We know little about the course of the romance except it must have progressed quickly.

On April 29, 1843, the directors asked Georgianna Bruce “to ascertain from Manuel Diaz and

⁸⁸ Delano says he could not identify the fourth boy. He mentions a José Lopez who was a student-boarder in 1846, but it is unclear if this was one of the four introduced in 1842 by Sturgis. Other former students of Brook Farm had different recollections of the Hispanic students. John Van Der Zee Sears (*My Friends at Brook Farm* [New York: Desmond Fitzgerald, 1912]reprinted in Henry W. Sams, *Autobiography of Brook Farm* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1958]) remembered eight Spanish boys who “were all courteous and polite to a degree that we American youngsters could admire, but to which we could hardly attain.” (248) They must have come from distinguished families since “they more than once received visits from high officials of the Spanish legation in Washington.” (248) Arthur Summer (“A Boys’ Recollections of Brook Farm,” *New England Magazine* X, New Series [March-August 1894, 309-313], reprinted in Sams) thought the Cuban boys the “most unpleasant fellows, haughty, jealous, quarrelsome and suspicious.” (243)

⁸⁹ Swift, 77-78.

Abby Morton their intentions with respect to further residence at the Farm.”⁹⁰ The couple did not marry until October 1845, and they remained at Brook Farm until it folded in 1847 with Abby teaching and directing the Infant School while Manuel gave Spanish lessons.

Clearly the atmosphere at Brook Farm appealed to Abby as it did to many creative women. Freibert writes, “For the women who lived there, Brook Farm was an empowering center; it shaped their visions and nurtured their creativity.”⁹¹ Women living at Brook Farm thought themselves equal to men. Male and female members were paid equally for their labor and all members, whether male or female, cast their votes equally at admissions and business meetings. Georgiana Bruce Kirby recalled with delight that “no distinction was made on account of sex.” She added that “this new sense of power and responsibility widened my horizon, and included all the benefits I was prepared to take advantage of.”⁹² The 1844 Articles of Agreement also required that a majority of the Council of Arbiters be women.

Another important advantage for women was education. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, who worked with Abby in the infants’ school, described her first meeting with George Ripley at Brook Farm and how he warmly encouraged her to improve her education while there:

⁹⁰ Delano, 113. Delano suggests that Ichabod Morton’s abrupt departure from Brook Farm might have been due to his daughter’s romance. Swift, however, has another, and more realistic explanation. He writes: “Ichabod Morton was a trustee from December, 1842, until April, 1843. . . . Because he felt that sentiment rather than good business judgment governed the practical affairs of the Farm, he abandoned his purpose of joining the Association.” (120) Morton’s fears were justified: when Brook Farm failed the Association owed him \$4,654.84 of which he received only \$641.81.

⁹¹ Lucy M. Freibert, “Creative Women of Brook Farm,” in *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States*, ed. Wendy E. Chmielewski, et al (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 75.

⁹² Quoted in Freibert, p. 79.

The friendly faces of the few who passed through the small oil-clothed reception room, while we were there, promised just the spiritual hospitality I had so longed for; and Mr. Ripley further declared that it made no difference what I wished to learn, as the association was composed largely of cultivated persons filled with a missionary spirit, who were more than ready to make over their intellectual wealth to those who had hitherto been deprived of it.⁹³

These were lessons that the women of Brook Farm took with them when they left the commune and moved on with their lives. For Abby Morton Diaz, the five years spent at Brook Farm were decisive. On an intellectual and spiritual level, she had not only discovered her vocation but developed an interest in women's rights.

⁹³ Georgiana Bruce Kirby, *Years of Experience: An Autobiographical Narrative* (1887).
<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/ideas/brkirby.html> (accessed September 21, 2004).

CHAPTER 3

THE LITERARY WORKS OF ABBY MORTON DIAZ

The second chapter focuses on that period in Diaz's life between the failure of Brook Farm in 1847 and 1876 when she began her public life as a social reformer.¹ During this period Diaz established herself as a successful author of stories for children and young people. A textual reading of two of her best-known novels for young people, *The William Henry Letters* (1870) and *Lucy Maria* (1874) will demonstrate how her ideas develop from the bucolic idealism of Brook Farm evident in *The William Henry Letters* to the budding feminist reformer resonating in *Lucy Maria*.

In 1847 Brook Farm came to an end. A disastrous fire in the winter of 1846 coupled with an ill-fated decision to apply the ideas of the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772-1837) to the small community signed its death warrant. Exactly why Ripley decided to attempt to convert Brook Farm to a Fourierist phalanx is unclear. Swift only says vaguely, "The various recollections say only in a dim way that at about this time [1843] there was much talk of a change, and that finally it was effected, principally through the influence of Brisbane."²

Fourier's plan was much grandiose than anything that Brook Farm had achieved. The French socialist envisioned a complete reorganization of society into a series of communities, called phalanxes, composed of fifteen hundred to sixteen hundred occupants and "at least one

¹ Lucy M. Freibert, "Abby Morton Diaz," in *American National Biography*, vol. 6, 543. In 1876 she gave her first public lecture before the Woman's Congress in Philadelphia. The following year she helped found the Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston with Dr. Harriet Clisby.

² Swift, 277. Albert Brisbane (1809-1890) popularized the social theories of Charles Fourier in the United States through his book *The Social Destiny of Man, or Association and Reorganization of Industry* (1840) (*Ibid.*, 270-271). Brisbane's most influential convert was Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, who allowed Brisbane to write a weekly column for the paper (*Ibid.*, 274).

square league of land.”³ According to Swift, the number of members of the Brook Farm Association was never more than one hundred and twenty at any one time.⁴ But like Brook Farm, Fourier’s utopia combined manual labor with educational opportunity and guaranteed each worker a share of the profits.⁵

Charles Crowe outlines the process by which Brook Farm became a phalanx. Ripley was aware of Fourier’s ideas since 1840 but only began to consider them seriously late in 1842.⁶ He desired Brook Farm to be part of a larger movement to reform society through a new social order.⁷ The Fourierist system seemed to Ripley to be the way to achieve this dream: “He had come to realize that Brook Farm needed a coherent, clearly articulated philosophy as well as a more formal plan of social organization, and he longed to unify the entire communitarian movement.”⁸ When Albert Brisbane and Horace Greeley met in the summer of 1843 to prepare a constitution for the North American Phalanx at Albany, New York, Ripley, as a recognized communitarian leader, was invited to join them.⁹ By the end of the year he was openly advocating Fourierist policies and on January 18, 1844, a new draft of the Brook Farm constitution was published, announcing that the community intended to expand into a phalanx.¹⁰

³ Johathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu, ed. *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 235.

⁴ Swift, 118.

⁵ Crowe, 173. Fourier advocated a complex method of dividing the profits (Beecher and Bienvenu, 250), which Ripley rejected in favor of a regular wage for all members with two exceptions—those who performed the least desirable jobs received a higher wage while those who had the best jobs were paid less (Crowe, 177).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁹ *Ibid.* See also Francis, 78.

¹⁰ Swift, 279. The new constitution contained the following sentence announcing the change in character of the Brook Farm Association: “With a view to the ultimate expansion into a perfect Phalanx, we desire without any

Most of the members enthusiastically followed their leader into the new experiment, although a few withdrew, claiming that socialism was a threat to individualism. Brisbane was a frequent visitor to the community, even living there on a part-time basis. The school continued to be important but, for the first time, Ripley introduced regular study hours and a detailed set of rules by which the teachers must abide. He also attempted to introduce manufacturing on a small scale but lack of capital and skilled workers did not permit mass production. The first year under Fourierism ended with a cash surplus and sufficient optimism to undertake the building of a communal center, the Phalanstery, a three-story building with fourteen apartments per floor, each consisting of three bedrooms and a parlor, a communal kitchen, a dining room that could accommodate 400, and several public rooms including a lecture hall.¹¹ In December 1845, Ripley wrote enthusiastically of his plans in *The Harbinger*, the Fourierist newspaper that he edited:

It is because we are convinced that the Associative Order is the Divine Order, that life in Association is the only true life of the body, that we are unwilling to give sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids till we witness the commencement of the great and solemn work, which is to emancipate man from the terrible scourges of a false order of society, and reinstate him in the glorious life for which a benignant Providence has adapted his nature.¹²

Unfortunately, prosperity lasted only a short time. On March 1, 1846, a fire broke out in the Phalanstery and, in spite of the best efforts of the Brook Farmers, most of whom had been attending a dance at the Hive at the time, it burned to the ground. The loss was a serious one. Unable to raise more capital, the community was doomed. Throughout the winter of 1846-47

delay to organize the three primary departments of labor, namely, Agriculture, Domestic Industry, and the Mechanic Arts.” (Ibid.)

¹¹ Crowe, 184.

¹² George Ripley, “Life in Association,” *The Harbinger*, II (December 13, 1845-June 6, 1846), 32. <http://www.louisville.edu/a-s/english/subcultures/colors/teal/jrhami01/harad.html> (accessed September 21, 2004).

members began to drift away and, by the spring of 1847, the last of the Fourierists abandoned the effort to maintain the associative lifestyle.

Abby left Brook Farm and returned to Plymouth. Her marriage to Manual Diaz produced three children, one of whom died young. Eventually the couple separated, leaving Abby with two small children to raise alone. The reason for the separation has never been fully explained. But Anne C. Rose points out that Boston society was rigidly class conscious and marriage into the upper classes did not assure assimilation. She mentions the marriage in 1828 of Eliza Lee Cabot and Charles Follen, a professor of law and philosophy in Germany. Hired by Harvard at a menial salary to teach language, he was only allowed to teach German literature when his wife's friends contributed funds specifically for the purpose. When the money ran out six years later, the college refused to renew his contract due to Follen's antislavery views. He then turned to preaching, but was unable to obtain a pulpit. Rose concludes: "Eliza Cabot Follen found she could not bring her husband into her circle of friends but had married out of her class."¹³ Imagine how much more difficult it would be to assimilate a young man who lacked Follen's education and was also a Catholic.

She turned to teaching in the public schools and to giving singing and dancing lessons. Harriet A. Townsend called her "a born teacher" whose "inventive faculties were marvelous"¹⁴

Townsend depicted her as a high-spirited young woman who found pleasure in her work:

The story of her village dancing classes is very amusing; the music was usually provided by an old, blind fiddler, to whom Mrs. Diaz sang the directions; if for any reason the musician failed to appear, she sang all the music for the dances,

¹³ *Transcendentalism as a Social Movement, 1830-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 20.

¹⁴ "Harriet Townsend on Abby Morton Diaz" from *Reminiscences of Famous Women* by Harriet A. Townsend (1916). Accessed September 22, 2003.

and such rare rollicking roundelays as she could sing all her life, to the delight of the children she met on the way.¹⁵

Her lessons at Brook Farm served her well, teaching her that no job was too lowly or too unimportant. She worked as a practical nurse and one summer as a housekeeper at a resort on Clark Island near Plymouth, where she did all the baking herself.¹⁶ During the Civil War she worked for a clothing manufacturer in Boston, “putting out”¹⁷ army clothing to be sewn by skilled seamstresses, who received menial wages for their labors. This experience gave her motivation for her later support of working women.

In 1861 Diaz sent her first story, “Pink and Blue,” to the *Atlantic Monthly* and was delighted when it was accepted. The check for \$40.00 that she received in payment she referred to as “poverty cake.”¹⁸ Soon, however, writing would become her major source of support. The sentimental story is told from the point of view of a male narrator who describes how he met and won his wife, whose “delicate pink cheeks and blue eyes”¹⁹ furnish the title of the story. The story concludes with the couple growing old together. Their sons and daughters have grown and moved away except for one daughter, and the narrator confides, “I’m glad they haven’t taken her,—she looks so much as her mother did when I first knew her.” The narrator is as much in

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Abby Morton Diaz,” *American National Biography*, vol. 6, 542.

¹⁷ Ibid. Putting-out system: The manufacturer supplied (“put out”) the raw materials and paid a piece rate for the finished product (Goldfield, 188).

¹⁸ Townsend.

¹⁹ “Pink and Blue” in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Volume 7, Issue 39 (May 1861), p. 565 in Cornell University Library Making of America series. <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABK2934-0007-2> (November 20, 2005).

love with his wife as ever: “The pink still lingers in her cheek, and her blue eye has that same expression which so bewitched me in my younger days. The spell has never been broken.”²⁰

Diaz began contributing stories to the children’s magazines of the period. The nineteenth century produced a number of periodicals aimed at children. Initially most were designed to edify young readers and teach them morality. A variety of weekly and monthly publications whose purpose was to replace the religious instruction no longer provided in the public schools were established and supported by the various Sunday schools run by the different Protestant denominations. Alongside these were various secular publications such as the long running *Youth’s Companion* (1827-1929), *Our Young Folks* (1865-1873), and *St. Nicholas* (1873-1939). Mary Mapes Dodge, author of *Hans Brinker or, The Silver Skates* (1865), edited *St. Nicholas* from the magazine’s inception until her death in 1905. The fame of Dodge attracted many well-known authors to contribute to the publication, including Louisa May Alcott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Mark Twain, and Rudyard Kipling.²¹ Diaz contributed stories and performed editing duties for *Our Young Folks* and *Youth’s Companion*. Her stories also appeared in *Golden Rule*, *St. Nicholas*, and *Wide Awake*.

In 1870 Diaz published her best-known novel, *The William Henry Letters*, the light-hearted story of a young boy’s experiences at boarding school. The school story was extremely popular in the nineteenth century, due perhaps to the phenomenal success of Thomas Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857). An American edition by Ticknor and Fields (Boston) was published in the same year with two different titles: *Schooldays at Rugby* and *Tom Brown’s*

²⁰ Ibid., 572.

²¹ “St. Nicholas,” in Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 466.

Schooldays at Rugby and underwent several editions.²² Carpenter and Pritchard point out that the popularity of the school story in England was due to the rapid development of the boys' public school, an institution lacking in the United States.²³ However, there are examples of American school stories in authors as diverse as Mark Twain (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* [1876]) and Louisa May Alcott (*Little Men* [1871]).

The *William Henry Letters* (1870) and its sequel, *William Henry and His Friends* (1872), originally began as a series of stories in *Our Young Folks* published in the late 1860s.²⁴ In her Introduction to the 1930 edition of *The William Henry Letters*, Anne Carroll Moore explains how Diaz came to write the stories:

Mrs. Diaz heard of a boy who sent home from boarding-school a letter saying they used pink soap, and with this slight foundation she wrote for *Our Young Folks* a few imaginary letters which she supposed would all appear in one issue. But the editor, recognizing their serial value, strung them out through several numbers.²⁵

The stories were so successful that Diaz was persuaded to continue the series and, a year or two later, to edit and publish them in book form. In her Introduction Anne Carroll Moore quotes President Theodore Roosevelt who read the *Letters* in *Our Young Folks* and thought so highly of them that he wrote in his *Autobiography*: "I really believe . . . *The William Henry Letters* were first class, good healthy stories, *interesting* in the first place, and in the next place teaching

²² Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 532.

²³ *Ibid.*, 470.

²⁴ "William Henry's Letters to His Grandmother" appeared in the following issues of *Our Young Folks*: 67.10.630-633; 67.11.696-698; 68.3.162-164; 68.6.349-354; 68.7.392-397; 68.8.466-470; 68.9.564-568; 69.3.167-176; 69.4.249-252; 69.5.282-287; 69.7.469-477; 69.10.687-694; 69.11.751-758; 70.7.437-441; 70.9.551-553; 70.11.689-694 in "Author Index to Our Young Folks," <<http://www.merrycoz.org/folks/index/AUTHOR.HTM#d>> (November 20, '05).

²⁵ Abby Morton Diaz, *The William Henry Letters*. Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co., 1870. Introd. Anne Carroll Moore. Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1930, 10-11.

manliness, decency, and good conduct.”²⁶ Moore calls William Henry “the forerunner of the American boy in literature,” adding that “he prepared the way for Jack Hazard, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Penrod, the whole glorious company of real boys who are the delight of boy readers.”²⁷ But, although William Henry manages to raise a fair amount of mischief at Crooked Pond School, the *Letters* are closer to Louisa May Alcott than Samuel Clemens. Gently humorous, they conform to a strict moral code. One can sense behind the storywriter the teacher who would instruct by a gentle word here and there rather than a lecture. For example, when William Henry first meets old Gapper Skyblue he wants to laugh because the elderly man looks so funny in his old clothes with his long nose. “But then I remembered what you said a real gentleman would do. That he would be polite to all people, no matter what clothes they had on, or whether they were rich people or poor people.”²⁸

The *Letters* are set in a loosely constructed frame narrated by a character named Silas Young Fry, who was chosen for this task, he says, not “on account of my talents, or my learning, or my skill in writing; but wholly because of my intimate acquaintance with the two families at Summer Sweeting Place.”²⁹ A former soldier, Fry had become interested in the cause of the Freedmen: “While serving in the Army of the Potomac, I had seen a good deal of them, and was connected with a hospital in Washington at the time when they were pouring into that city, hungry and sick, and half naked.”³⁰ As a charitable offering, he had promised to collect a barrelful of old clothing for their use. “But this, I found, was for an unmarried man, having few

²⁶ Ibid., 11-12.

²⁷ Ibid., 8.

²⁸ Ibid., 58

²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

acquaintances in the town, a very rash promise. I had no idea that one barrel could hold so much.”³¹ He is looking for other sources of supply when he meets a vegetable vendor (he was a “tall, high-shouldered man” with a “bright, good-humored face,” whose horse always had a flower or “a sprig of something green, stuck in the harness”³²) and asks the man if he may ride out into the country with him.

On this trip he meets William Henry’s family: the vegetable vendor is Uncle Jacob and there is Aunt Phebe, and little Tommy, and the three daughters, Lucy Maria, Matilda, and Georgiana. William Henry has been sent away to boarding school to keep his grandmother from spoiling him (“She was a smiling, blue-eyed old lady, though with a little bit of an anxious look just between the eyes. I thought there was no doubt about her being a grandmother that would spoil boys.”³³). Although William Henry is away from home, his presence is strongly felt as much of the conversation centers on him and speculation about what will become of him at the Crooked Pond School. Grandmother is afraid that he won’t take care of himself: “I really hope he’ll take care of himself, and not be climbing up everywhere. Houses and trees were bad enough; but now they have gymnastic poles and everything else, to tempt boys off the ground.”³⁴ His little sister is afraid he may be whipped and his Grandmother admits that, “Tisn’t an impossible thing. He’s quick. Billy’s good-hearted but he’s quick. He might speak up.”³⁵ But his father, Mr. Carver, says that there is one thing that makes him trust William Henry even while he is away: “ ‘I have watched him pretty closely,’ said Mr. Carver, ‘and I have noticed that he has a

³¹ Ibid., 14.

³² Ibid., 15.

³³ Ibid., 26.

³⁴ Ibid., 29.

³⁵ Ibid.

kind of pride about him that will not permit him to lie, or equivocate in any way.”³⁶ His Aunt Phebe agrees: “Billy don’t always look fit to be seen, but he isn’t deceitful.”³⁷ This honesty is demonstrated by an episode described in one of the letters. William Henry is racing his friend Dorry to see who can get back to the school first. Each takes a different way back and William Henry decides to take a shortcut through a neighbor’s garden, causing considerable damage. The next day the headmaster calls the boys together and tells them about the damage caused by a boy running through the garden. “ ‘I don’t know what boy it was, but if he is present,’ says he, ‘I call upon him to rise.’”³⁸ And William Henry stands up and admits his guilt: “I was ashamed, but I stood up. For you told me once this saying: ‘Even if truth be a loaded cannon, walk straight up to it,’ and I remembered it.”³⁹

The *Letters* are written from William Henry’s point of view so they reflect those things that a boy would think important to tell his family at home. The first letter begins: “I think the school that I have come to is a very good school. We have dumplings.”⁴⁰ Sometimes he complains that it takes too long to write when he wants every minute to play. He also includes pictures with some letters to illustrate whatever he is describing. These child-like stick figure drawings are included rather than the more accomplished art of the adult artist (with one exception, the story of little Tommy’s travels) and they add verisimilitude to the story. This

³⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 63

³⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 46.

suggests the possible influence of Bronson Alcott who often instructed his students through pictures that they drew themselves to illustrate some point he was teaching.⁴¹

At first the boys tease him about his red hair and call him names, but he consoles himself: “But I can run faster than any of them that are no bigger than I am, and some that are.”⁴² He has learned to take the teasing good-naturedly: “But I laugh, too. That’s the best way.”⁴³ Eventually he makes friends: “Some of the boys play with me now, and ask me to go around with them. Dorry hasn’t yet. Tom Cush plagues the most.”⁴⁴

The headmaster is “a great, tall man”: “He has got something very long to flog us with, that bends easy, and hurts,—Q.S. So Dorry says.”⁴⁵ However, William Henry adds, “When he smiles, he looks just as pleasant as anything.”⁴⁶ Dorry tells William Henry that the headmaster likes him: “If a boy can run fast, and knows his multiplication-table, and won’t lie, he likes him.”⁴⁷

Many school stories in the nineteenth century contain episodes about whippings. When Amy is smacked with a ruler in *Little Women*, Marmee removes her from the school. Tom Sawyer confesses to something he didn’t do and takes Becky’s whipping for her because he wants to win her regard. In the *William Henry Letters* there is an episode when William Henry is

⁴¹ John Crouch, “Bronson Alcott’s Experiment in Practical Transcendentalism,” on the *American Transcendentalism Web*, <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/alcott/crouch.html> (accessed September 22, 2004).

⁴² Diaz, *William Henry Letters*, 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

caught with a dead rabbit that Tom Cush has killed. He is taken to the headmaster and denies the charge but he does not implicate Tom: "I didn't want to tell tales of Tom, for it's mean to tell tales."⁴⁸ The headmaster has threatened to whip the next boy that robbed a hen-house or stole fruit from an orchard, so William Henry goes to bed thinking about how much the whipping would hurt and how ashamed he would feel because everyone would know he had been whipped: "I wasn't so very much afraid of the hurt, though. But the name of being whipped, I was afraid of that, and the shame of it."⁴⁹ The next day Tom Cush calls William Henry down and asks if he has seen him last night and William Henry admits that he has. Tom promises William Henry two dollars if he will take the whipping for him. "I don't believe he'll whip you," says he, "for he likes you. And if he does, he wouldn't whip a small boy so hard as he would a big one."⁵⁰ But William Henry indignantly refuses to accept money: "I said a little whipping would hurt a little boy just as much as a great whipping would hurt a great boy. But I said I wouldn't be mean enough to tell or to take pay for not telling."⁵¹

The next morning when William Henry is called up in front of all the school to take his whipping, little Bubby Short, who shares Tom's dormitory room, cries out that it was Tom Cush who killed the rabbit, not William Henry. Bubby had overheard Tom telling another boy about the rabbit and when they caught Bubby peeking out, they threatened to beat him if he told the truth. The headmaster is overcome with emotion and everyone is happy for William Henry.

Later, when William Henry is visiting his friend Dorry, they learn that Tom Cush has disappeared. Tom's parents question William Henry and Dorry about what happened at the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁵¹ Ibid.

school, and his father is very upset that his son didn't have the courage to tell the truth and was ready to let another boy take the blame for something he did. When William Henry says tentatively that he doesn't believe that Tom is lost, Tom's father cries out:

“Lost? That’s not it. That’s not it. ’Tis his not being honorable! ’Tis his not being true! Lost? Why, he was lost before he left the school.’ Says he: ‘When he did a mean thing, then he lost himself. For he lost his truth. He lost his honor. There’s nothing left worth having when they are gone.’⁵²

William Henry and Dorry return to school and, shortly afterward, William Henry meets Tom again, hiding out in an abandoned house near the school. Tom has run away from home and intends to go to sea. He has cut his foot and is sick, but he is ashamed to go home. The next day, when William Henry returns to the old house, Tom is gone.

Eventually Tom returns from sea and stops by the school to visit. He is taller and tanned and “has some small whiskers.”⁵³ He has brought presents for William Henry, Dorry, and Bubby. He also treats the two elderly ladies who run a small store near the school to a generous tea party. When one of the old ladies exclaims, “‘Now, did you ever? Now, who’d believe ‘twas the same boy!’”,⁵⁴ Tom replies that he “hoped ’twasn’t exactly, for he didn’t think much of that Tom Cush that used to be round here.”⁵⁵

The William Henry Letters reflect the bucolic idealism of Brook Farm. The interplay between the family, where each member is valued for his/her contribution to the welfare of the group, is reflected in the life at Crooked Pond school, where the boys learn through play and work to help one another to become honest, moral adults.

⁵² Ibid., 102-103.

⁵³ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 234.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 234-235.

If *The William Henry Letters* is Diaz's best known children's work, *Lucy Maria* (1873), her next major work, is the one that has the most autobiographical content. Lucy Maria is William Henry's cousin and is first introduced in the *Letters* where she is given a very minor role. She is mentioned in the *Preface* when Uncle Jacob gives little Tommy a magazine to carry in to Lucy Maria and she later joins in the general family discussion about what will happen to William Henry at Crooked Pond School. She is mentioned again later in Dorry's letter to home when he is visiting William Henry's family at Summer Sweeting Place. When William Henry gets sick and cannot return to school at the end of vacation, Lucy Maria brings him stories and picture papers.

In speaking of the novel to a friend, Diaz is quoted as saying that, while the language of the book may be faulty, "I am sure of the ideas, and remember that in writing that book, I tried to gather up, and express as many as possible, thoughts that would be helpful to young girls."⁵⁶ It seems possible to conjecture that Diaz envisioned the two novels, *The William Henry Letters* and *Lucy Maria*, as companion pieces, like Alcott's *Little Women* and *Little Men*.

Like the *William Henry Letters*, *Lucy Maria* is written in epistolary form. For the time period, it was an unusual form to apply to a novel directed at young people. But, as a form, it was ideal in that it allowed Lucy Maria to reflect on her own experiences and the role they would play in her growth and development as a young adult.

The novel begins with a letter from Lucy Maria in answer to one from her cousin Myra. In it she reveals her fear that she lacks the preparation for school teaching ("A sense of incapacity weighs upon me more and more each day of school-life"⁵⁷) and her desire to acquire

⁵⁶ Townsend.

⁵⁷ Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 7.

knowledge both as a teacher and for her own self-improvement. She observes that the teacher needs to know “botany, astronomy, geology, theology, physiology, the habits of every living creature, the science of education (especially of *heart*-education), and the history of all noble lives.”⁵⁸ In order to acquire the education that she desires, Lucy Maria proposes to take a post as a seamstress with a wealthy family in the city so that she may have the opportunity to experience the cultural activities that the city has to offer and to improve herself:

I have had for some time a half-formed plan in my mind, something like this,—to try to find some employment in the city which would pay my board and a trifle over, leaving me a little time each day to spend at picture-galleries, libraries, concerts, lectures, &c., but especially libraries; though I believe there is no kind of culture but will make me a better teacher of little children.⁵⁹

Her family is hesitant about the plan—her friends think it is strange that she would be willing to live in a household where she will be regarded as inferior and even her parents are uncertain that it is a wise move. But Lucy Maria is determined: “Now, my main chance is to live a while where I can have the benefit of certain advantages. This is my aim; and I shall aim at this alone: so why trouble myself with other considerations?”⁶⁰

Lucy Maria finds her new life very exciting. The house is full of beautiful things—pictures and books that she hopes to be allowed to read. Even walking down the street is exhilarating: “Why, just moving along the street with the crowd works me up to a high pitch; for I catch the hurry and excitement; and my breath comes fast, and my pulses fly. . . .”⁶¹ Her employers, the Calloons, find themselves somewhat at a loss confronted by an intelligent young woman whom they would like to believe is not quite their equal because she belongs to the lower

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁶¹ Ibid., 25.

class. Mrs. Calloon complains that, “[S]he knows too much. This educating the lower classes is going to play the mischief with every thing. These seamstresses—why, there was one here last spring had a Latin book in her pocket!”⁶² But while the family considers Lucy Maria educated above her station, the servants think she is “stuck up.” Lucy Maria acknowledges that the charge may be true although she is unaware that her attitude is condescending: “*Trying* not to look down is an entirely different thing from not looking down.”⁶³ This sense of class consciousness disturbed the peace of Brook Farm especially as the membership expanded to include people of vastly different backgrounds. Perhaps Diaz had something of what George Ripley had in mind when she has Lucy Maria embrace the “oneness” of all humanity:

We are all composed of the same materials; as lime, phosphorus, iron, albumen. We are all pleased with the same things; as love, praise, flattery. We all fear the same things; as pain, death, a bad name. And certainly our souls all emanate from the same divine source. Why! we touch at all points; don't we now?⁶⁴

Lucy Maria spends much of her free time in the public library, reading “treatises on education.”⁶⁵ Through self-education, she hopes to become a better teacher for her young charges. At first Lucy Maria does not take teaching seriously: “I took up school-keeping lightly, and with too much self-confidence (and also because we needed the money). Anybody would do for the small ones, they said.”⁶⁶ The smallest children are the most easily influenced and should be not exposed to teachers without preparation and excellent moral qualities: “It is a very solemn thing to help in giving even one young life its first direction. Every impression tells. Think of

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 27.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 7.

that! —every look, every word, every action. Anybody will do for the small ones? Instead of anybody, read nobody.”⁶⁷

Lucy Maria’s views of education seem to echo those of Bronson Alcott, who was a friend of Diaz’s father and had visited the Morton family home to speak against slavery. She views the child as a special being; Alcott describes the child as a “Type of the Divinity.”⁶⁸ She also views education as a divine calling; Alcott called education the “art of completing a man”:

It includes all those influences, and disciplines, by which his faculties are unfolded and perfected. It is that agency which takes the helpless and pleading Infant from the hands of its Creator; and, apprehending its entire nature, tempts it forth—now by austere, and now by kindly influences and disciplines—and thus moulds it at last into the Image of a Perfect Man. . . .⁶⁹

Alcott considered himself a follower of Pestalozzi, whom Alcott had read in translation. Pestalozzi in his turn was a disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and was much influenced by Rousseau’s *Emile or On Education* (1762), echoes of which reverberate in Alcott’s work. Rousseau argues that, “the first of all useful things, the art of forming men, is still forgotten.”⁷⁰ The educators do not understand that childhood is a unique period in the development of a human being. Instead, “They are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man.”⁷¹ Pestalozzi took Rousseau’s ideas and created a system of education modeled on the ideal of a loving home. In his “Account of the Method” (1800), Pestalozzi wrote that he was trying to “psychologize the instruction of mankind”: “I start

⁶⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁸ A. Bronson Alcott, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture* (1836) in Myerson, 179.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 168.

⁷⁰ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, Introduction, Translation, and Notes by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 33.

⁷¹ Ibid., 34.

from no positive form of teaching but simply ask what I must do to give a single child all the knowledge and practical skill he needs. . . . I think, to gain this end, the human race needs exactly the same thing as the single child.”⁷²

Alcott considers education as an outgrowth of religion. “It is the ever-sounding Trump of Duty, urging us to the perpetual work of self-renewal.”⁷³ (Lucy Maria seeks education for self-improvement and to improve her skills as a teacher.) The ideal teacher is Jesus and the Gospels are both a textbook and an example of the methodology best suited for instruction: “This preference of Jesus for Conversation, as the fittest organ of utterance, is a striking proof of his comprehensive Idea of Education.”⁷⁴

Lucy Maria also believes that the role of the teacher is divinely inspired:

It needs a seraph. I believe that the wisest and best and most angelic and most beautiful-looking persons in the land ought to be picked out and educated into teachers for the little children; and they ought to be ordained and set apart for their calling, and consider it a sacred one .⁷⁵

Unlike Marion Kent, a character in the book who teaches school solely to earn the money to purchase a trousseau, Lucy Maria worries over her students and wonders if she will ever be good enough to teach them:

School-teaching comes hard, Myra,—very hard. I wish my scholars were younger. Not that it is any easier to teach little children, but that I feel more drawn toward them, and feel that more effective work can be done with them. Perhaps I am not worthy to teach the little ones; or to teach any, for that matter.⁷⁶

⁷² Harry G. Good, James D. Teller, *A History of Western Education* (London: The MacMillan Company, 1969), 256.

⁷³ Alcott, 169.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁷⁵ Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 8.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

Drawing perhaps on her experiences at Brook Farm, Diaz has Lucy Maria take the children into the woods to learn about nature: “Occasionally I take a whole class into the woods, wishing, if possible, to interest my scholars in flowers, trees, insects,—in all natural objects.”⁷⁷ According to Lindsey Swift the Brook Farmers were particularly interested in botany and spent much free time in the woods and fields surrounding the community: “Reasonably enough, perhaps, botany was exceedingly popular with those who were feeling their first real contact with natural beauty; and since the neighborhood provided liberally in the way of specimens, there was every excuse for rambles to wood and river.”⁷⁸

One thing that Lucy Maria emphasizes over and over is the importance that the mother be educated. She observes that, “Our mother very often ‘had her head in a book;’ but she never neglected her family: on the contrary, books helped her bring up her family.”⁷⁹ Lucy Maria notes proudly that her mother “owns every one of Horace Mann’s works.”⁸⁰ Uncle Carver points out that “children follow the condition of the mother,”⁸¹ therefore the mother should be educated and prepared for her role as the first educator of her children: “I am sure, if anybody needs wisdom and knowledge, it is a woman with a family of children to bring up.”⁸²

Diaz is moving toward those interests that will dominate her later life—the role of women in society, their rights and needs. When a cousin raises the “woman question,” Lucy Maria is ready with an opinion: “A vote is merely the expression of an opinion, of a preference:

⁷⁷ Ibid., 293.

⁷⁸ Swift, 72.

⁷⁹ Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 134.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

so why all this clamor about it?”⁸³ She declares that she does not want to vote—“I would much rather study music than politics”⁸⁴—but there is a principle involved: “Woman being created equally intelligent with man, there is no reason why man should define or limit woman’s course of action.”⁸⁵ And, although she does not want the responsibility of voting, she feels that no one should have the power to prevent her from doing so if she did wish it. There are also special occasions when a woman might particularly wish to vote—“as, for instance, in some neighborhood affair, though no case in point occurs to me just at this moment; perhaps the location of a schoolhouse.”⁸⁶ Her major concern is preparing herself to vote wisely: “What I dread is the labor of preparing myself to vote intelligently. Still the men, most of them, take this quite easy, especially those who can’t read. . . .”⁸⁷

Lucy Maria’s ideas about voting are stimulated by discussions at the home of her friend and mentor, Mrs. Everson, whom she met on her very first visit to the public library: “On my very first visit to the Public Library I fell in love with a lovely lady. She had regular features, wavy gray hair, a delicate complexion (just a little flushed), beautiful hazel eyes, and altogether what I should call a serene presence.”⁸⁸ She calls her the Peaceful Lady and observes her from a distance. Eventually the two begin to acknowledge each other’s presence and, one day, when Lucy Maria is discouraged, the Peaceful Lady speaks to her. Lucy Maria explains that she is seeking books that will demonstrate “heart-teaching” rather than “intellectual teaching” Mrs.

⁸³ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 239.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 240.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 33.

Everson is taken aback: “She moved close up, took hold of my hand, and said, speaking earnestly, ‘Pardon me again; but you do not mean’ (emphasis on the “do not”),—‘you do not mean that you wish to learn how to train the moral natures of little children?’”⁸⁹ This leads to a friendship between the two women and Lucy Maria is invited to Mrs. Everson’s house for discussion evenings.

Lucy Maria speaks of the “almost perfect enjoyment” of these evenings. Mrs. Everson’s home is beautiful, decorated with fine paintings, its walls lined with books: “I peeped through a door ajar, and saw a spacious room lined with books! Just think, *lined!* completely *lined!*”⁹⁰ She imagines how much her mother and uncle would enjoy exploring that library.

The conversation is “so easy and natural, and yet of such high order!”⁹¹ The topics are wide-ranging and the speakers diverse. Education is frequently discussed. One very tall man whose “head was full of ideas, and his heart was all aglow,” rises to his feet and exclaims: “Just see the folly of it! . . . leaving little children to the care of teachers who will work cheap, and then paying ministers dear to undo and do over!”⁹² A conversation about unhappy marriages leads to a discussion of the value of co-education: “Young people, when educated together, will meet on a basis of common sense, and can *take each other’s measure*. As it is now, they meet on a basis of nonsense,—to dance, to flirt, to flatter and to be flattered. *Society* acquaintance is only an outside acquaintance.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 169.

⁹¹ Ibid., 168.

⁹² Ibid., 169.

⁹³ Ibid., 264.

These discussion evenings remind the reader that Diaz was educated in the Transcendentalist tradition where meetings and much discussion on a wide range of topics were the norm. At Brook Farm visitors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody would come to stay and exchange ideas. A colleague of Diaz's in the infant school, Georgiana Bruce Kirby, reminisces about Margaret Fuller's visits to Brook Farm in terms that remind one of the regard felt by Lucy Maria for Mrs. Everson: "How wise her counsel! How generous her hand and heart! As I was younger, and so far from her equal, I of course felt proud of her regard for me."⁹⁴

Education is a topic of overriding importance to Lucy Maria. To a young woman who expresses a desire to "distinguish" herself in a way that will be recognized, she writes, "I believe in women studying, and in their going just as deep or as high into learning as they have a *mind* to. Emphasis on *mind*."⁹⁵

Like a true Brook Farmer, Diaz also has Lucy Maria extol the virtues of labor. She observes that housework and study complement each other: "Study and housework go admirably together. You have no idea. It is like *see-saw*. Brain up, muscles down; muscles up, brain down. Who knows but this *see-sawing* is the right way?"⁹⁶ The scholar "needs the smell of the earth," just as the worker needs education. She suggests that, "The idleness and industry of the community should be shaken up together. To work is not genteel; but when dignity labors, then labor will be dignified."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Georgiana Bruce Kirby, "On Brook Farm," from *Years of Experience: An Autobiographical Narrative* (1887). (accessed December 28, 2005).

⁹⁵ Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 130.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

As a true Transcendentalist, Diaz has Lucy Maria extol the virtues of individuality: “How free we shall be when this idea—*individuality*—is once understood and accepted, not only in the matter of dress, but in other matters. . . .”⁹⁸ She has learned this point of view from Mrs. Everson who urges “less *following the leader*, and more individuality of expression.”⁹⁹ Lucy Maria longs for the day when all “unequal restrictions” will be removed and the individual will be able to develop naturally, “same as the flowers do.”¹⁰⁰ Culture, she says, should not “cramp and dwarf” the individual, but rather allow him or her to “unfold and develop from the centre, according to its individual nature.”¹⁰¹

Diaz went on to write many children’s stories, including a series of illustrated books on birds and animals with educator Norman A. Culkin, but from the mid-1870s onward, her attention turned to the role of women as homemakers and teachers, topics already touched upon in *Lucy Maria*. In her work with the women’s movement, Diaz was as innovative as she was in her roles as teacher and author. Many of her ideas regarding the role of women in society stemmed from those formative years at Brook Farm.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 339.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 339.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

ABBY MORTON DIAZ AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In her study on the women's movement, *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, Janet Zollinger Giele explains that the women's movement in the United States took two forms: "The form of the American feminist movement when reduced to its essentials comprised two major branches, one oriented to upgrading women's domestic role, the other to assuring her voice in the public sphere."¹ Abby Morton Diaz's work spans both categories—first as a spokesperson for simplifying women's domestic labors and, later, as an advocate for women's participation in civic affairs. Like her character, Lucy Maria, she feels that a woman should have the right to vote, even if she chooses not to exercise it: "[A]lthough at present I may not wish to share in the responsibilities of voting, I can see, that, if I did wish to, no person has any rightful power to prevent me from doing so."² But Diaz was most concerned about the changes brought about by the industrial revolution and how they would affect women's lives. The Women's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston, with which she was associated during the last twenty-five years of her life, was founded to offer assistance and legal aid to young working women. Still true to the Transcendental ideal of self-improvement through reading and self-examination, Diaz also wrote several books whose purpose was to relieve the drudgery of housework so that a woman would have more time for herself and her children. In this chapter we will examine the influences that led Diaz into the women's movement and look more closely at her contribution to that movement.

¹ New York: Twayne, 1995, 27.

² Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 239.

One influence on Diaz was Margaret Fuller who was a frequent visitor to Brook Farm while Diaz was there. A second important influence was Sophia Ripley, the wife of George Ripley and co-founder of Brook Farm. In the fall of 1839, with the support and encouragement of Sophia Ripley, Margaret Fuller began a series of “Conversations” for women. The purpose of the “Conversations” was to supply “a point of union to well-educated and thinking women,”³ who would meet to discuss cultural topics set forth by Miss Fuller (one series was devoted to Greek myths while another examined the fine arts) and designed to encourage women to develop their ideas and express them freely without the restraints imposed in a mixed social group. The discussions would serve as a means of support for women of all ages, providing “stimulus and cheer” for the mature woman and a safe place where younger women could learn to think rationally and express themselves intelligently. Fuller hoped that the discussions might allow the participants to explore vital questions such as, “What were we born to do? and how shall we do it?”⁴ She saw herself as the “moving spring” that would draw out the participants and encourage them to realize their true potential.

The “Conversations” were enormously successful, attracting women from all over New England. The crowds did not please everyone: in a letter dated February 9, 1840 to John Sullivan Dwight, Sophia Ripley complained of the crowds of the “world’s people” who so dominated the meeting that “we who belong there could not talk.”⁵

The evenings opened with a series of essays for the purpose of encouraging discussion. One such essay was written and presented by Sophia Ripley. In her essay, Ripley argues that

³ Margaret Fuller, “Letter to Sophia Ripley, August 27, 1839,” <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/conversationsletter.html> (accessed December 30, 2004).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Raymond, *Sophia Willard Dana Ripley*, 23.

“Woman is educated with the tacit understanding, that she is only half a being, and an appendage.”⁶ When she marries, she adopts her husband’s preconceptions and prejudices and, “where she differs from him in taste and habits, she believes herself in the wrong and him in the right, and spends life in conforming to him, instead of moulding herself to her own ideal. Thus she loses her individuality, and never gains his respect.”⁷

Religion would also relegate a woman to a “different position” from a man and would place great emphasis on “the religious duties of women.”⁸ But Ripley points out that, “Difference of position surely does not imply different qualities of head and heart.” True religion belongs equally to men and women as human beings rather than sexual beings. Like Christ, “The true teacher addresses the same language to both.”⁹ She adds acerbically that if a woman makes the home a peaceful haven she does so, “not by her sweet religious sensibility, her gentle benevolence,” but “by a strength and energy as great and untiring as leads man to battle. . . .”¹⁰

Ripley argues that a loving husband should not desire “blind reverence” from his wife, but “intelligent affection.”¹¹ A woman faces as many responsibilities in the course of her life as a man does in his, yet society encourages her to remain “weak and frivolous.”¹² She then describes the ideal of the perfect woman: “Thought should be her atmosphere; books her food; friends her

⁶ Sophia Ripley, “Woman,” (January 1841), in Myerson, 316.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 315.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 316.

¹² Ibid.

occasional solace.”¹³ She concludes, “Is this the ideal of a perfect woman, and if so, how does it differ from a perfect man?”¹⁴

Ripley’s article was later published in the *Dial* in January 1841 under the title “Woman.” A few months later in April 1841, Ripley and her husband would begin their adventure in association at Brook Farm. Because Abby Morton spent several formative years at Brook Farm, we must examine the role women played at the Farm. Women at Brook Farm enjoyed equal rights with men. From the founding of the Association women held shares of stock in the venture and had the right to vote and hold office. Lindsay Swift wrote of Brook Farm: “One great step in genuine reform was taken noiselessly, and therefore with greater certitude, by both the antislavery and the transcendental movements. Men and women stood on a basis, not of asserted equality, but of actual achievement and assumed responsibility.”¹⁵ But even in this small oasis of equal rights the “usual duties were mainly discharged by the young women, no attempt being made to foist on the men tasks beyond their experience or knowledge.”¹⁶ The young men sometimes assisted, especially on washday, “where the pounding, wringing, and hanging out of clothes was a severe task of muscular strength. . . .”¹⁷ Swift attributes this willingness to help to the fact that there were more young men than women at the farm and the “desire to free the young women for participation in some further scheme of entertainment was not seldom a motive power.”¹⁸ Lucy M. Freibert in her study on the “Women of Brook Farm” suggests that,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁵ Swift, *Brook Farm*, 113.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 51

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

“Because such menial tasks were community activities completed in a spirit of play, gender stereotyping of work declined.”¹⁹

One of the frequent visitors to Brook Farm was Margaret Fuller. Although Fuller had declined to join the Association, she sent her younger brother there as a student-worker and she herself visited often to enjoy the peace and solitude of the fields and pine woods surrounding the Farm. The Brook Farmers respected her privacy. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, who greatly admired Fuller, observed, “My great reverence for a person at once so remarkable, and so in need of rest and leisure, made me keep at a very careful distance.”²⁰ Another woman expressed her desire to have Fuller as a “spiritual advisor.” One is reminded of Lucy Maria’s admiration for her “Peaceful Lady,” who becomes her mentor and spiritual advisor. But Fuller was coming into her own, not as a “Peaceful Lady,” but as a voice of change for American women. In September 1840, she wrote to Emerson: “All things I have given up to the Central Power, myself, you also; yet, I cannot forbear adding, dear friend. I am now so at home, I know not how again to wander & grope, seeking my place in another soul. I need to be recognized.”²¹ The time is ripe for woman to take her rightful place alongside man, not as a lesser intelligence but as a full equal.

In July 1843 Fuller published “The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men; Woman versus Women” in *The Dial*. In it she argues that if “All men are born free and equal,” then “[i]t is inevitable that an external freedom, such as has been achieved for the nation, should be so also for every member of it.”²² America has failed to fulfill its promise of equality in its treatment of its citizens. Instead men and women have been confined to “separate spheres,” whose boundaries

¹⁹ Chmielewski, 76.

²⁰ Swift, 213.

²¹ Quoted in Anne C. Rose, 59.

²² Margaret Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit. Man *versus* Men. Woman *versus* Women,” in Myerson, 389.

are culturally defined rather than the result of nature. The “Great Lawsuit” would rectify this situation. “We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to woman as freely as to man. Were this done, and a slight temporary fermentation allowed to subside, we believe that the Divine would ascend into nature to a height unknown in the history of past ages, and nature, thus instructed, would regulate the spheres not only so as to avoid collision, but to bring forth ravishing harmony.”²³

Fuller explores the different kinds of marriage relationships: the “household partnership,” the marriage based on “intellectual companionship,” and, best of all, the religious union that she characterizes as a “pilgrimage towards a common shrine.”²⁴ She deplores the type of thinking that views women as children or possessions and argues that man cannot properly defend the rights of women if he cannot overcome the view that “woman was made *for man*.”²⁵

Fuller also believes in the importance of women being educated. Her Conversations were designed to serve this purpose, as she pointed out to Sophia Ripley in a letter dated August 27, 1839:

But my ambition goes much further. It is to pass in review the departments of thought and knowledge, and endeavor to place them in due relation to one another in our minds. To systematize thought, and give a precision and clearness in which our sex are so deficient, chiefly, I think, because they have so few inducements to test and classify what they receive. To ascertain what pursuits are best suited to us, in our time and state of society, and how we may make best use of our means for building up the life of thought upon the life of action.²⁶

Fuller believes that women must learn to act for themselves and not rely on men if they are to change their situation of dependency. “What woman needs is not as a woman to act or

²³ Ibid., 394.

²⁴ Ibid., 409.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Fuller, “Letter to Sophia Ripley, August 27, 1839.”

rule, but as a nature to unfold such powers as were given her when we left our common home.”²⁷ Fuller points out that women have worked tirelessly in the cause of abolition and it is this movement that makes “the warmest appeal in behalf of woman!”²⁸ She compares the situation of woman to that of the slave: “If the negro be a soul, if the woman be a soul, apparelled in flesh, to one master only are they accountable. There is but one law for all souls, and, if there is to be an interpreter of it, he comes not as man, or son of man, but as Son of God.”²⁹ The soul is androgynous: “Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. . . . There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.”³⁰ Women must follow the example of the Indian maiden and dedicate themselves to the “Sun of Truth” rather than rely on men to guide them. Instead, they must “retire within themselves, and explore the groundwork of being till they find their peculiar secret.”³¹

In 1845 Fuller expanded and re-published her article as *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, considered one of the major influences on the women’s movement. Fuller and Sophia Ripley are two important sources that must surely have influenced Diaz’s thought on women’s rights. Coupled with her own experiences as a wife and mother who has her own way to make and children to provide for, Diaz became an active supporter of the women’s movement. But unlike Fuller, whose essays would define the rights of women, Diaz’s writings sought to find ways to relieve the drudgery of housework and to allow women more time for themselves so

²⁷ Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit,” in Myerson, 394.

²⁸ Ibid., 390.

²⁹ Ibid., 394.

³⁰ Ibid., 418.

³¹ Ibid., 420.

that, in the tradition of transcendentalism, they could educate and prepare themselves to be better mothers and wives.

Diaz, whose point of view is more practical and less intellectual than Fuller's, is well aware of man's view of woman as an adornment or a servant. In a letter to Lucy Maria, Maggie complains that her mother would have her spend all her time dressing up and going out to parties so that she will meet an eligible young man. She longs for a mother like Lucy Maria's who "sympathizes with your thoughts and feelings, and always used to talk to you."³² Lucy Maria agrees with Maggie that it is not pleasant to be "dressed up prettily, and set in the market-place" as the Orientals do, and adds: "No wonder partners talk silly talk. They do it, probably, *thinking* to adapt themselves to their hearers."³³ She mentions Mrs. Calloon's daughter Bessie who "could not converse intelligently on any subject outside of society bounds."³⁴ But she also acknowledges that some men do prefer a wife "of not *very* much character or *very* much learning."³⁵ Bessie's suitor, the clerk in the store where William Henry is employed, says that:

[H]e didn't want a woman to be always saying what *she* thought, and what *she* believed, and setting up *her* opinion, and contradicting, and having her head forever in a book, and having ideas. He wanted a wife that would sew on his buttons, and work his slippers, and let him do the thinking, so as to have peace in the house.³⁶

Lucy Maria believes that a woman should be neither a drudge nor a butterfly and describes her own version of a happy marriage where the man and woman respect each other enough that they are able to disagree and still live peacefully together: "Sensible human beings

³² Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 126.

³³ *Ibid.*, 133.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

ought to be able to live peaceably together, even when differing in opinion; and the more sensible folks are, the less fuss they make about agreeing or not agreeing.”³⁷ It must be terrible, she concludes, to discover after marriage “that one’s partner for life is too silly, or is wanting in principle or in love.”³⁸ A good marriage depends on the characters of the couple: “There must be enough in the man to make him a good bargain at any price, and there must be enough in her to appreciate him at his worth, and love enough on both sides to keep them in happiness.”³⁹

Lucy Maria believes that women have a right to study and better their lot: “I believe in women studying, and in their going just as deep or as high into learning as they have a *mind* to. Emphasis on *mind*.”⁴⁰ She believes that the best rule to follow is the one that would allow all human beings to exercise their genius: “for certainly, if genius is bestowed, it is bestowed for a purpose.”⁴¹ Genius is not the exclusive property of man or woman.

In *The Schoolmaster’s Trunk*, she urges the “Slaves of the Rolling-Pin” to rise up and demand their freedom: “Say, I believe in health, in books, in outdoors.”⁴² The chapter, which opens with gentle good humor (“Can any one tell who first imprisoned our luscious fruits in a paste of grease and flour, baptized the thing with fire, and named it pie?”),⁴³ soon turns serious as the schoolmaster becomes aware of the toll that daily baking takes out of a woman’s life:

³⁷ Ibid., 134.

³⁸ Ibid., 263.

³⁹ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁴¹ Ibid., 130.

⁴² Abby Morton Diaz, “The Slaves of the Rolling-Pin,” in *The Schoolmaster’s Trunk, Containing Papers on Home-Life in Tweenit*. (J.R. Osgood, 1874).
http://faculty.etsu.edu/lloyd/English%204087_5087/Readings/abby_morton_diaz.htm (accessed October 2, 2003).

⁴³ Ibid.

I had the idea, . . . that woman's work was not of much account. . . . The tempting food which Mrs. Fennel serves up daily stood for a very small part of the labor which it actually represents. . . . Since my eyes have been opened, however, those delicacies taste too strong of the toil to be relishable; for I see that the rows of pies on the buttery shelves, the mounds of cake, the stacks of doughnuts, do not come there by any magical 'sleight o' hand,' but are wrought out of the very life of poor Mrs. Fennel.⁴⁴

Diaz suggests through the narrator that Mrs. Fennel's family love her and would never ask her to do anything that would put her health at risk. If they understood the true cost to Mrs. Fennel's well-being, they "would beg Mrs. Fennel to stop cooking them."⁴⁵ Thus Diaz makes her point with a combination of humor and firmness that fails to offend and yet points out how a woman needs time for herself.

The following year Diaz published her best-known work, *A Domestic Problem: Work and Culture in the Household*. Originally written as a paper to be delivered before a woman's club, the book seeks to answer the question: "How may woman enjoy the delights of culture, and at the same time fulfil her duties to family and household?"⁴⁶ In the course of the book, Diaz writes: "We want to prove that mothers must have culture because they are mothers. We want to show it to be absolutely necessary for woman, in the accomplishment of her acknowledged mission."⁴⁷ The book emphasizes the importance of education for women and also suggests, in the gentlest way possible, that women should be given a limited voice in public affairs, indicating Diaz's evolving view of women's role.

The first chapter sets forth the problem: housework takes up an inordinate amount of a woman's time. Each task is made up of multiple parts: "Of the almost infinite number of those

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *A Domestic Problem: Work and Culture in the Household* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875), 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 32.

parts, and of the time, skill, and labor required to adjust them, it hath not entered, it cannot enter, into the heart of man to conceive.”⁴⁸ Each task must be repeated over and over, everyday, sometimes two or three times a day, and done as well “as if done to last forever,” and every task requires that the housewife devote her mind to the task.⁴⁹ The result is that women are unable to enjoy culture because they spend all of their time and energy on housework and sewing:

In the treadmill of their household labor, breakfast, dinner, and supper revolve in ceaseless course, and they *must* step forward to meet them. And, when more of her vitality is expended daily than is daily renewed by food and rest, woman does, actually and without any figure of speech, use herself up.⁵⁰

As a consequence a woman has no time to read and prepare herself for her true mission in life which is “to train up her children rightly, and to make home happy.”⁵¹ Women are not even given the special education necessary to keep their young children healthy: “What does a young mother want to know first? First, she wants to know how to keep her child alive, how to make it strong to endure or defy disease.”⁵²

Tragically, because a woman is given no training in hygiene, nearly one-fourth of all children die in infancy. And of these, the first born child is more likely to die in infancy than his younger brothers and sisters: “The mother learns at the cost of her first child, and is better prepared for the care of the second, and still better for the third and fourth, whose chances of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁵¹ Ibid., 20.

⁵² Ibid., 64.

development into full life and strength are much greater than those of the oldest brothers and sisters.”⁵³

But, Diaz argues, society believes that a married woman does not need much education and the education she does receive does not prepare her for her role as a wife and mother: “If this is woman’s work, *educate her for her work*. . . . She requires not only general culture, but special preparation, a technical preparation if you will.”⁵⁴ Diaz points out that “in every other occupation we demand preparation”so why not for mothers?⁵⁵ “[W]e want not learned mothers, but enlightened mothers, wisely educated mothers.”⁵⁶ Her husband should urge her to work less and “Read, study, rest.”⁵⁷ Then she would have the leisure time to devote to culture.

This work is in some measure Diaz’s version of Sophia Ripley’s “Woman” or Fuller’s “The Great Lawsuit.” It is Diaz’s view of woman and man in their roles in private, family life and in their larger roles in society. She points out that, “The prevalent belief that woman is in some degree subordinate to man, is rather taken for granted than expressly taught.”⁵⁸ She describes a story parents frequently tell their daughters about a young man seeking a wife who sets the prospective bride a domestic task to judge her fitness—one prepares bread but leaves some of the dough sticking to the platter, proving that she is not thrifty, another is given a skein of tangled silk to wind to prove her patience: “It was the thrifty or patient young woman who was fortunate in being selected by a young man,—by any young man; for the character of the

⁵³ Ibid., 65-66.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

youth is never stated.”⁵⁹ Diaz also suggests that the story teaches young girls that the “hours of a young woman can be employed to no better purpose than that of untangling a skein of silk.”⁶⁰

Diaz concludes, “[S]o long as so much is expected of woman physically, and so little in the way of mental acquirements; so long as it is taken for granted that she is a subordinate being, that to contribute to the physical comfort and pleasure of man, and gain his approval, are the highest purposes of her existence,—it will not be considered essential that she should acquire culture.”⁶¹

In a civilized society, Diaz insists, woman “stands on a level with man” and is neither an “appendage” nor a “relict:” “Thus in the barbaric stage woman *is* an appendage to man, existing solely for his pleasure and convenience. She is then at her lowest.”⁶² But when society becomes civilized and women achieve equality with men in all matters, then men will be able to put aside the burden of deciding for women what is proper for them to do: “Equals need not decide for equals.”⁶³ She adds with characteristic humor that man “has carried double weight long and uncomplainingly, and should in justice to himself be relieved.”⁶⁴

When woman is free to decide for herself, she may choose to interest herself in those aspects of public affairs that bear on her “special duty.” She warns the reader that in this respect we must advance carefully, “for there are lions in the path.”⁶⁵ But, she says, “Public affairs, then, are only individual’s affairs, managed collectively, because that is the most convenient way of

⁵⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 51-52.

⁶² Ibid., 95.

⁶³ Ibid., 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 96-97.

managing them.”⁶⁶ Schools fall into the category of public affairs and why should a woman not wish “to express her opinion [on this subject] by dropping a slip of paper with a name written on it into a hat or a box.”⁶⁷ By stripping voting of its ideological value and reducing it to the simple act of casting a piece of paper into a box, she suggests that voting is not the complicated process that men would pretend when arguing that women are not fit to vote. Furthermore, she says, there is no reason why the father of a family should not stay at home and look after his children while his wife goes out to cast her vote: “Then, indeed, would the climax be reached! Then would that state of things so long foretold have come to pass: the husband takes care of the children, while the wife goes out to vote!”⁶⁸

There is another topic that Diaz explores: the kind of reading material suitable for young people. She describes the illustrated papers “crammed to overflowing with details of vice and barbarity.”⁶⁹ The pictures illustrate the stories: “a jealous lover shooting a half-naked girl; a father murdering his family; an inquisitive youth peering into a ladies’ dressing-room.”⁷⁰ She speaks of the dime novels that boys love: “The boy at school has one between the leaves of his geography; the boy riding, or sailing, or resting from his work or his play, draws one from his pocket; the grocer’s boy comes forward to serve you, tucking one under his jacket.”⁷¹

Diaz’s negative opinion of this reading material is similar to that of Louisa May Alcott who, in *Eight Cousins* (1875), condemns the dime novels favored by the cousins Will and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 74.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 75.

Geordie. Aunt Jessie complains that, “It gives boys such wrong ideas of life and business, shows them so much evil and vulgarity that they need not know about, and makes the one success worth having a fortune, a lord’s daughter, or some worldly honor, often not worth the time it takes to win.”⁷² Ironically, Alcott wrote thrillers like those she condemns.⁷³

Diaz also argues for simplicity in women’s dress, a holdover perhaps from Brook Farm. She would do away with all “follies and fripperies,” arguing that, as society becomes enlightened, these will go the way of the “tattooings, gaudy colors, glass beads and tinsel, and other absurdities of savage tribes.”⁷⁴ The fact that women still crave “follies and fripperies” indicates to her that, “Woman is not quite out of her barbaric stage yet. At any rate, she is not fully enlightened.”⁷⁵ On the same subject of feminine adornment, she adds, that although “the nose-ring has been cast off; . . . rings are still hooked into the flesh of the ears, and worn with genuine barbaric complacency.”⁷⁶

A Domestic Problem points to the way that Diaz’s interests are bending. She is genuinely concerned about the problems of the working woman. She describes the conditions in which the professional “sewing-girls” work:

Go into the upper lofts where much of this sewing is done, and what will you find? You will find them crowded with young girls, bending over sewing-machines, or over work-tables, breathing foul air, and, in some cases, engaged in conversations of the most objectionable character.⁷⁷

⁷² Louisa May Alcott, *Eight Cousins* (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1965), 179.

⁷³ Louisa May Alcott, *A Whisper in the Dark*, ed. Stefan Dziemianowicz (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1996).

⁷⁴ Diaz, *Lucy Maria*, 89.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

Diaz says that some society ladies defend elaborate clothing because they provide the seamstresses with a means of support. But Diaz believes this to be a specious argument. The working seamstress receives very small compensation for her labor—“a dollar and a half for doing the machine-work on a full-trimmed fashionable ‘suit’.”⁷⁸ With this small salary she must pay for their clothing, food and board, consequently doing without things that she needs. “They enrich their employers, but not themselves,” Diaz concludes.⁷⁹ And the society lady is indirectly responsible for their condition because she provides a market that allows these women to be exploited.

Diaz also praises the women’s organizations that band together to provide support for women and their interests: “The writer, though not a club-member, can affirm of her own knowledge, that at the weekly gatherings questions are discussed which have a direct bearing on the interests of the family and household.”⁸⁰ She believes that women need this kind of contact with other women, just as teachers benefit from conventions where they meet and discuss mutual concerns with other teachers: “The contact of mind with mind has invigorated them.”⁸¹ The Woman’s Congress is also an important organization because it “considers matters which have an immediate practical bearing on the welfare of human beings.”⁸²

The next step in Diaz’s career was to play a role in the women’s organizations that she praises in *A Domestic Problem*. The Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) was founded in 1877 by Dr. Harriet Clisby, a woman physician, for the purpose of “increasing

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁸¹ Ibid, 105.

⁸² Ibid., 108.

fellowship among women in order to promote the best practical methods for securing their educational, industrial and social advancement.”⁸³ Beginning with only forty-two members at the time of its founding, within one year the membership had risen to four hundred members. Ten years later the membership swelled to twelve hundred.⁸⁴ The Union is still active in Boston today, although its projects have changed over time. Perhaps one of the reasons for its longevity has been its ability to adapt to changing times.

Diaz took over for Clisby as president of the WEIU in 1878 when Clisby became ill. She served as president from 1881 until 1892 and vice-president from 1892 to 1902 and played an important role in shaping the organization.

The Union had two main purposes: the first, the “industrial” referred to in its name, was to provide an outlet for the sale of the products made by women; the second, the “educational,” was in keeping with Transcendentalism, which must have touched the lives of many of the founding members: “to satisfy their more obscure yearnings for a fuller life.”⁸⁵

Initially, men were not admitted to the organization, although its historian admits that this would have been the ideal, “but because the women felt it was necessary to prove that they could work with each other ‘in amity and peace’ before running the risk of being ‘hindrances to the men.’”⁸⁶ Perhaps past experience had taught the ladies that when men were present they tended to monopolize the meeting.⁸⁷

⁸³ Cornelia James Cannon, *The History of the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union 1877-1927* (Boston: Thomas Todd, 1927), 4.

⁸⁴ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 75-76.

⁸⁵ Cannon, 5.

⁸⁶ Cannon, 4.

⁸⁷ Myerson, 280.

From its inception, the WEIU managed a store where women could sell homemade baked goods and handicrafts.⁸⁸ Lack of room in the store caused some to argue that the available space should be reserved to the poorest women. But the leadership of the WEIU took the position that the income of the husband was separate from that of the wife and that wives of wealthy men had as much right as the wives of poor men to earn money.⁸⁹

The quality of the products was regulated by the members of the association who inspected the kitchens of the consigners for cleanliness before the products were accepted for sale. Cannon says that, “Emphasis was laid on quality, not only to build up a satisfied patronage of buyers, but to make ‘labor honorable’ so that a woman could have pride in earning money which was a recognition of the high standards she was able to achieve.”⁹⁰ Sales at the store rose from \$21.56 in 1878 to \$53,183 in 1905, principally from the sale of food items.⁹¹ The store continued in business until 2004.

The store led naturally into the foundation of lunchrooms where women could obtain inexpensive and nutritious meals in a clean, safe environment. The lunchrooms provided a means of using some of the food products that were sent to the store as well as employment for cooks and an educational experience for students studying food service at area colleges. In 1900 almost 45,000 lunches were served up at the WEIU lunchrooms.⁹² Profits from the lunchrooms supported other, less lucrative projects.

⁸⁸ Cannon, 9.

⁸⁹ Blair, 80.

⁹⁰ Cannon, 9.

⁹¹ Blair, 80.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

One of the earliest concerns of the WEIU was women's health. In *A Domestic Problem*, Diaz regrets that women lack the knowledge of basic hygiene that would maintain their families in good health. The WEIU shared Diaz's concern. A Hygiene Committee was formed to educate women on health and nutrition and for a number of years sponsored a free clinic for women, run by Dr. Clisby and a colleague, Dr. Arvilla B. Haynes. Later, as schools began teaching hygiene and hospitals provided free care for the needy, the committee turned its attention to matters of public health and industrial conditions.⁹³

In 1879, the WEIU established the Committee for the Protection of Women, a forerunner of the Legal Aid Society, to provide free legal advice to women with work related complaints. In 1880 the Committee investigated 140 complaints and recovered \$742.42 in wages.⁹⁴

Work was of vital concern to the WEIU. For this purpose they established a job bureau and a domestic service. Diaz was particularly concerned about the young country girls who came to the city to work in factories when they could have filled a need as domestics where they would have a safe home and enough to eat:

In the present condition of things, destitute women and girls congregate in our cities, and in dull seasons depend on charity for their daily food. . . . [T]heir situation is pitiable, not to say dangerous. A great number of them come from country homes. Of these, many might live comfortably in their neighbors' houses, where they would be considered as members of the families, have good lodging and nourishing food, and where their assistance is not only desired, but is some cases actually suffered for. They prefer the excitements of city life.⁹⁵

Diaz's interest is reflected in the formation of a Domestic Reform League that investigated the conditions of domestic labor. Cannon describes the problems that the WEIU uncovered:

⁹³ Blair, 81.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁵ Diaz, *A Domestic Problem*, 118, 86.

Friction between employer and employee, intolerance on both sides, absence of any standards by which to judge the right or wrong of the matter, a shortage of domestics and an indifference on their part to the wage temptation as set against the undesirable social status of the position, the quiet assurance on the part of the employers that it was a fiat of nature that some should serve and others be served—all combined to present a difficult situation.⁹⁶

To resolve these problems, the WEIU produced a sample contract that would protect both parties. But, eventually, changes in the domestic situation reduced the need for servants and the rise in commercial agencies caused the union to discontinue this aspect of their work.⁹⁷

In January and February 1884 Diaz traveled to Buffalo, New York to give a series of lectures at the Literary Club of the Church of the Messiah. One was on the Boston WEIU and caused such interest that the ladies were moved to establish a similar organization in Buffalo. In March the new organization held its first meeting with sixty members. In one year that number increased to over seven hundred.⁹⁸

Diaz was enthusiastic and predicted that her plan to help working women by providing them employment would succeed if branches of the WEIU could be created across the country:

May the time soon come, where shall be a national and international system of such Unions, all under the same name, uniting women throughout the country and the world for mutual interchange of ideas and a general cooperation and becoming each in itself a centre of enlightenment, a social centre and a welcoming place for all women.⁹⁹

Eventually there were branches established in Buffalo, Syracuse, Auburn, Dunkirk, Watertown, and Rochester, New York; Columbus, Cleveland, and Youngstown, Ohio; Saco and Chelsea, Maine; Washington, D.C.; Providence, Rhode Island; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; St. Paul,

⁹⁶ Cannon, 15.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Blair, 87.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 85.

Minnesota; Brattleboro, Vermont; San Francisco; Brocton, Massachusetts; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and even Geneva, Switzerland; and Paris, France.¹⁰⁰ Diaz continued to work with the WEIU until shortly before her death. Karen J. Blair offers this assessment of the work of the organization:

If the WEIU made only limited headway in spreading opportunities, skills, and jobs to greater numbers of employable women, the club efforts must rank among the more realistic approaches for nineteenth-century women to deal with the oppression of the less affluent women. Countless other clubwomen naively supposed that cultural uplift would satisfy their laboring sisters.¹⁰¹

Diaz's spirit animated the movement and through her writings she spread her philosophy to countless other women who did not have the benefit of a WEIU in their own town.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 84.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: ABBY MORTON DIAZ AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

In 1893 Diaz published her last major work, *A Flock of Women* (1893).¹ Her last books were religious in nature: *The Law of Perfection* (1895), a reprint of a title originally published in 1886, and *The Religious Training of Children* (1895); and a novel, *The Flatiron and the Red Cloak* (1901). A collection of short stories, “*Those People from Skyton*” and *Nine Other Stories* (1906), was published shortly after her death in 1904.

A Flock of Women, with its clear call for social reform, is a strong bid for social and political change and an indictment of a capitalistic system that she clearly believed fed the greed of the few at the expense of the labor of many:

The object of competition in business is individual money gain. If the principle is all right, why, it is right that every man secure as much of the trade as his sharpened faculties can bring in, no matter how many are left without, and that he make all possible profit.²

The thirty years following the Civil War were marked by alternating periods of prosperity and depression: “Between 1870 and 1900, for every year of prosperity there was another of recession and contraction.”³ Middle-class Americans felt themselves under attack on all sides. They feared the loss of economic and social status and distrusted the political system to protect

¹ Abby Morton Diaz, *A Flock of Women* (Boston: D. Lothrop Co., 1893).

² *Ibid.*, 151-2.

³ Phillip A. Gibbs, “Middle-Class Socialism: Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement” (Master’s thesis, East Tennessee State University, 1982), 2.

them.⁴ On the other hand, they also feared the labor unrest that had plagued the country for over a decade.⁵

In 1888, when Edward Bellamy published his utopian novel, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*, he found an eager audience. The novel described an America of the future where there was no inequality of wealth or class and industry was nationalized. It enjoyed an enormous success, outselling every book published in the United States in the nineteenth century except for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁶ Later that same year the first "Nationalist Club" was formed in Boston to discuss the novel's revolutionary program and how it might be implemented for the improvement of American society.⁷ The membership was made up of the social elite of Boston:

They [the members] were not the weak crying for mercy; they were the strong, demanding justice. They were not the crank or uneducated foreigners, importing ideas declared to be "exotic," they were men of position, educated, conservative in speech and of the oldest New England stock. In fact, one prominent paper discussed them of being the Brahmin caste of New England.⁸

Members of that club included authors William Dean Howells, Edward Everett Hale, and Abby Morton Diaz. Most of the members of the Nationalist societies were professional people, doctors, lawyers, and clergymen, writers, and artists. Women made up a large percentage of the membership.⁹ The members met to discuss socialist theory and political reform through lectures and conversations and to establish contacts with international socialist reform movements.

⁴ Arthur Lipow (*Authoritarian Socialism in America: Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982]), discusses the political corruption of the period (101-103).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. In 1881, 130,000 workers took part in 477 strikes; in 1886 more than 600,000 workers were involved in over 1500 strikes.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷ The number of clubs increased rapidly reaching 165 nationwide at the peak of the movement (*Ibid.*)

⁸ Cyrus Field Willard, "A Retrospect," *Nationalist* (December 1889), 38-39, quoted in Gibbs, 39.

⁹ Lipow, 129.

For Diaz, the Nationalist movement must have had a strong affinity to Brook Farm. She had been nurtured on the ideals of association as a solution for society's ills. George Ripley had envisioned a classless society where competition was eliminated and labor and intellectual pursuits complemented one another. Brook Farm, however, had failed. It did not start a national movement as George Ripley had hoped and, by 1893, when Diaz published *A Flock of Women*, it was already figuring in the memoirs of former Brook Farmers as a bucolic idyll. Nationalism, on the other hand, was on the rise and appeared to offer the kind of solution that Brook Farm had anticipated: a cooperative form of government that would eliminate the system of competitive capitalism that Diaz and others believed was destroying America.

In *A Flock of Women*, Diaz denounced the kind of cutthroat competition that allowed the businessman to get rich at the expense of the worker: "By his sharpened faculties he got the clothing made at starvation prices. This kind of a thing is a part of that trade system which gets its life from competition. So is adulteration of goods."¹⁰ The businessman thrives on competition at the expense of others: "The misfortunes of his competitors are helps to that success. Greivous ruin to them means enjoyable gain to him."¹¹ If we support the system in principle, we must accept the results in practice: "Why upon him [the businessman] place the responsibility of the 'twelve-by-fourteen tenement room,' where women and children live, crowded together, working all day and far into the night, with scant food, and for a pittance of pay?"¹²

The solutions she offers are the solutions of the Nationalists: abolish child labor, nationalize corporations that presently subject the whole country to "the unscrupulous rule of

¹⁰ Diaz, *A Flock of Women*, 152.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹² *Ibid.*, 160.

self-interest,” and establish a state-run educational system that will insure that every child is educated to the best of his ability: “Nationalism’s surety of success lies in its foundation principle of universal education with a view to the development of individual qualities and capacities, necessary restrictions bearing equally on all.”¹³

Such a system of education would surely elevate the condition of the masses and not of the poor alone:

To elevate all the rich and flourishing, to lift them out of their money greed, rivalry, pride, self-conceit, self-seeking, to enthuse them all with noble purpose, give them exalted ideas of what is a truly successful life, to make each solicitous for the general good—such an uplifting of the masses of the well-to-do, together with the masses of the not well-to-do, would prove a wonder-working remedy for the wrongs of working women, and for other evils, and it will be made possible—sometime by educational methods and by aims which await the perceptions of a far more enlightened age than ours.¹⁴

In Nationalism Diaz believed that she had found the solution for the problems that she had addressed for much of her public life. All reformers must have a touch of the utopist or they would not be reformers. Like George Ripley, who dreamed of a Golden Age in the here and now with his ideal of social justice at Brook Farm, Diaz hoped that Nationalism would bring to fruition a more just society for men and women, rich and poor alike.

Diaz stands out among the Transcendentalists as a true reformer. While other Transcendentalists talked of social reform, Diaz worked to bring it about. She was the one Brook Farmer who truly carried the ideals of Brook Farm to the threshold of the twentieth century, not as a nostalgic memory but as a possible reality that could be achieved through cooperation among men and women to improve our society as a whole and ourselves as individuals. Many of the principles that Diaz fought for were eventually realized and became a part of our legal system

¹³ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴ Ibid., 161-162.

today. Through the combination of Transcendental idealism that believed in the achievement of the individual and the Christian belief in social justice and action, Abby Morton Diaz represented the ideal American reformer.

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VITA

ANN B. CRO

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: June 6, 1951
Place of Birth: Tallahassee, Florida
Marital Status: Married
- Education: Public Schools, Tallahassee, Florida
Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida;
Modern Languages, B.A., 1973
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
Liberal Studies, M.A., 2006
- Professional
Experience: Managing Editor, *The Canadian/American Journal
of Italian Studies*, 1977-2000
- Publications: Cro, Ann. Review of *Saint Hysteria*, by Cristina Mazzoni.
Canadian/American Journal of Italian Studies 23
(2000): 148-150.
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