

Resistance in the Prairie: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House Series and the (Male) Mythologies of the Frontier

Belaid Afettouche and Amar Guendouzi
University of Tizi-Ouzou

Abstract: Since Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893), the legendary American Westward Frontier is often regarded as a male-dominated space, wherein women are absent or relegated into a subaltern position involving mostly and simply the four principles of the Victorian 'cult of womanhood', namely piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.

Contrary to this dominant view, this paper tries to demonstrate that the Frontier was not solely a masculine monolithic space; it was also an ideological stage engaged by American women writers in their discussions of gender-related issues, such as social roles, the private and the public spaces. For this sake, Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series is studied in order to illustrate how the author contests the dominant narrative of the Frontier by dialogizing the discourse of her male counterparts and negotiating a new relationship with the natural landscape of the Frontier.

Key words: The myth of the American frontier, man, woman, dialogue, social roles, the private and the public spaces.

Since the first Europeans set foot upon the North American continent, response to its space, or what is commonly known as the American Frontier, was one of the most important and pervasive characteristics of American literature and culture. Responses to the Frontier space are ubiquitous in the writings on the New World from the first settlements to the present day. Whether it is the propagandist tracts of Captain John Smith, the sermons of William Bradford and John Winthrop, the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Frederick Jackson Turner, Owen Wister and Zane Grey or the western films of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, the Frontier is always represented as a male space where women are invisible or simply absent.

When women are included in frontier stories written by male authors such as Cooper, Wister and Grey they are always

domesticated and stereotyped. In fact, the woman is generally represented as a helpless victim who awaits rescue from Indians, or other perils, or as sunbonneted “gentle tamer” who cares for her husband and children. In the two cases the woman occupies the domestic or the private space and satisfies what Barbara Welter has called the four principles of the “cult of true womanhood” which are: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Welter, 1966: 152).

Contrary to this dominant view, our study will try to demonstrate that the Frontier was not solely a masculine monolithic space; it was also an ideological stage engaged by American women writers in their discussions of gender-related issues, such as social roles, the private and the public spaces. These issues are reflected in many works by women writers, such as Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Mary Austin, Willa Cather and Laura Ingalls Wilder. In this paper, we will focus on Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series which, in our view, illustrates how the dominant narrative of the Frontier is contested and a new relationship with the natural landscape of the Frontier is negotiated.

Wilder’s *Little House* series has been favored by much critical scholarship. The latter focuses mainly on three areas of academic interest, which are: the biographical concerns including the collaboration of Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane, the representation of Native Americans and content oriented studies. One of the most important historians who has written extensively on the biographical elements of Laura Ingalls Wilder is William Anderson. Anderson has published a dozen of short biographies of Wilder where he traces her life history and accomplishments. Anderson’s booklets, such as *Laura Ingalls Wilder’s Country* (1990) and *The Story of the Ingalls* (1993), contain letters and artifacts from the Wilder Museum and are destined mainly to a youth audience.

In a study entitled *Becoming Laura Ingalls Wilder: The Woman behind the Legend*, John E. Miller tries to fill a gap in Wilder’s biography by focusing mainly on her adult years in Missouri from 1894 to 1957. He starts his book by raising a question, “How did this

seemingly ordinary woman come to produce such extraordinary work?" (Miller, 1998: 3-4). In his study, Miller identifies the various events and circumstances that led Wilder to produce her masterpiece, argues that "the key to Wilder's success as a storyteller lies in the dramatic, engaging way in which she transformed the remembered facts of her own life into the materials of imaginative fiction." (Ibid. 9). The importance of Miller's study lies in his description of the relationship between Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane, demystified by Rosa Ann Moore who has shown how Wilder was influenced by her daughter in the writing of her narratives. Of the *Little House* series Moore writes: "they are the legacy of a unique mother-daughter team, one providing objectivity and the craft [Lane], the other bringing the life and the perspective [Wilder] (Moore, 1980: 108).

As far as the theme of the representation of Native Americans in the *Little House* books is concerned, it is dealt with from different perspectives by Frances W. Key, John Kilgore, Dennis McAuliffe, and Rachel Seidman. Other Wilder scholars include Anne Romines and Anita Clair Fellman. In *Constructing the Little House: Gender, Culture, and Laura Ingalls* (1997), Romines focuses more on the cultural perspective rather than the feminist one, whereas Fellman's *Little House, Long Shadow: Laura Ingalls Wilder's Impact on American Culture* (2008), brings forth the cultural and social implication of the narratives rather than the main character's resistance to the Male Mythologies of the Frontier.

In this study, we will put Wilder's fiction at the center of the Frontier's narratives and we argue that she presents the Frontier as a stage of resistance to the limiting social roles allowed for women by the dominant frontier authors. For example, the female heroine in her novels uses her relationship with the frontier to challenge the limited domestic roles prescribed for women. At the same time, the *Little House* series highlight the ways in which the frontier itself is not a neutral space since the main character, Laura, directly engages the mesh of ideologies that define American pioneer's relationships with

the Frontier. Through the actions of the protagonist, the series implicitly challenge the gendered representation of the Frontier inherent in the masculine narrative by negotiating a new relationship with the landscape based on exposing the oppression of women inherent in that grand narrative of American identity and Manifest Destiny.

Before starting the discussion of Laura Ingalls Wilder's revisions of the master narrative of the frontier, it is of order to define Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism that will be used in the analysis. For Bakhtin, the novelistic discourse is inherently dialogic and involves a number of utterances belonging to speaking subjects and interacting within the wider social context. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), he foregrounds the social dimension of language and the simultaneous interactions of utterances within a given background: The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements – that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object.

(Bakhtin, 1981 281)

As for the dialogism at the heart of novelistic discourse, it is explicated by Tzvetan Todorov in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle*, where he argues that the core of all discourse, according to Bakhtin, is its dialogic essence. Todorov writes

The most important feature of the utterance, or at least the most neglected, is its dialogism, that is, its intertextual dimension. After Adam, there are no nameless objects nor any unused words. Intentional or not, all discourse is in dialogue with prior discourses on the same subject, as well as with discourses yet to come, whose reactions it foresees and anticipates. A single voice can make itself heard only by blending in the complex choir of the other voices already in place. This is true not only of literature but of all discourse. (Todorov, 1984: x)

The dialogue with which this paper is concerned relates to the women resistance to the Male discourse of the Frontier, as illustrated in Wilder's appropriation of the Frontier narrative to foreground the woman voice and redefine feminine spatiality. The Myth of the Frontier is one of the most important myths in American history, representing a master narrative that comments on the formation of the country's identity and the development of its culture. As an "authoritative discourse", as such types of narrative are called by Bakhtin, it exercises a tremendous power on American thought, because it implicitly conveys a set of assumptions and an underlying worldview that assigns action, authority, courage and freedom to men and silence, passivity and submission to women. However, in spite of its authoritative discourse, the Frontier Myth can be resisted, challenged, and changed as will be demonstrated in Wilder's *Little House* series.

In order to analyse Laura Ingalls Wilder's resistance and challenge to the major assumptions of the male mythologies of the Frontier, we should first discuss the latter and show how the Westward Movement Frontier was mythologized as a male space where men could prove their manhood whereas women assigned to the domestic space to take care of their husbands and nurture their children.

One of the first historians to theorize on the myth of the frontier was Frederick Jackson Turner. His now famous "frontier thesis" (1893) is one of the most persistent and persuasive descriptions of how frontier spaces influence American identity. In his landmark essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Turner argued that the primary force in the formation of American national identity has been the Euro-American man's relationship with the frontier, the struggle to tame it and to make a civilization upon it. In this respect, he wrote:

Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.

(Turner, 1893 [http:// www.xroads.virginia.edu/hyper/turner](http://www.xroads.virginia.edu/hyper/turner): 1)

What Turner expressed in his Frontier Thesis was just a continuation of a tradition that started with the first explorers of the New World. In her book, entitled *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (1975), Annette Kolodny writes that the movement to the American frontier was a projection of a male fantasy that began during the fifteenth century with Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the New World searching for an earthly paradise. The image that was projected on the New World by Columbus and the first explorers was that of a virgin, wild woman "with all her virgin beauties", "a delicate garden" and "a country that hath her maydenhead" (Kolodny, 1975: 4-11).

The starting of such symbolizations is to be found in the documents of exploration and the earliest American writings reviewed by Kolodny. For example, in their propaganda tracts to invite migration to the New World, the first explorers and settlers were using a sexually suggestive language to describe the land. In his "*Nova Britannia*" (1609), Robert Johnson commented on Virginia's "Valleyes and plaines streaming with sweet springs, like veynes in a natural body"; another explorer, Captain John Smith, in 1616, praised the rough New England coast as a virginal garden when he refers to "her treasures hauing yet neuer beene opened, nor her originalls wasted, consumed, nor abused"; Thomas Morton, in 1632, complained about the colonists who had rudely abandoned New England, leaving her "like a faire virgin, longing to be sped, / And meet her lover in a nuptiall bed"; and John Hammond, in 1656, in the role of a lover who was recalling the delight he found in the two mistresses "*Leah and Rachel; or, The Two Fruitful sisters Virginia and Mary-land*", about whom he says "having for 19 years served Virginia the elder sister, I casting my eye on Mary-land the younger, grew in armoured on her beauty (qtd. in Ibid: 11-13). Kolodny argues that such verbal images are "a bold exercise of masculine power over the feminine (Ibid: 22). In other words, the representation of the land/frontier as female is a

reflection of the ways in which western women themselves were stereotyped.

The exclusion of the female or her relegation to the subaltern positions continued in male frontier literature from the biographies of Daniel Boone, the *Leatherstocking tales* of James Fenimore Cooper to the modern frontier novels of Owen Wister and Zane Grey. In other words, masculine frontier literature assigned freedom, independence and adventure to male characters while female characters were silenced and denied such roles.

One of the first women to be stereotyped in male frontier literature was Rebecca Bonne. According to Boone historian John Filson she was, “the first white woman to stand beside the Kentucky River (qtd. in Slotkin, 1973: 286). In his *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone*, Filson describes Rebecca as “an amiable spouse” leaving her nearly nameless (qtd. in Ibid: 301). Commenting on John Filson’s account, Richard Slotkin argues that the textual Rebecca was “subject to the conventional weaknesses of the conventional sentimental heroine, suffering deprivation and heartbreak without acquiring a personality of her own (Ibid.).

This stereotype of the passive and silent frontier woman continued with James Fenimore Cooper. The theme of the frontier space as unsuitable for the sensibilities of women was the major point of his *Leatherstocking tales*. The hero of Cooper’s novels is the adventurous frontiersman who goes by several names – Natty Bumppo, Hawkeye, Deerslayer, or Leather-stocking. However, his female characters are not protagonists; they are weak and they lack control over their lives. His novels portray a society in which gender, race and class must remain fixed if order is to prevail in American society. And in case a woman ventures in the frontier space and shows capacities of defying the patriarchal strictures she will be killed like what happens with Cora in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). In his frontier novels Cooper established a patriarchal hierarchy in which males are empowered by their freedom, independence and adventure whereas

women are relegated to their “proper sphere” which is the private or the domestic.

The stereotyping of women continued in twentieth-century male frontier literature. Owen Wister’s *The Virginian* (1902), and Zane Grey’s *Rider’s of the purple Sage* (1912) which are among the most popular and well-known frontier novels of the twentieth century still perpetuate the myth of the frontier as a male space where women should be under the authority and control of men. In other words, in both novels power is defined through male control of land, cattle, women and the other races. There are women in these novels, but the frontier of *The Virginian* and *Ridersis* also a highly gendered space. In other words, everything is structured around the nineteenth-century ideology of the separate spheres where men are assigned the public or the outside space and women are kept in the private or the domestic space.

Stereotyping women is the most prevalent feature of male frontier history and literature of both the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The two (male frontier history and literature) support the image of the frontier space as Hisland (Armitage, 1987: 3). In the latter men are given voice, action, authority, adventure, freedom and independence whereas women are kept voiceless, submissive and dependent. These stereotypes of women in the frontier space which are created by men serve the perpetuation of the ideology of separate spheres in which men are assigned the public/outdoor space and women are relegated to the domestic/indoor space.

Many American female writers, among whom Laura Ingalls Wilder, understood that the frontier had become an ideological space in which the place of women in the American society was debated. Thus, to challenge the stereotyped image of the silent woman in the frontier and to answer her male counterparts, she entered that debate by substituting a female heroine in the place of a male hero. She also used the frontier as an ideological space to give voice to women, to free them from the stereotype of the “angel in the house” and to conquer the public space or the outside space.

In her essay, “The Frontier of the Little House”, Ann Romines argues that Wilder’s frontier novels function as a space where transformations take place. She writes

Now the Little House has become a serial, not a static locale, and it offers possibilities of continuation and growth that give Laura, as a frontier girl protagonist, space to run and think and grow.

(Romines, 2002: 36)

In her frontier novels, Laura Ingalls Wilder portrays a society of pioneer women. By writing about the woman’s movement into the frontier space and her response to the latter, Wilder establishes her first challenge to the masculine frontier narrative. In the series, the protagonist is always a woman; her name is Laura Ingalls, and is described as being as brown as an Indian (OBPC, p. 143), which differentiates her from the submissive blond who awaits rescue by her beau in male frontier literature. Her voice is at the centre of the whole narrative. By giving voice to the woman who is silenced and stereotyped in the male frontier narrative, Wilder is just expressing what the feminist Hélène Cixoux asked for in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” where she writes

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement. (Cixoux, 1976: 875)

So, Laura Ingalls Wilder understood that one of the ways by which she can extend the woman’s sphere or to put her in the public sphere is by writing about her frontier experience. In a speech she delivered in Detroit in 1937, Wilder says

I realized I had seen and lived it all-all the successive phases of the frontier, first the frontiersman then the pioneer, then the farmers and the towns. Then I understood that in my own life I represented a whole period of American History. That the frontier was gone and agricultural settlements had taken its place when I married a farmer [...] I wanted children now to understand more about the beginnings

of things, to know what is behind the things they see - what it is that made America as they know it.
(qtd. In Fellman, 2008: 65)

Thus, as she tells her story in the *Little House* books, she transfers the agency from the pioneer to herself. In other words, she reconfigures the signifier of the Myth of the Frontier from male to female.

By juxtaposing Laura's freedom with the frontier space, Wilder revises and challenges the masculine frontier tradition which associates the American frontier with manhood, including such iconic figures as Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Natty Bumppo and Buffalo Bill. In fact, the *Little House* novels engage a dialogue with frontier authors and show that the frontier space is a liberating space for women. The prairie or the frontier space is a source of inspiration for Laura. Moreover, for her it is "a felicitous space" or the space we love to borrow Gaston Bachelard words in his *Poetics of space*. In *Little House on the Prairie*, Laura the heroine connects quickly to the frontier space. In this respect, Wilder writes

Laura was very happy. The wind sang a low, rustling song in the grass. Grasshoppers' rasping quivered up from all the immense prairie. But all these sounds made a great, warm, happy silence. Laura had never seen a place she liked so much as this place.
(LHP, p. 49)

After her joyous connection to the prairie, Laura starts to associate the expansive horizon of this frontier space with a sense of freedom. Her ventures in the prairie contribute to her sense of self-confidence and independence. As a result, Laura starts to resist her mother's domesticity and disrupt nostalgia for the traditional family.

The American Frontier as a space which is defined by ever shifting borders empowered women to question the ideology of separate spheres and allowed them to transgress the patriarchal strictures of the American society. Susane Naramore Maher writes

In the frontier space gender roles underwent considerable revision. Settlers daughters enjoyed the outdoors, contributed to men's work, felt themselves part of a national experiment. These daughters of first wave women questioned their mothers' practices and often identified strongly with the male members of their circles – fathers, brothers and uncles. (Maher, 1994: 131)

Laura, the heroine of the *Little House* series, likes the outdoor frontier space. Rather than to identify with her mother who satisfies the four pillars of “true womanhood” that we have mentioned earlier, she identifies with her father's love for the wild. In *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, Laura takes the role of the pioneer when she says “Let's go west” (BSSL, p. 126). In *Little Town on the Prairie*, Wilder writes “Laura wanted nothing more than just being outdoors. She felt she never could get enough sunshine soaked into her bones” (LTP, p. 8). In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura prefers the outdoor space of the prairie rather than the safety of their dugout home, “Laura would rather sleep outdoors, even if she heard wolves, than to be safe in this house dug under the ground” (OBPC, p. 17).

Even though Mary is the eldest daughter of the Ingalls family, it is Laura who helps her father in performing different outdoor masculine tasks. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, Laura filled her apron with the fresh, sweet smelling chips to help her father smoking meat for the long and hard winters (LHBW, p. 7). In *Little House on the prairie*, Laura helped Pa make the door. Mary watched, but Laura handed him his tools (LHP, p. 100). In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura helps her father in the construction of their new home and catch fish (OBPC, p. 14- 93) and in *The Long Winter*, she helps her father make hay (TLW, p. 10). By helping her father in his different tasks outdoor, Laura moved from the private space (the home) to the public one (the frontier space). Being exposed to the public space, Laura discovers the freedom of the open space and questions the ideology of the separate spheres.

For Laura, the place of the woman is not the home; she must go outside and take a job in order to reach financial independence. The

latter will free her from the conventional pressures and the dominance of the patriarchal society. In this respect, Wilder writes
All the weak, she looked forward to the pleasure of bringing home her wages to Ma. Often she thought, too, that this was only the beginning. In two more years she would be sixteen, old enough to teach school. If she studied hard and faithfully, and got a teacher's certificate, and then got a school to teach, she would be a real help to Pa and Ma. Then she could begin to repay them for all that it had cost to provide for her since she was a baby. (LTOP, p. 48)

In the *Little House* series, Laura takes different jobs. She works as a teacher and in her extra-time she works as a seamstress for the town's dress maker Mrs. Mc Kee. With the wages she earns, she helps her indebted family ruined by draught and grasshoppers which destroyed their wheat crop. She also contributes in sending her sister Mary to college for the blind in Iowa. Yet, her real satisfaction in taking these jobs is the fact of being free and independent. In "The Woman's Place," Laura believes in the equality between the husband and the wife when she writes "And so in, in these days of women's clubs from which men are excluded, and men's clubs that permit women to be honorary members only, I'm glad to know there is a club whereby farm men and farm women work together on equal terms and with equal privileges (Hine, 2007: 267).

Throughout the whole series, Laura, the protagonist, is portrayed as someone who is courageous, rebellious, intelligent and questioning her surrounding world, the contrast of her sister Mary who is docile, submissive and always minds her manners. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, the first book in the series, Laura is portrayed as someone who is brave and strong. In one of the games they played with their father called Mad Dog, she saves her sister Mary who is so frightened that she could not move (LHBW, p.35). After her act of bravery, her father congratulates her by saying "You're only a little half-pint of cider half drunk up, but by Jinks! You're as strong as a little french horse! (Ibid.).

In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura is fascinated by the creek from the first sighting. Even though she knows that her mother will not allow her to play there when the creek floods, Laura quietly slipped outdoors without saying anything to Ma (OBPC, p. 101). In the creek she immerses herself in the raging waters and saves herself from drowning. This experience in the creek encourages her to rely on herself because the creek does not make her scream and cannot make her cry (Ibid. 106). In other words, this experience teaches her that she is strong for she has not cried for help and she has not been defeated by the creek.

After proving her physical strength and bravery, Laura started to use her voice to rebel against the patriarchal rules which she sees unfair and repressing for women. In *Little House in the Big Woods*, Laura shows her first act of defiance of the patriarchal strictures. On Sundays, the girls must not run or shout or be noisy in their play (LHBW, p.84). The only things which are allowed to them to do are sewing and knitting, two works which are associated with “true Womanhood”. But, one Sunday after supper, Laura cannot bear it any longer. She begins to play with Jack, and in a few minutes she is running and shouting. Her father tells her to sit in her chair and be quiet, but her response was crying and kicking the chair with her heels (Ibid: 86). From Laura’s response, we understand that the heroine of the *Little House* series chooses defiance rather than submission.

In *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, Laura disobeys the instructions of her mother. When Laura and Mary go swimming in the creek, their mother tells them to stay near the edge and do not go where it’s deep, but Laura defies her and went deeper and deeper (OBPC, p. 23). After her act of disobedience, her father ducks her in the creek but rather than to show her fright, Laura asks him to duck her again. This shows that Laura is someone who is sticking to her opinions and endorses her acts. But the most important act of defiance is when she disobeys both her mother and Mary the two women who represent “true womanhood” in this novel. One day, a storm is getting near their house and their woodbox is empty, so Laura decides to go out to bring

wood but Mary grabbed her and says: “you can’t!” “Ma told us to stay in the house if it stormed”. Laura jerked away and says: “We’ve got to bring in wood before the storm gets here, hurry!” then, the two girls went out but since Laura is quick and mobile, she is the first to run to the woodpile; piled up a big armful of wood and ran back with jack behind her (Ibid: 287). This instance shows Laura as an intelligent woman; a woman who uses her mind and knows when it is time to act.

Another example of Laura’s defiance and challenge to the traditional woman is her hatred of her sunbonnet which is one of the most important symbols of “true womanhood”. When she plays outdoor, Laura lets her sunbonnet hang down her back because “when her sunbonnet was on she could only see what was in front of her, and that was why she was always pushing it back and letting it hang by its strings tied around her throat” (LHP, p. 123). One day, When the girls were walking to school together and Laura as usual lets her sunbonnet hang down her back, Mary says

For pity’s sake, Laura ... keep your sunbonnet on! You will be as brown as an Indian, and what will the town girls think of us? I don’t care! Said Laura, loudly and bravely. (OBPC, p. 143)

In *These Happy Golden Years*, the last book of the series, Laura shows her autonomy and independence. Moreover, she even redefines the institution of marriage. The first thing she starts with is the wedding dress. Rather than to choose a white wedding dress which is fashion among the traditional women, Laura decides to wear a black dress even if her mother objected. The second thing she changes is omitting the word “obey” in the vows of the wedding ceremony. Wilder writes

Laura summoned all her courage and said, “Almanzo, I must ask you something. Do you want me to promise to obey you? ... “Well, I am not going to say I will obey you,” said Laura ... I cannot make a promise that I will not keep, and Almanzo, even if I tried, I do not think I could obey anybody against my better judgement.” (THGY, p. 269-270)

To conclude, this study shows that throughout the *Little House* series, Laura Ingalls Wilder resists and challenges the male Myth of the Frontier. As discussed above, masculine frontier literature, such as James Fenimore Cooper's *the Leatherstocking Tales*, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* empowers the male hero who finds freedom, independence and regeneration in the frontier space. At the same time it also marginalizes and stereotypes westering women. In this grand narrative, women are portrayed as silent, docile, and submissive and they occupy the private realms of domesticity. For these authors, women should be kept inside the house because the frontier space is unsuitable for the "weaker sex." Unlike these male authors, in her masterpiece work, Wilder gives voice to women and challenges the dichotomized sexual roles and the values associated with them. By portraying a heroine who, from childhood to adulthood defies the patriarchal strictures and challenges the ideology of separate spheres, Wilder redefines gender roles and feminine spatiality. In other words, throughout her *Little House* Books, Laura Ingalls Wilder encourages American women to subvert the ideology of separate spheres and to take jobs outside the domestic domain to be independent and to assume their full citizenship.

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