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A Road of One's Own

On the Roles of Mobilities in Feminist Utopian Writings

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Abstract

A key to utopia's relevance and fascination lies in its dual function as critique of society and hopeful imagining of alternatives, as well as the question of how one might reach an unreachable ideal. From this starting point, my thesis combines insights and concepts from utopian, feminist, and mobilities studies with approaches from comparative literature to investigate the role(s) of mobilities in feminist utopian writings. My case studies include the short story "Sultana's Dream" (1905) and novella *Padmarag* (1924) by Bengali author Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) and the novel *Iola Leroy* (1893) and two speeches, "We Are All Bound Up Together" (1866) and "Woman's Political Future" (1893), by American author Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911). By combining flexible definitions of utopia and utopianism with an intersectional, comparative view on feminism, and distinguishing various types of mobility and their relations, I discuss how Hossain and Harper each present mobilities as sites of oppression and liberation. I argue that mobilities play a vital role in their social dreaming and that mobilities serve as a productive factor for cross-cultural comparison. Feminist utopian writings allow their authors and readers to look beyond (im)possibilities in reality to envision social change. A revaluation of mobilities in these narratives—both in realistic and more utopian spaces—helps distinguish consequences of intersectional oppressions and reimagine them as sites for potential social change. Finally, the writings of Hossain and Harper play an essential role among their other practical utopian projects to communicate social critique and dreams of a better society to readers and thinkers across time and space, broadening perspectives on what is (im)possible.

Keywords: utopia; utopianism; mobilities; feminist utopia; comparative literature; feminist utopian writings; women writers

Introduction

What It Means to Tread Beyond Reality

"'. . . I wish to prove to society that married life alone is not a woman's ultimate quest; a housewife's responsibilities do not constitute life's essential duties. In other words, I hope this sacrifice of mine will in future contribute to the welfare of women.'" (176)
– From Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Padmarag* (1924; 2005)

"Let the hearts of the women of the world respond to the song of the herald angels of peace on earth and good will to men. Let them throb as one heart unified by the grand and holy purpose of uplifting the human race, and humanity will breathe freer, and the world grow brighter. With such a purpose Eden would spring up in our path, and Paradise be around our way."
– From Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's "Woman's Political Future" (May 20, 1893; 2021)

During my years in university, I came across various writings that fuelled my main interests in the literary field: utopias, travel literature, and women writers. Here I mean 'woman writer' in a broad way as an author who openly identifies as woman or feminine, and/or who has been considered part of this category historically. In this thesis, my academic interests come together to answer the question what role(s) mobilities may play in feminist utopian writings. One such inspiring text features in my thesis, namely "Sultana's Dream" (1905) by Bengali author Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932). The fable-like story about Ladyland—a society run by women, while men are secluded in their homes—struck me for its sharp criticism of the treatment of women in Hossain's own society, while the utopian form allows the author to envision hopeful alternatives. Not only do women in Ladyland have access to education and hold important positions in social and political spheres, they also have

freedom to move around the country as they please either on foot or by using fantastical flying machines. This utopia, where hopeful dreaming touches every aspect of life, made me wonder about possible connections between utopias and the freedom to move in these various spheres. When I encountered the novel *Iola Leroy* (1893) by Black American author Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911), I found another context and set of utopian approaches that deepened my questions and answers concerning the possible roles of mobilities in feminist utopian writings.

From one question, several more sprang. What types of mobilities feature in these writings? How do these different forms of mobility relate to each other in the authors' utopian visions? How do the types of mobilities reflect on gendered (im)mobilities in the authors' own contexts? And finally, how do these texts overcome mobility-related unfreedoms, including involuntary (im)mobilities, in reality? With immobilities I indicate lacks of movement, whether these result from enforced (involuntary) stasis, such as seclusion or social isolation, or from voluntary stasis, such as the opportunity to reside in one's home. Likewise, voluntary mobilities include agency and a choice to move, while involuntary mobilities are enforced and may defy one's (bodily) autonomy. I approach the questions above from a comparative literary studies perspective, making use of research methods from this field, including close reading, narratology, and literary theory. Furthermore, my thesis is set up as an interdisciplinary project, venturing into utopian studies, feminist studies, and mobilities studies, which scholars so far have combined in various ways and to differing extents.

A particular study that combines utopia, mobilities, and feminism with comparative literary analysis is "Speculating with human rights: two South Asian women writers and utopian mobilities" (2020) by Barnita Bagchi, published in the journal *Mobilities*. This study has partly inspired my own research, both in its choice of case studies and its approach to utopianism and mobilities in the works of women writers. Bagchi discusses "Sultana's

Dream," of which I have spoken above, and a novella by the same author, namely *Padmarag* (1924). In this novella, young Siddika arrives at an institution run by women for the good of society, where she learns invaluable life lessons and finds renewed purpose. In an effort to contribute to the growing scholarship on Hossain, I delve deeper into these two works of fiction through the combined framework of utopian, feminist, mobilities, and literary studies, and view the texts in the broader context of Hossain's feminist utopian activism and projects.

The thesis consists of the following chapters. This first chapter elaborates on my theoretical approach to utopianism, feminist utopian writings, and mobilities in this study, followed by the academic debates that I engage in. Chapter two and three discuss the case studies by authors Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper respectively. The chapters have their own emphasis, although both discuss similar themes and approaches to social dreaming. For Hossain's writings, I pay particular attention to the different types of mobilities in her critique and social dreaming, while for Harper's writings I focus more on the distinction between voluntary and involuntary (im)mobilities. In the works of both authors, education plays an important part in their social dreaming and changing one's footing in society; as such, I treat education as mobility within a larger category of intellectual mobility, namely the opportunity to encounter new ideas and change one's perspective. The communication of idea(l)s lies at the heart of social dreaming and while one might not always be able to venture outside and meet other people, one's horizon of possibility might broaden through education, reading, or mediated correspondence (letters, for example). As such, education and intellectual mobility more broadly may be considered as hopeful mobilities introduced by utopian social dreaming.

The two authors deal with the rights and possible futures of women as a general, even universal topic, with a focus on the possibilities and challenges in their own particular contexts. First, each chapter opens with a brief overview of the authors biographical contexts,

their feminist utopian enterprises, and how mobilities played a role in their lives. Then follow the case study analyses. For Hossain, these case studies are the short story "Sultana's Dream" and the novella *Padmarag*. For Harper, the case studies are the novel *Iola Leroy* and the two speeches "We Are All Bound Up Together" and "Woman's Political Future." After these three chapters, chapter four compares the results from the case study investigations and answers the research question and sub-questions. These conclusions will then inspire further reflection on the project as a whole and suggestions for future research.

Utopian Studies

Why should one not study utopias? Lyman Tower Sargent in "The Three Faces of Utopia Revisited" (1994) and Ruth Levitas in *Utopia as Method* (2013) discuss some of the main anti-utopian critiques on utopianism (9-10; 21; 26; 27 and xiii; 7-11). These include stances that utopia is outdated, naïve, or even a dangerous practice, particularly in its political execution that might lead to totalitarianism. As both Sargent and Levitas point out, these critiques rely on particular definitions of utopia: the notion that utopia is a 'perfect' society, for one, or that its political application involves the forceful regulation of a whole society. Utopianism as social dreaming, however, as an act of hopefully imagining alternatives to one's situation, is a necessary impetus for social change. To be clear, I do not attribute magical powers to utopianism, nor that someone's dream of a better society will equally improve the situations of all members. Instead, I ask this question: if we, in a lacking present, will not dream of an alternative situation, can we even aspire to it? Utopia, be it in the form of a myth, social commentary, or otherwise, imagines a different reality from one's everyday life. My definitions of utopia and utopianism will be broad ones, focused on acts of social dreaming in various guises beyond imaginaries of 'perfect' cities or lands. Significant developments within the field include opening up utopian definitions to include expressions

beyond Western literary forms and to include a wider variety of social dreaming. Since I have been trained as a literature scholar, I choose to investigate utopian writings, which have traditionally been excellent vessels for communicating utopian imaginations. What literature can do, its 'affordances,' plays a significant role in this project, for the case study authors did not restrict their utopian expressions to written text alone. When I discuss 'affordances' of writings, I use the term as Caroline Levine does in their theory on social and literary forms in *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015); as "the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs" (5). The activism, social projects, and relationships of the case study authors are as much part of their utopian practice as their writings. These areas of their lives were intricately connected, and in this thesis I discuss them as such. Writings, with their particular affordances, may take a specific place amidst these acts of social dreaming.

One of the main utopian studies debates I engage with is that of considering utopia as a method, formulated by sociologist Ruth Levitas in *Utopia as Method* (2013). With utopia as method, Levitas indicates an understanding of utopia that strays from the perfect, completed society, and instead offers a dynamic approach:

> The core of utopia is the desire for being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing. It is thus better understood as a method than a goal – a method elaborated here as the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society, or IROS. (xi)

In the context of societies' policy discourses, Levitas advocates for utopian "holistic thinking" that could facilitate important societal change. "Our very survival depends on finding another way of living," they write strikingly, for what is truly impossible is not the utopian, but to

continue practices that destroy the planet and its inhabitants for the fleeting happiness of few (xii). The writings I discuss likewise highlight in their social commentaries the need for large-scale change of harmful (legal) discourses and practices that affect many members of society. Levitas's understanding of the role of desire in utopia builds on a previous argument from *The Concept of Utopia* (1990), namely that "utopia is the expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living, and as such is braided through human culture" (*Utopia as Method* xii). In Levitas's understanding, then, utopia is interwoven in society through culture and, consequently, cultural products like fictional and non-fictional writings convey these utopian imaginings (4).

In *Utopia as Method* Levitas argues for a definition of utopia that relies on expressions of the desire for change, which in turn allows utopias to be "fragmentary, fleeting, [and] elusive" (4). For their approach to and definition of utopia Levitas is indebted to the work of Ernst Bloch, whose trilogy *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The Principle of Hope*) (first book published in 1954) argues for "the existence of a utopian impulse, an anthropological given that underpins the human propensity to long for and imagine a life otherwise" (*Utopia as Method* 5). In this principle of longing for change as the foundation of utopianism, Bloch and Levitas point towards a broad concept that is both distinguishable and elusive. Interestingly, Levitas's Imaginary Reconstitution of Society (IROS) already identifies an interconnectedness between different levels of society that pairs well with a mobilities studies approach: "For the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society intrinsically necessitates thinking about the connections between economic, social and political processes, our ways of life, and what is necessary to human flourishing" (xv). Utopia in Levitas's approach cuts across society to take into scope different factors that together constitute society as it is *and* as it could be. In a similar vein mobilities studies regard the interconnectedness of mobilities to social realities. In my thesis, I will analyse various types of mobility—or, alternately phrased, dimensions of

mobility—and how they intersect. In this regard, both the debate of utopia as method as well as Levitas's particular understanding of utopia will inform my approach to utopias and their mobilities in the writings of Hossain and Harper.

From political science Lyman Tower Sargent engages with Levitas's *The Concept of Utopia* in "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (1994) and further develops their own arguments in *Utopia: A Very Short Introduction* (2010). Like Levitas, Sargent is indebted to Bloch's approach to utopia and defines utopianism as "social dreaming" ("Three Faces" 3). In their discussion of utopia and its definitions, Sargent includes a variety of utopian expressions and points to a desire that connects these expressions; I would add that Sargent suggests a common factor that helps qualify the utopian, namely "the desire to communicate a social dream, a eutopia" (19). The communication of a social dream is an essential part of utopia's quest for social change, as it forms the link between the individual dreamer and other potential dreamers in society. Sargent furthermore identifies three main types of utopian expressions: utopian literature, communitarianism, and utopian social theory (4). Sargent states that the literary genre of utopia "refers to works which describe an imaginary society in some detail . . . —a condition in which there is human (or some equivalent) interaction in a number of different forms and in which human beings (or their equivalent) express themselves in a variety of ways" (7). Meanwhile, the definition for utopian social theory remains open-ended, but at least for Sargent consists of socio-political thinking rooted in "the idea of progress" and which is formulated alongside and in dialogue with anti-utopian streams of thought (21). In *Introduction* Sargent rethinks communitarianism or the intentional community as "utopian practice," which covers a broader range of "social and political activity intended to bring about a better society and, in some cases, personal transformation" (n.p.). Helpful here is Sargent's elaboration that "all utopian practice is about the actual rather than the fictional transformation of the everyday" (n.p.). My thesis operates at the intersection

of utopian literature—as the writings I discuss can be classed as such—and utopian practice, for they served functions in a wider social context alongside other practical projects by Hossain and Harper. As Sargent signals, while a definition of utopia is necessary, it is equally vital to incorporate enough flexibility to accommodate various types of utopia. Indeed, such boundaries should be "porous and permeable" ("Three Faces" 5). Drawing on the definitions of utopia as method, utopia as desire for change (Levitas), and utopianism as social dreaming (Sargent), I discuss my case studies as "utopian writings" to probe the boundaries and opportunities for border-crossing between utopian literature and utopian practice. I will analyse the case studies within their authors' contexts so as to better understand how these texts critique societal flaws and imagine alternatives. The position these writings have as bridges of communication between authors, readers, and a more abstract collective of society, indicates their potential for conveying critique and alternatives, which in turn may contribute to social change.

Finally, my understanding of utopianism is influenced by two more approaches, that of intercultural imaginaries of the ideal by Jacqueline Dutton, and the combination of utopian studies and mobilities studies as presented by Carlos López-Galviz, Monika Büscher and Malene Freudendal-Pedersen. Firstly, Dutton's theoretical approach to cross-cultural literary comparison of utopias provided inspiration on how to analyse and compare my own case studies in a manner that both shows their particularities and their similarities. Dutton discusses various utopian creation myths across cultures in their chapter "'Non-western' utopian traditions" (2010) through the self-coined phrase of "intercultural imaginaries of the ideal" (224). While I understand Dutton's argument for this new neutral term in contrast to utopia, which has been associated predominantly with Western narratives and traditions, I myself continue to use the terms 'utopia' and 'utopianism' as a way to broaden and open up established concepts. Dutton makes use of archetypal utopian forms as factors for cross-

cultural comparison that qualify various non-western narratives as utopian narratives. For my research, both my interdisciplinary framework and the focus on mobilities in feminist utopian writings function as common ground and a site of diversity. The introductory chapter of *Mobilities* by López-Galviz et al., "Mobilities and Utopias: a critical reorientation" (2020), provided more direct handles for my research. The authors consider how mobilities studies and utopian studies could benefit from collaborations. López-Galviz et al. emphasise two facets of utopian thinking that make utopia such a good fit for mobilities studies: "Utopia both as critique and orientation" (5). This notion presents the dual function that lies at the heart of utopia's relevance: utopia both critiques society for its flaws and looks forward (or to a distant past or alternate time and place) for an alternative, one that seems impossible at present but might be reached through particular societal change. Indeed, López-Galviz et al. argue that for analysing mobilities, utopian critique "can be a vehicle to recognise, reconsider and reimagine . . . opaque socio-spatial relationships, emphasizing the importance of everyday life and the kernels of change therein" (6). Mobilities play an integral part in relationships to space; who is able and/or allowed to enter a space, under which conditions, and to which possible effects, to name a few factors of importance. An analysis and evaluation of mobilities in these relations allows for utopian reflection and critique, and provides a concrete site for hopeful dreaming of change.

Feminist Utopias

Questions might arise about the relevance of my historical case studies today. Both Harper and Hossain wrote their critical works from their own socio-political situations: the Southern United States during the (post-)Reconstruction days (when seceded states were reintegrated in the Union and the legal status of African Americans was redefined ("Reconstruction" *Britannica*)) and its aftermath, and colonised British India, respectively.

More specifically, these women writers were part of marginalised communities within these societies. Based on their ideals and when the authors wrote and published, they can be regarded as first-wave feminists; however, some nuance is required here, as I will elaborate on later in this chapter. First-wave feminism can be considered historical, a movement linked to specific time and space; yet to state that advocating for basic human rights for women has become obsolete, or to thoughtlessly shove all advocates for women's rights under the same feminist umbrella, would be a mistake indeed. While women's civil rights and suffrage have been attained in many countries, to say that current-day feminism should no longer heed these subjects would erase the experiences of many women and feminine-presenting persons worldwide, including those in our own societies who may not receive equal chances. Studying the works of these authors can help shape a perspective on feminism that is built on solidarity across space and time and that regards the feminist aim of women's rights and gender equality as a continuous, connected quest, rather than a clear-cut succession of moments.

The writings of Harper and Hossain, then, provide the opportunity to view the feminist pursuit of gender equality as a utopian enterprise that is simultaneously historical and ongoing, transnational and situated. I call this ideal utopian because the presented gender equality was dreamt of from a place of lack in the authors' societies. This notion of utopian ideals qualifies present times as part of that same dreaming, hoping, and advocating, yet also identifies situated and context-specific challenges. Such a view of the present allows for a more interactive stance towards feminist history and may prove productive for a variety of contexts from which one can still dream of gender equality in revolutionary, innovative ways from a place of lack. In their lives, writings, and projects, Hossain and Harper show a variety of approaches to social dreaming. Their lives overlap one another's and the authors display similar goals, yet also focus on specifically situated ambitions. They travelled to speak at conferences and assemblies, they traversed the public realm to educate people, and their

writings journeyed to various audiences across time and space to convey both critique and hope. These women writers related their own experiences and those of people around them in a utopian way—not by painting castles in the sky, but by critically reflecting on society and offering thought-provoking alternatives that beam with hope.

Here I take a moment to clarify my reasons for focussing on writers who identify as women or feminine and my own intersectional identity as an academic. With my choice of case studies I wish to provide a platform for women writers, for their experiences and thoughts on gender inequalities, as well as the hopeful alternatives they imagine. The two authors of my case studies both came from marginalised communities: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain was a brown Muslim woman in colonised British India, while Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was a Black freeborn woman from the South of the United States in times of slavery first and continuous racial segregation later. As a scholar in general and one of comparative literature in particular, it is my privilege and desire to amplify voices from marginalised communities that may have struggled or yet struggle to be heard by a broader audience and academic circles. The works of Hossain and Harper have been reclaimed over the years by diligent academics who contribute to a growing scholarship on their lives, writings, and other projects, and I am indebted to these scholars for being able to read and discuss the writings of Hossain and Harper. My focus is on the case study authors, their written experiences, and their imaginations, as well as the context from which they wrote. Writing as a white, Dutch woman and university student in the twenty-first century means that my experiences differ to a large extent from those recorded by Harper and Hossain, just as our everyday lives and contexts are vastly different. However, this does not mean that we do not share similar goals or hopes, that I or others cannot take inspiration from their efforts or learn from their experiences. Instead, I seek to amplify their voices and experiences and find commonalities and differences in their use of mobilities in feminist utopian visions. On a technical note, I

refer in this thesis to my case study authors as she/her, as their identity as women and women writers is of consequence to the case studies, contexts, and general topic of this thesis. Academic authors I refer to as they/them, because in those cases the focus lies on their ideas, while their gender does not form a significant part of the discussion.

Within the scope of utopian narratives the subgenre of feminist utopias, with its own literary traditions and histories, holds an interesting place. Utopian narratives that include gender equality or a reversal of gender roles in society can be found at least as far back as the fifteenth century. Alessa Johns in her overview of feminist utopian narratives distinguishes four particular moments in history when feminist utopias thrived: "the late middle ages and beginning of the early modern period," "the 'long eighteenth century,'" "the late nineteenth and early twentieth century," "and the 1970s" (174). The perspective to an extent coincides with the feminist waves, particularly the latter two with the first wave and second wave of feminism. While Johns focusses on Anglo-European feminist literature and leaves out a range of utopian narratives from other cultures and traditions beyond the West, it serves this thesis insofar as it indicates 'utopian moments' in history and signals distinct histories of the feminist utopian genre. When I discuss feminist utopias—and more often, feminist utopian writings—I qualify these based on their critique and reflection on the contemporary state of an author's society, as well as their imagination of an alternative situation that upsets the gendered status quo towards gender equality or achieves this ideal. This has to do with my earlier statement that a utopia, in the definition I use in this thesis, does not imply a 'perfect' society, but a better alternative to the society it reflects on.

The notion of feminist waves can be helpful to draw connections between the works of authors, thinkers, and activists within a larger framework of advocating for women's rights. When discussing Hossain and Harper as first-wave feminists I refer to the historical movement that was conceptualised in hindsight from the second wave as "the period between

1848 (the Seneca Falls Convention) and 1920 (the gaining of the vote)" (Astrid Henry 58). In my studies, I will pay attention to the feminist ideas Hossain and Harper professed against the backdrop of the first wave and its characteristic tenets. Rather than force their thoughts and writings into this mould, though, I incorporate a cross-historical outlook on the feminist utopian project of gender equality and take into account local feminist efforts.

The wave model is not a neutral approach in itself. Iris van der Tuin points out that the wave model is "spatiotemporally fixed," for it predominantly focusses on feminist movements in North America and Northern and Western Europe (15). This approach, then, leaves out many other contexts and feminist initiatives. My thesis works on cases from two contexts: The United States during the antebellum, Civil War (1861–65), Reconstruction (1865-77), and post-Reconstruction days for Harper, and Bengal and India, then under British imperial rule as British India, for Hossain. These authors moreover had their own particular aims in their projects beyond a 'general' feminism: Hossain taught Muslim girls and women (Bagchi "Speculating" 70), while Harper argued both for women's rights and the abolition of slavery. To then uncritically accept feminist waves as a shared background is out of the question. The model may help understand larger tenets of feminism across national borders, such as the advocation for civil rights, education, and suffrage for women, as well as a broader call for women to engage in the public sphere rather than remain isolated in the home. When treated scrupulously and with regard for each context, the model can help distinguish common approaches in the feminist writings of Harper and Hossain. As Van der Tuin states, the wave model insinuates separate ambitions or feminist moments that follow one another (15-16), while the feminist project of advocating for rights in the face of gender inequity and a desire for gender equality may be seen as a multifaceted, continuous struggle. When women's bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are again—or still—under threat, when regimes discourage or forcefully prevent girls and women from attending education, and when gender-based

discrimination is still an everyday issue on various tiers of society, it shows how essential and valuable the rights are that earlier feminist advocates fought for, and that we should defend, guard, and advocate for these rights ourselves.

In their introduction to *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998), which focuses predominantly on feminism in the academy (7), Susan Stanford Friedman comments on the rise of 'feminisms' in contrast to feminism singular:

> In its advocacy of dialogic negotiation, *Mappings* polemically suggests that the time has come to reverse the past pluralization of feminisms based on difference, not to return to a false notion of a universal feminism that obliterates difference but rather to reinvent a singular feminism that incorporates myriad and often conflicting cultural and political formations in a global context. (4)

This perspective on feminism as a term that encapsulates clashing notions and formations is one that informs my perspective in this thesis. To compare the case studies without question as first-wave feminist writings would be a mistake, while disconnecting the writings and their authors from larger feminist debates and enterprises would equally be misguided. One does not live in a vacuum, nor does one live in constant, unmediated connection with the whole world; it is the challenge to find the bridges and borders that are crossed, to use some of Friedman's spatial imagery (3). In this line of thought, Friedman makes a similar point for the definition of feminism as Sargent does for the definition of utopianism, namely for porous borders. It is necessary to demarcate different feminist enterprises, just as it is necessary to demarcate different types of utopia, but borders can be crossed and gaps bridged. Such an understanding provides enough flexibility to include a great variety of feminisms and still function as a shared definition.

Mappings also discusses the concept of identity in its multitude of facets, such as "the meanings of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, and national origin as these axes of difference constitute multiplex identities and challenge binarist ways of thinking" (4). Such identity factors I take into account in my reading of Harper's and Hossain's writings; I wonder how their circumstances and reactions to their intersectional identities have shaped their critique and dreaming. In this line of thought, I use the terms 'intersectionality' and 'intersectional identity' to look at the variety of power structures the authors faced, as well as the communities in which they moved. Harper, for example, did not only advocate for women's suffrage, but for that of Black Americans more broadly, too, while Hossain worked together with women from various religious backgrounds, yet focussed on setting up a school for Muslim girls in particular. Eye for such nuance and particularities enriches one's understanding of these authors and their projects. Friedman argues for the use of a locational approach to feminism based on "a recognition of how different times and places produce different and changing gender systems as these intersect with other different and changing societal stratifications and movements for social justice" (5). The critiques of the authors on society and the challenges they faced stem from particular times, spaces, and social environments in which they lived, which in turn come with their own issues and possibilities of gender systems. Furthermore, an approach to feminism with permeable borders also "acknowledges the travels and travails of feminism as it migrates across multiple borders, adapting itself to new conditions" (5). One consequence of acknowledging travelling feminism for Friedman is likewise acknowledging that feminism might predominantly arise out of "transcultural interaction" rather than come in "purely indigenous forms" (5). A key part of locational feminism is this interplay between time and place and a shared sense of feminism: "Locational feminism pays attention to the specificities of time and place, but unlike fundamentalist identity politics, it is not parochially limited to a single feminist

formation and takes as its founding principle the multiplicity of heterogeneous feminist movements and the conditions that produce them" (5). This approach, which seeks a nuanced view on different feminist branches of the same specie 'feminism,' is the balance that I aspire to in my treatment of the case study materials.

To combine approaches from feminist and utopian studies comes with its own challenges. Earlier I have covered some of the main contributions by Levitas and Sargent to utopian studies debates. Both authors also discuss the study of feminist utopias by pointing out and commenting on significant contributions of fellow-academics such as Angelika Bammer and Raffaella Baccolini. Levitas compares the positions of utopia and feminism in 1960s sociology and draws some remarkable parallels:

> The overt project [of sociology] was critique, not utopia, for 'utopian' remained a derogatory term on almost all sides. Curiously, this was also partially true of feminism. Curiously, because feminism is fundamentally informed by the view that the world should be otherwise, and that critical knowledge is important as a route to women's emancipation. . . . Yet the suggestion that feminism is an intrinsically utopian perspective was unpopular within the academy, largely because feminism struggled so hard for recognition and acceptance. This acceptance remains incomplete . . . (*Method* 95-96)

While utopianism and feminism were both at a disadvantage academically, the merits of their working together resonate from the parallels between them. In the 1970s feminists began to reclaim utopias and the utopian form "'as a vital dimension of a radical politics'" (Bammer per Levitas 108) and indeed the partnering of these fields of study is productive to both. Levitas presents Bammer's work *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the*

1970s (2012) as an illustration of how elements of utopia and ideology intertwine; while "actual utopias are always historically situated and thus contain both utopian and ideological elements," the focus of feminist utopias on "gender inequality is sometimes accompanied by alarming blindness to questions of ethnicity and class" (Levitas 109). Such oversights as a consequence of an exclusive focus on gender inequality are stumbling blocks to heed in both feminist utopian narratives and academic studies of them.

Levitas further complicates feminist utopias through the question of utopian form: "Utopian writing by women has not, however, typically taken the form of the fictional utopia as conventionally understood; in itself this requires a broadening of the concept of utopia from a literary genre to the more diffuse Blochian not yet" (109). The Blochian not yet refers to utopia's quality of imagining of what not yet exists. Sargent notes a similar vein of thought in Baccolini's "Breaking the Boundaries: Gender, Genre, and Dystopia" (1990), namely "that women writers have used various strategies to undermine the dominance of genre. Female protagonists are a central strategy but so are the frequent use of irony, detachment, and humor" ("Three Faces" 7-8). These are specific aspects to look out for when studying a feminist utopian text, as narrative forms themselves might be subversive. The undermining of genre is related to the notion that

> "genres are cultural constructions; implied in the notion of genre and of boundaries lies a binary opposition between what is 'normal' and what is 'deviant'—a notion that feminist criticism has attempted to deconstruct since the difference consigns feminine practice to inferiority . . . " (Baccolini per Sargent 7)

Particular attention to form of these feminist utopias is in place, then, as these forms themselves may be critical, imaginative tools to simultaneously fight for women's rights and

against oppression. Finally, in line with Bammer and Lucy Sargisson, Levitas argues that the "openness, the radical indeterminacy of consciousness and of the future, are seen as feminism's contribution to a new utopianism" (109). Bammer's approach aligns with Levitas's argument for utopia as method, as a "'series of utopian moments within the shifting configurations of the possible'" (Bammer per Levitas 109). This new utopianism informs my thesis, a utopianism of active methods, affordance of form, and chiselling away at the foundations of flawed structures to imagine and build better ones.

Mobilities Studies

When considering classic utopian tales with a perfect city, society, or paradise of sorts, a key element is that the place is hard or impossible to reach. This, then, is where mobilities come into view. When Thomas More coined the phrase 'utopia,' it involved a pun in Greek between *eutopia* (good place) and *utopia* (non-place or no place). If a utopian society was easy to reach, many might have ventured there already; instead, it made more sense to imagine such an ideal society far removed from the author in time (ages ago or ahead) or space (an 'undiscovered' or 'unknown' part of earth or another planet entirely), sometimes both. These are places that are known to some extent and can thus be imagined, but are not known well or widely enough to dispel all mystery and refute some necessary suspension of disbelief. Once a place is hard to reach, yet the observer must reach it in order to discuss it, travel becomes an important crux in the story. One might happen upon a secret cave or road, or shipwreck on unknown shores, or build a flying machine. In the case studies for this thesis, the road to the utopia, too, plays an important role, both in terms of travel at plot level and as imagined changes in society. In addition, an important aspect of investigating mobilities in feminist narratives relates to embodied travel and gender-based cultural/societal restrictions that may impact one's mobilities. The degree of physical mobility and social mobility granted

to individuals within a society plays a decisive role in which people one can meet and which places one can visit. At the same time, a circulation of utopian thought through literary works or the upholding of social networks through letters or meetings in common spaces allows for an exchange of ideas, hopes, and dreams. In that sense, such connections—through the aid of media—may be able to overcome boundaries dictated by society and thus feature as a utopian space or endeavour of their own *within* reality. These mobilities and immobilities also fuel the dreams and hopes for gender equality and what this may mean for one's freedom to move, which is another reason why I investigate the role of mobilities in these narratives.

In order to conduct my comparative literary research on mobilities, I turn to the work of scholars such as Marian Aguiar, Charlotte Mathieson, and Lynne Pearce, who trace collaborations between mobilities studies and the humanities from the early days of mobilities studies. With their collection *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* (2019) Aguiar et al. seek "to further advance the recent 'humanities turn' in mobilities studies with a particular focus on scholars who approach the field through literary and cultural studies" (2). As a comparative literature scholar, I approach mobilities from a humanities perspective with a particular focus on literary representation. Mobilities studies, as defined by Aguiar et al., "works towards a rigorous assessment of the social and spatial aspects of mobile practices within their cultural milieu" (2), which incorporates various scales of movement from the international to the local. Mobilities studies' standpoint that different scales of movement together make up a society's mobile culture (2) indeed facilitates collaborations with the humanities. Relations between material mobilities and textual representations remain a site of productive debate; as Aguiar et al. point out, the two types should not be treated as interchangeable, yet—in line with the arguments of scholars such as Henri Lefebvre—imagination plays a substantial role in experiencing and shaping spaces in the material world (7-8). Textual representations of mobilities similarly play a part in these processes of meaning-making, both representing what

is there and infusing these mobilities with meaning through a variety of literary devices. Aguiar et al. discuss the merits of viewing texts through a "'distributed consciousness' approach" which

> enables us to grasp the contingency of the human subject within a 'system-based' social order . . . to recognise that 'mobile [human] lives' (Elliott and Urry 2009) cannot be separated from those of other animals or, indeed, the machines, commodities and services that constitute the fabric of daily life. (9)

Such an approach pairs well with an intersectional feminist view, which recognises how people navigate various social structures, and prompts one to consider how means of transport, social status, and commodities meaningfully interlink with mobile lives. Indeed, feminist studies have left significant impressions on mobilities studies—in particular feminist geography—such as a focus on corporeality of mobility, which stems from the understanding of "the body as a place within socially produced space" (14), and "'emotional geographies,'" which concerns the "interrelationship of embodiment with subjectivity" (15). Particularly relevant for my study is a consequence of investigating embodied mobilities:

> Studying the body has also allowed scholars to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which factors such as class, gender, race, and sexuality, impact upon travel, moving away from the universal to a better understanding of how different bodies move and negotiate spaces differently[.] (15)

Approaches of embodied mobility bring together feminist theories of identity with mobilities studies to significant effect: a viewpoint of embodied mobility invites scrutiny of the

sociocultural dimensions of mobilities. As I will demonstrate in my approach for reading Hossain's and Harper's texts, the tools and perspectives I deploy from utopian studies, feminist studies, and mobilities studies approach society, the intersectional individual, and mobilities in their own ways. Merged together, this view helps me analyse the role of mobilities in these feminist utopian writings.

A subsequent question dawns, namely how to approach literature from a mobilities perspective. First off, written texts lend themselves well to presenting utopias and thinking through and presenting mobilities because of their affordances. Such affordances may include the ability to convey narrative through language, use descriptions and imagery, include both narrated commentary and character dialogues, and the use of metaphors, symbolism, themes, and motifs. In their introductory article for *Mobilities* (2017) on the role of humanities in mobilities studies, Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce discuss among others the issue of how literary—and often fictional—representations of mobilities relate to empirical 'real-life' mobilities. Most theorists, Merriman and Pearce state, work around this question by considering the literary representations as "prompts to *model* theoretical possibilities which may, in turn, be put to work alongside more empirical data" (502). Such a move does not, and does not seek to, answer the question at hand. Various theorists, in line with the observation by Aguiar et al. mentioned before, have instead argued that relations to spaces are "thoroughly mediated" (503) and therefore the textual plays a part in our lived experience. Merriman and Pearce point out another obstacle, which also provides its own possibility for humanities and mobilities studies' collaboration: texts "by definition . . . trade in representations of our individual and collective *pasts*," while social science research "is often focused on the present and the future" (503). These two perspectives seem to clash. However, Merriman and Pearce state, these perspectives can work together depending on how one understands the role of pasts in mobilities. "Texts, then, may be seen to do much more than

take mobilities scholars 'inside' the embodied/sensuous present; they also dig deep into the ontological past of that experience, and through the author/protagonist's reflections, reveal its unique history" (503). Rather than conflict, the perspectives offered by texts and empirical data may enrich one another. Merriman and Pearce point out one humanities contribution to mobilities studies in particular, that of "'kin-aesthetics:'"

> Kinaesthesis, the sensation of movement, particularly the sense of muscular effort relating to voluntary embodied movements, is central to many arts and humanities practices, experiments, and expressions. This is particularly the case when the concept is framed broadly as kin-aesthetics – the aesthetics of movement – rather than simply associated with the muscular sensations of those who move. This is movement enacted, felt, perceived, expressed, metered, choreographed, appreciated and desired. (498)

As humanities approaches lend themselves particularly well to studies of such aesthetics of movement and experiences of mobility, they may provide tools and approaches that add to debates on mobilities studies. With the particular affordances of writings, authors can describe movement, convey speed through rhythm or metre, and reflect on the meanings of movement either through narration or their character's voices. Looking at experiences of mobilities from a historical perspective, Merriman and Pearce argue, also provides context and nuance for our observations and imaginings of the present and future:

> Sensations, registers and experiences of movement, speed and acceleration are not simply confined to late twentieth or twenty-first century societies and cultures, and

> have a long history to which arts and humanities scholars (alongside social science scholars) have made a major contribution. (499)

Even when imagining futures or alternative realities (as is often the case in utopian narratives), these imaginations are rooted in a certain context and history. Where the acceleration of a steam train may have been the epitome of speed for one group of people, a similar experience of intense speed may be experienced by others when sailing the sea or racing in a chariot. Kin-aesthetics in writings may form precious artefacts of experienced mobilities and their imagination-fuelling properties.

Peter Adey picks up on questions prompted by the experiential aspects of mobility in the article "If Mobility is Everything Then It Is Nothing" (2006). The interactions between people and spaces are fundamental for conceptualising mobilities, as are the relations between different mobilities and supposed immobilities. Adey approaches these topics through John Urry's concept of the mobility/moorings dialectic, which entails that mobility needs context to exist and be understood—every aircraft needs an airport, to use Adey's imagery. Adey investigates "the notion that social life must operate through constitutive relationships of movement, relative immobilities and differences in speed" (77). Our experiences of speed and mobility are based on difference—an acceleration or slowing down compared to other movement—and furthermore our relations are temporal, as we experience movement in terms of time and space (84). Expanding this fundamental notion to social life, Adey observes that "the complexities of life seem to require immobile moorings that are solid, static, and immobile" (86). In order to go to work or school, the start and finish of one's journey need to be stable to some extent. Between A and B mobility unfolds as the person in question commutes. When it comes to the politics of mobility, Adey explains that these revolve around two notions in particular:

> First, that movement is differentiated – that there is a politics to these differentials. . . . And second, that it is related in different ways, it means different things, to different people, in differing social circumstances. (83)

The difference between mobilities and the way they relate and interact constitutes how we understand these mobilities and experience them—and, in line with this, how "illusions of mobility and immobility are created" (83). When we are walking and we see a train rush past, we experience different mobilities. These do not have a direct effect on each other, but they make our paces seem slow and the train's speed fast. Beside this, the time-space compression of the train is vastly different from the pedestrian or hiker, and those on board the train are able to travel relatively longer distances in shorter amounts of time than the people on foot. These different and related mobilities provide different opportunities for moving, which in turn impacts the travellers' social lives. Control over these different mobilities and their relatedness constitutes what Adey terms a "related politics of (im)mobilities" (90). This understanding of mobilities and relative immobilities, paired with attention to kin-aesthetics, provides a productive approach for reading different mobilities in my case studies. In line with Adey's related politics of (im)mobilities, I will look at various dimensions of these mobilities—physical mobility, social mobility, political mobility, and even intellectual mobility—and their intersections, for one how physical and social mobilities restrain or provide encounters with other people and their beliefs, stories, and presence, which in turn might inspire a person to review their situation and find innovative mobilities.

In their introduction to a special issue of *Mobilities* (2022), Genevieve Carpio, Natchee Blue Barnd, and Laura Barraclough discuss mobilities in combination with Indigenous identity and race questions in settler colony contexts. This article contributed to

my awareness of tensions between intersectional identities, mobilities, and power structures and how such tensions might surface in the colonial context of British India for Hossain and the postcolonial, settler context of America during and after the institution of slavery for Harper. The main concept that will inform my thesis from this article is that of "mobility sovereignty," namely "an interdisciplinary analytic referring to the ability to choose when, where, how, and for what purposes to engage in movement" (5). As discussed by Adey before, mobilities politics relate to the physical and social dimensions of experienced (im)mobilities; mobility sovereignty pays particular attention to various factors within these power structures that enable or disable people from moving or staying put as they choose. Carpio et al. align with Indigenous studies scholarship in their understanding of mobility sovereignty as "practiced at the scale of the body and at the scale of the collective, both of which can function as inherent expressions of being-in-the-world" (5). An awareness of the interplay between various scales of mobility politics—particularly of the individual, the collective, and the larger, more abstract collective of society—will feature in my thesis, as will the question of how mobilities and immobilities are granted and/or enforced on these different scales.

Here I seize the opportunity to discuss an important mobilities distinction that plays a part in this thesis, namely the notion of voluntary versus involuntary (im)mobility. In the same way that rights and freedom constitute the possibility to travel or to stay put as one wishes, a lack of these or an active oppression of such rights and freedom may constitute involuntary mobilities and immobilities. In the writings I discuss by Hossain, involuntary immobility comes to the fore particularly in the practices of seclusion that restrict Sultana and Zainab in their respective stories to the domestic sphere, while certain narrative events cause them to move out of these spheres. Meanwhile Harper emphasises in her writings the lack of civil rights for women of colour and the oppression of people of colour more generally during

the institution of slavery and later that of segregation. At the start of my thesis, I thought that I would look only at the utopian, hopeful aspects of mobilities, much as the *The Virago Book of Women Travellers* (1994) does. In the introduction, Mary Morris states:

> For various reasons, we decided not to include involuntary travel. It would have seem casual—disrespectful, even—to juxtapose slave narratives, pioneer literature, and war stories of flight and displacement with accounts of deserts crossed, swamps forded, and mountains climbed by choice" (xxi).

I commend the editor for this choice and for their explanation. The mention of voluntary mobilities in contrast to involuntary ones made me wonder about my own case studies and once I dove deeper into the materials, I continuously encountered two stances towards mobilities, for critique and hopeful alternatives together constituted the brilliance and fundament of these utopian texts. If I only sought to investigate how mobilities increase freedom and enable characters in their feminist enterprises, I might have disregarded involuntary (im)mobilities, but it is the strength of utopia to both critique and dream, to delve for hope where it seems the furthest away. I find myself with the opportunity to analyse how mobilities function in these narratives and choose to investigate how they are used to either extinguish hope or kindle it.

Debates

In formulating an answer to the question of what role(s) mobilities may play in feminist utopian writings, I will engage with utopian studies, feminist studies, and mobilities studies from a comparative literature standpoint. Using tools from narratology and close reading alongside concepts and approaches from these fields, I set out on my journey. The

first academic debate I partake in, is that of considering utopia as method rather than as a static form. In line with Levitas and Sargent I look at utopias as products of social dreaming based on desire for change. In line with López-Galviz et al. I consider the dual function of critique and orientation—reflection and imagination—as an essential aspect of utopia that plays a part in the sharing of social dreams with other potential dreamers. The intercultural approach of Dutton inspired me to find common structures, themes, motifs, and intersectional mobilities, as well as to seek out the particularities of these writings in their critique of and orientation from their own contexts. As stated before, in my understanding of 'utopian writings' I bring together Sargent's notions of utopian literature and utopian practice, as these writings intersect with a variety of utopian enterprises by their authors. The conflation of utopian literature and utopian practice in utopian writings allows me to investigate and test definitions of utopia and utopianism presented before, as well as to reconsider the media-specific affordances of these writings. Through these approaches I emphasise the vitality and urgency of social dreaming for societal change, thereby joining the quest of many utopian scholars.

Partly inspired by the locational feminism advocated by Friedman, I look at a variety of writings by Hossain and Harper, in whose works I look both for continuity and overlap in aims and literary tools, and for particularities and disparities in their utopian expressions. These early feminist writings from the contexts of colonial British India and the United States during the antebellum, Civil War, and (post-)Reconstruction require attention to context and time, yet can both classify as feminist writings when using the flexible definition Friedman offers. The wave critique by Van der Tuin and Henry's critical discussion of feminist waves lead me to both situate Hossain and Harper within the first feminist wave, as well as to remain aware of what locational feminism may look like in these contexts and how it may differ from the quest for rights by white, Western women. Rather than treat these case studies as remnants

of a long-gone past, I consider how they can help us understand debates, feminist aims, and situated struggles today. When focussing on feminist utopias in particular, I take precautions through an intersectional approach to the blind spots and weaknesses that may occur in feminist utopias mentioned by Bammer and Baccolini, as well as the strengths and possibilities of feminist utopian writings as pointed out by them, Levitas, and Sargent. In line with the view of utopia as critique and orientation, my definition of feminist utopianism is 'social dreaming of an alternative situation based on lacks of gender equality in one's own society.' Important to note here is that this does not mean that the utopia needs to have reached absolute gender equality or that such absolute equality is stated as the ultimate goal. In the first place, to speak of utopia as method means to look at expressions that move towards a better situation: not ideal as in perfect, but ideal as in imagined, better, and worthy of pursuit. Secondly, authors can be critical of what gender equality may bring about—that it might not fix all issues—particularly when rights for women, such as the right to vote, in a society that oppresses people of colour does not necessarily mean that all women get equal rights. Gender equality and its flipside gender inequality here serve as common factors through which these narratives discuss the situations of particular women in their respective societies.

Finally, by focussing on mobilities in these narratives, I seek to contribute to the mobilities turn in humanities—and the humanities turn in mobilities, from another viewpoint—and in particular how mobilities may play a role in comparative literary analyses of utopian texts. Since the journey to a utopia is a fundamental part of the notion of an ideal yet unreachable place or situation, mobilities studies lend themselves well to utopian readings. For my understanding of mobilities studies I make use of the definition by Aguiar et al. and will likewise focus on "the social and the spatial aspects of mobile practices within their cultural milieu" (2). While fictional mobilities cannot be equalled to the experience of

mobility itself, both Aguiar et al. through a distributed consciousness approach and Merriman and Pearce through kinaesthetics point out the interconnectedness of experienced mobilities and imagined ones. My thesis will draw on these approaches and consider the affordances of various types of writings for conveying experienced mobilities. Experienced mobility is also interconnected with one's intersectional identity, much as mobilities studies investigates the social and the spatial in a cultural setting. Both Adey and Aguiar et al. pay attention to this, the first through related politics of (im)mobility, the latter through the notion of embodied mobilities. This realisation of interconnections between identity and mobilities features heavily in my thesis, as does the experiential aspect of mobilities; in my close readings, I distinguish different types of mobilities based on this relation between the social and the spatial, namely physical, social, political, and intellectual mobilities, as well as the distinction between voluntary and involuntary mobilities. Since education is an essential part of Hossain's and Harper's utopian visions and a spearpoint of the first-wave feminist movement, I consider education as mobility in the sense that it can change someone's social status and connect like-minded individuals (social mobility), and it can broaden someone's experience and perception of mobility and immobility, including their opportunities for different sorts of movements. The notion of moorings and mobilities by John Urry and mentioned by Adey does not play a part per se, but the general sense of places that facilitate stasis or mobility underlies this project. Finally, in tandem with the related politics of (im)mobility, mobility sovereignty has an important part to play, particularly in the investigation of relations between power structures and voluntary/involuntary (im)mobilities.

In The Footsteps of Freedom

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

There are various reasons to regard Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) as a feminist utopian woman writer and to consider her writings in light of a wider range of hopeful social projects. Multilingual author, teacher, and advocate of women's rights, Hossain achieved remarkable feats during her life and changed the lives of many. Growing up in British India, she was educated by two older siblings in Bengali, English, and literature, among others. Later, her husband valued her intellect, too, and supported her various enterprises, including her writing. During their marriage, Hossain developed her writing skills and published in various journals.

After the death of her husband in 1909, Hossain founded a girls' school in Bhagalpur, Bihar, with money inherited from her late husband for this purpose. In 1911, Hossain restarted the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School in Kolkata. Running a school for girls as a Muslim woman in British India came with many challenges; yet, like her dedicated siblings, Hossain would not allow criticism, slander, or setbacks to stop her from providing education. The school grew and developed over time from a class with eight students to a "High Primary School" with 105 students in 1916 (Mohammad Quayum "A Chronology" XIII). By the time of her death in 1932, the school had become a government-funded High English School (XIV) and it remains a thriving institution to this day, in its present avatar as a government-supported school that welcomes students from all religious communities. The yearning for education connected Hossain to her sister, her brother, and her husband, but also drove wedges between her and other relatives, such as her conservative father and Hossain's stepdaughter and son-in-law; hostility by the latter party concerning her financial investment in women's education even led her to close her first school and move to Kolkata (Quayum "A

Biographical Essay" XX; XXIV). These instances show the prominent part education played in her life and mobilities, its sacrifices as well as its rewards. Education plays a key part in her feminist utopian expressions, too; as Quayum points out, as early as 1903 Hossain "fervently argued that lack of education was the root cause of women's suffering; the servitude and bondage that had been inflicted on them, had been possible only because of their ignorance" (XXIV). Hossain sought to change this situation by providing and arguing for women's education. This critical stance and focus on education as a feminist venture echoes through "Sultana's Dream" and *Padmarag*.

1916 also counts as the year that Hossain founded the "Bengal branch of the Anjuman-i-Khawateen Islam" (Barnita Bagchi *Two Feminist Utopias* x), the Muslim Women's Association. She was even elected President of the association in 1932. The women within Anjuman-i-Khawateen Islam undertook activities such as

> setting up . . . vocational training centres for women from financially deprived backgrounds, providing aid for widows in distress, helping young girls from underprivileged backgrounds to settle down by getting them married off and persuading educated women to teach in slums and train their residents for different kinds of income-generating work. (Bagchi x)

These activities—which include particular mobilities—also feature in the literary text of *Padmarag*, as Bagchi notes. Parallels between the writings of Hossain and her practical utopian projects lead me to investigate the utopian ideas in her writings as connected to her other projects, the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School and the Muslim Women's Association. Stella Chitralekha Biswas notices similar relations between Hossain's "visions of emancipated Muslim womanhood [which] found expression in some of her speculative

writings" and the association which "held various debates, meetings and conferences on the issues of Muslim women's emancipation, education and reform" (43). These two projects give an impression of Hossain's "feminist and reformist position" in which education played a fundamental role (Bagchi "Speculating" 72).

Beside the two practical projects of the school and association, Hossain was a prolific and versatile author. Rather than remaining within one literary genre, she successfully tried her hand at many. From essays on the state of women in British India and the need for women's education, to imaginative short stories and intricate, realist narratives. She took strengths from various genres—the sharpness of satire, the philosophical flow of (religious) poetry, and the elaborate worldbuilding and formats of narrative prose—and deftly wielded them in both Bengali and English. "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain is considered the first and foremost feminist of Bengali Muslim society . . . for both her literature and her commitment to educating women practically," Danielle Hall notes (57). Feminist utopian thinking courses through her literature and practical projects. To this day, she is remembered as a ground-breaking author and woman, who stood up for the rights of women on the margins of society and as a teacher who did all in her power to provide women education in her own lifetime.

"Sultana's Dream"

The first literary utopia by Hossain I discuss, is "Sultana's Dream" (1905). The text was originally written in English and published in *The Indian Ladies' Magazine*. When the protagonist and narrator, Sultana, lounges in her bedroom and contemplates "the condition of Indian womanhood" (3), a lady appears in her room. At first, she takes the visitor for her friend, Sister Sara, and she continues to use this name even when she realises the woman is actually a stranger. 'Sister Sara' invites Sultana on a walk to show and tell her about Ladyland, a peaceful and innovative place where women are in charge and men are restricted

to the *mardana*—an inverted version of de *zenana*, the private quarters of the home where women might live in seclusion. During their tour, Sultana eventually slips from the air-car and wakes up to find herself in her bedroom, "still lounging in the easy-chair" (14). "Sultana's Dream" is a piece of utopian fiction that also combines elements such as a fablelike brevity, philosophical conversations, and social commentary, that contribute to the richness of the text.

Modes of Transport

The narrative begins in stasis, namely with Sultana in the zenana. Seclusion is one of a myriad of customs associated with *purdah*, cultural practices based on maintaining women's modesty through veiling in the shape of modest garments and/or through secluding women to particular spaces. The appearance of the woman whom Sultana mistakes for Sister Sara is the first sign of physical mobility in the story. However, the movement itself is invisible: "All of a sudden a lady stood before me; how she came in, I do not know" (3). Earlier, Sultana as narrator already mentions that "I am not sure whether I dozed off or not. But, as far as I remember, I was wide awake" (3). The question of whether this was a dream and therefore whether mobility has to adhere to a certain realist logic is posed at the beginning of the story. At the end, Sultana describes her fall from the air-car, which "startled me out of my dream" (14). Even though there is a clearer connection between the fall and waking on the sofa, there is still a moment of invisible or incomprehensible movement, even if this means moving from the subconscious realm of dreams to the waking world. This is not a movement Sultana can easily—or rather, consciously—make herself, and may tie in with the vision of Ladyland as a utopia, an alternative reality beyond her reach. Hall reads Hossain's use of the dream concept as a means "to destabilise our understanding of the text as a mere story" and points towards Hossain's play with "the binaries of night and day, and states of repose and activity" (59). The dream concept, combined with Sultana as "representative of the ordinary colonial Bengali

housewife" and "the possibility that such advanced thought processes exist in the mind of the text's readership," makes it impossible to dismiss the dream as only a dream; instead, the audience is left with "the concept of Ladyland as a possibility of a lived reality rather than a mere fantasy" (59). In contrast to Ladyland, there may not be a female ruler to demand education for her female subjects, so the road to a society similar to Ladyland is not clearly mapped out yet. However, the narrative shows streams of thought and actions that could take place in Sultana's world, too, such as the education of women and their leaving the zenanas.

In Ladyland, Sister Sara explains, there is no sign of "'rail road nor any paved streets,'" to which Sultana replies: "'Therefore neither street nor railway accidents occur here'" (12). As the conversation swiftly moves on, this comment is easily overlooked, yet it presents a significant point on mobility in Ladyland. The Ladylanders cross long distances by "aerial conveyances" that run on electricity and hydrogen, also called 'air-cars' (12-14). The country, therefore, assigns separate spaces to different forms and scales of mobility: air for long-distance journeys, ground for travels on foot. The two forms in theory do not cross each other's paths. Bagchi notes that "[while] walking is more allied to the garden-like, green, and pastoral quality of the feminist utopian vision, flying is more allied to the technophilia, futurism, and love of the sciences" ("Speculating" 73). In these distinct ways of transport, Hossain brings together utopian visions that may otherwise be seen as conflicted—the pastoral, traditional, natural utopia and the scientifically ingenious, futuristic utopia—much in the same way that she presents womanhood; on the one hand, harmonious and traditional, while peace and virtue are increased rather than destroyed by education and scientific inventions. The lack of vehicles on the streets does not seem to lead to inactivity or quiet in the country. Instead, when Sultana enters town it is "fully awake and the streets alive with bustling crowds" (3). Productivity then might not have to be exclusively linked to the speed of railways.

When Sister Sara invites Sultana to "come out and have a look at our garden" (3), she introduces the main mode of transport for the Ladylanders: walking. It is puzzling at first that Sultana enters Ladyland rather than a garden as one might expect, but soon Sister Sara explains how the Queen of Ladyland wishes to turn the whole country into one large garden as well. The garden imagery is meaningfully linked to mobility, as the garden organisation of the land promotes walking. Early on their tour over paths "covered with moss and flowers" (4), Sultana comments that she enjoys the paths yet does not like to "'tread on the tender and sweet flowers.'" Sister Sara replies, "'Never mind, dear Sultana; your treading will not harm them; they are street flowers'" (4). This is an interesting comment in light of the arguments for the seclusion of women that the story counters. Sultana explains that women are kept in the zenanas because they are weaker than men and therefore in need of protection, while "Sultana's Dream" shows the resilience, intellect, and ingenuity of women as a different and ultimately superior form of strength. The word play between "street" and "sweet" strengthens the association. These women may appear and perhaps even be tender and sweet like flowers, but they are flowers used to the streets; the Ladylanders are not afraid of hard work and no matter how downtrodden they may have been in the past, they will not be permanently trampled.

As I will explain further on, the activity of walking itself also has various functions and social implications within the story, but here I wish to dwell a little longer on the impact of walking and the role of the garden on the utopian image presented by "Sultana's Dream." Hossain connects an enterprising enthusiasm for science and knowledge with a lively garden space. A garden can be a space of leisure, where one can exercise mind and body. Ladyland knows paths, but they are covered in moss and flowers; it knows traffic, but no traffic that changes the design of the ground it starts from or interferes with pedestrians. There seems to be a significant relationship between the environmental and the organisational aspects that

together constitute a garden. In a similar vein, the Ladylanders seek to discover and find the ecological treasures of their country, rather than claim and take them—an attitude which rings of anti-colonial critique that appears in the story (14). On the one hand, Sister Sara explains that she and her countrywomen "'are all very busy making nature yield as much as she can'" (12). On the other hand, the Queen of Ladyland states that they "'dive deep into the ocean of knowledge and try to find out the precious gems, which nature has kept in store for us. We enjoy nature's gifts as much as we can'" (14). This attitude might seem somewhat paradoxical at first, but the elements also complement each other. The inhabitants work together with nature to enhance their lives, learning from nature and receiving valuable gifts without demanding too much. Depending on how one imagines a garden in comparison to an ecological environment, the utopia imagined by a Queen who loves botany (12) can be seen as either overruling the ecological environment with human intellect or as understanding the environment's potential and playing into that. The latter attitude comes to the fore in the sentiments of Sister Sara and Sultana.

Mobility of the Mind

Mobility of the mind—or intellectual mobility, as I will refer to it, namely the chance to encounter new idea(l)s and reflect on one's mobility—plays a part in "Sultana's Dream" at two levels: in the narrative frame of Sultana's dreaming and in the founding and organisation of Ladyland. I wish to begin with the latter, as it might illuminate what is at stake in Sultana's reality. Despite its central role in the constitution and rule of Ladyland, education started with one individual: the Queen. The statement that the Queen was particularly fond of science is immediately followed by her order "that all the women in her country should be educated" (7). The intellectual mobility of one would shape the future of many. Education as a mobility of the mind to explore new ideas, speak up for one's rights, and find solutions to problems is

one of the pillars of Ladyland's society. As I will further elaborate in the section on mobility as political action, education is what saves Ladyland from the foreign invader. When military actions have failed against the enemy, the wise women of the country come together and the Queen tells them: """If you cannot save your country for lack of physical strength[.] . . . Try to do so by brain power"'" (10). The women follow the Queen's incentive: they combine the fruit of their intellect—their scientific inventions—and their intellectual sisterhood—the academic community of teachers and students—to bring an end to the war in the form of a march.

The Ladylanders' mobility of the mind is also the major difference between this utopia and Sultana's dystopian reality. Sultana supposedly falls asleep and wakes up later in her bedroom, a space significantly smaller than the country of Ladyland she could roam with her guide. She is lounging there and "thinking lazily" (3). The word choice is worth paying attention to, as 'lazy' stands in stark contrast to the industrious lifestyle of the Ladylanders, who balance work and leisure. However, this laziness is not a chosen but an imposed state, for the zenana hardly allows for engaging physical activities. It is the mind, on the contrary, that is still able to roam far beyond the walls that confine its inhabitants. Indeed, Sultana once uses the image of a frog in a well to describe herself in her guide's eyes, a creature trapped within stone walls (6). This image features in other works of Hossain, too, for example in the essay that translates as "A Frog in a Well Beholding the Himalaya" (Hans Harder 827). It stems from the Sanskrit expression *kupa manduka*, 'frog in the well.' Mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik identifies the term as "one of derision for the intellectually complacent" as it describes a pompous person who, like a frog in a well, "imagines the well, its home, to be the whole world" (n.p.). This image ties in with the earlier dichotomy of inside/outside and its links to restraint/freedom and intellectual (im)mobility. The interaction with Ladyland broadens

Sultana's environments and where her mind may roam, showing her mountains where before she saw only the walls of the zenana.

Another image, mentioned by Sister Sara, directly links the Ladylanders' victory to their intellectual mobility. When Sultana asks how the women of Ladyland came to be in charge, she remarks, "'[w]omen's brains are somewhat quicker than men's'" (9). This image involves movement, how woman's intellect might outrun man's. Yet, no matter how marvellous the feats of the students and teachers in the all-women universities of Ladyland were, the men would not recognise their intellect. Instead, their inventions were ridiculed by men and the two Lady Principals told their affronted young students that "'they should reply, not by word, but by deed, if ever they got the opportunity'" (9). This opportunity was the foreign invasion, where desperation made their countrymen welcome any possible solution to the conflict. It proved the ultimate moment for the women to use their intellect to better their individual situations as well as change the politics of their country.

Mobility as Social Connection

Different forms of transport within Ladyland not only allow the inhabitants to fulfil practical aims, but they also have a role in the social connections among people. Once again, I turn my attention to the importance of walking. Firstly, walking is an activity that connects Sultana's experience in Ladyland to memories from her own reality. The woman she calls Sister Sara reminds her of the friend with whom she

> used to have . . . walks when we were at Darjeeling. Many a time did we walk hand in hand and talk light-heartedly in the botanical gardens there. I fancied, Sister Sara had probably come to take me to some such garden and readily accepted her offer and went out with her. (4)

Not only does the woman she sees remind Sultana of Sister Sara, but the leisurely and friendship-related activity of walking—and walking hand in hand in particular—convinces her at the outset that this must be her friend, inviting her for their usual walk. During these walks, the two friends used to talk light-heartedly, which might imply a connection between the activity and/or place of the walks and a sense of light-heartedness, friendship, and freedom even. Different moments in time become tied to one another through this activity. The walks almost become a utopia of their own, a pocket in space and time where and when Sultana and her friend can speak light-heartedly. It is significant that Sultana continues to call the stranger 'Sister Sara,' even when she notices that she has been mistaken (3). The stranger keeps referring to her with her name, Sultana, and the two walk as if they were old friends. By using names of women who *are* friends, the two are allowed to walk about as if they knew each other, even if Sultana is nervous and hesitant at first. Whereas walking allows Sultana and her guide to converse and engage with Ladyland, the air-car provides a birds' eye view of the country. As a narrative device, the story can easily and swiftly switch from one place to another through the air-car's journey. It is remarkable that there is no conversation during the air-car travels, as if dialogue, too, belongs to the realm of walking rather than flying. These different forms of mobility then might include different possibilities for social interaction.

On their way, Sultana and Sister Sara come across many other women in the streets; upon having met "more than a hundred women while walking there," the protagonist wonders where the men are (4). Early on, she explains her nervousness about encountering men, for she is a "purdahnisian woman" (4)—that is, a woman observing the rules of purdah. With all men in the mardanas, women can easily remain in purdah and go about their business outside the house, as they are surrounded by women only. Walking, to come back to Sultana's comment of meeting over a hundred women, is a social activity that also allows women to

meet outside. Particularly in Ladyland, where it is easier for women to be mobile and meet than in Sultana's reality, walking provides opportunities for social interaction. Sultana and Sister Sara even meet the Queen of Ladyland while the latter is out walking with her young daughter in her own palace gardens (13-14). Walking seems a primary activity among the women of the country and rather than restricting its delights to certain times or rules—Sultana at first thinks it acceptable to go out for a walk only because it is night-time and the men-servants should be fast asleep (3)—there speaks an abundance of freedom and mobility from the steps of the Ladylanders.

The meeting with the Queen is, nonetheless, made possible by the swift transportation by air-car. The "square piece of plank" (13) on which they sit can fit the two travellers comfortably. Although it does not say how many passengers the air-car will take, the repetitious figuring of pairs—a couple of seats, two hydrogen balls, two winglike blades—might signify that the air-car is also made for two rather than a larger company. The screwing on of the seats can also indicate that the amount of travellers it would fit can be adapted depending on the need. Rather than the carriage being a social experience of its own, it brings the persons from one place to another to then engage in conversation and walking.

Mobility as Political Action

One of the most striking moments of mobility in the story falls into the category of mobility as political action, namely the women's march to battle. The king of a neighbouring country, who "cared more for power than for good government," declared war against Ladyland when the Queen refused to extradite political refugees (9). When all hope seems lost during the enemy invasion, the wise ladies of Ladyland congregate with the Queen to think up a plan that might save their homeland. When the Lady Principal of one of the two women's

universities sees an alternative purpose for a machine that collects sunlight, the following comes to pass:

> 'Then the Lady Principal with her two thousand students marched to the battle field, and arriving there directed all the rays of the concentrated sunlight and heat towards the enemy. The heat and light were too much for them to bear. They all ran away panic-stricken, not knowing in their bewilderment how to counteract that scorching heat. When they fled away leaving their guns and other ammunitions of war, they were burnt down by means of the same sun-heat. Since then no one has tried to invade our country any more.' (10-11)

Now, compare this to the initial reaction of the countrymen to the declaration of war:

> 'Our military officers sprang to their feet at once and marched out to meet the enemy. The enemy however, was too strong for them. Our soldiers fought bravely, no doubt. But in spite of all their bravery the foreign army advanced step by step to invade our country. Nearly all the men had gone out to fight; even a boy of sixteen was not left home. Most of our warriors were killed, the rest driven back and the enemy came within twenty-five miles of the capital.' (9)

Both images present dynamics of mobilities. The Lady Principal and her students march to the battle field. To define marching in this context, I would like to point out a few definitions of the verb 'to march' from the Merriam Webster dictionary, namely: "to move along steadily usually with a rhythmic stride and in step with others," "to move in a direct purposeful manner," or "to make steady progress." This movement may be viewed as a collective,

collected, and purposeful one. The reaction of the enemy to the heat and light is panic, bewilderment, and fleeing away. To flee is “to run away often from danger or evil” or “to hurry toward a place of security” (*“flee”*). The movement is faster and the opposite of collected, namely bewildered or panic-stricken. The guns and ammunitions, which allowed the enemy to get so close to the capital in the first place, are rendered unusable and static. After that, there is no more hostile mobility towards Ladyland’s borders. In the second section, the military officers “sprang to their feet,” an abrupt motion from passive to active. Then they march and fight, yet the enemy “advances step by step.” This latter way of walking is collective, collected, and purposeful too, but where the men and women of Ladyland march to repel the enemy, the invader marches in, a threatening sort of walking. In their wake, warriors are rendered static (dead) or they are driven back.

There are moments of jest in the text that question the skills and efforts of men in comparison to women, which underline the satiric qualities of the piece. The overall stance, however, as in the citation above, is not hostile to men in particular, but rather to the way society—ruled predominantly by men—viewed and treated women. The soldiers had fought bravely, but were no match for the foreign army. Once again, anti-colonial critique comes to the fore in the image of the foreign invader. Left without men to fight and the enemy practically at the gates, the women decide to step into action and manage to save the day by turning the fruits of their intellect into tools of defence. The fact that the solar collector scares the enemies and burns their guns, keeps me from saying that this is ‘weaponised intellect;’ once again, the Ladylanders are concerned with protection and peace, not with offense. The same way they seek the treasures of their land without taking too much, and the same way they defend those who seek sanctuary in Ladyland rather than hand them over to a corrupt government, they seek to drive the enemy away without a wish to expand their territory. They value and protect what is theirs, which once again can be read as critique by the colonised of

colonisers who continuously seek to expand their regions of influence. The political layer of the short story then involves anti-colonial critique as well as critique of women's seclusion, which was linked directly to gender identity. The socio-political power structures of colonial India that Hossain critiques provides particular challenges for advocates of gender equality, as "[all] those working for greater gender equity in colonial India found themselves caught between the devil of the British colonial state and the deep blue sea of revivalist, neo-patriarchal nationalists" (Bagchi "Ladylands and Sacrificial Holes" 168). For one, Hossain understood the restraints of purdah practices and by contemplating its purpose both in "Sultana's Dream" and *Padmarag*, she surgically severs the seclusion from the religious intention of a pure and modest life. Beside this, education for women plays a decisive role in the plot of "Sultana's Dream," for without the edict of the Queen, the universities would not have been founded, the solar machine would not have been built, and the country might have been lost to the foreign invader. Mobility plays a literal and symbolic role in the story when it comes to the plot and to the politics of Ladyland: first, the men marched to battle and failed to repel the enemy; then the women marched, and managed to do just that.

In both scenarios—society before the women's march and after—there remains a gap between those who dwell in the domestic sphere and those allowed in the public realm. The Queen's order to educate women brought about a change of mobilities, for women were now taught on location at specific women's universities (once enough women had been gathered; before, they were educated at men's universities). The image of purdah, which carries connotations of screening off or veiling off, embodies some of that dichotomy. Seclusion in the story pushes the distinction between men and women or male/female to extremes and therefore to drastic consequences. Sister Sara sharply comments on the state of affairs in Sultana's homeland; Sultana's apprehensiveness and Sister Sara's remarks reflect on potential dangers of traversing the public realm in Sultana's reality. As Bagchi describes, the story

displays "a sense of the dystopian worlds of actually existing patriarchy, predatory, masculinist rape culture, and denigration of women and female talents, as a speculative imaginative protest against which 'Sultana's Dream' is composed" ("Speculating" 72). Ladyland provides an alternative space of freedom and safety by reversing the logic of shielding potential victims for one of isolating potential perpetrators. As shown in "Sultana's Dream," seclusion as result of gendered oppression will always separate either men or women from contributing to society in a meaningful way. I will further comment on the role of purdah in Hossain's writing in the section on *Padmarag*. "Sultana's Dream" offers a satiric commentary on seclusion of women as well as a utopian solution that upholds the aims of purdah to protect one's modesty, while allowing the women more freedom to move.

Padmarag

The novella *Padmarag* (1924), or *The Ruby* in translation, was published about nineteen years after "Sultana's Dream" and shows consistent themes in Hossain's writing that also surface in her founding of and teaching at the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School. The novella was written in Bengali. I have read the English translation and do not know Bengali, so for in-depth understandings of the words used in the source text I will refer to other sources and to notes in the book itself. Much like "Sultana's Dream," *Padmarag* includes a range of media and literary techniques, including poetry and philosophical conversations with didactic inflections.

The story follows the mysterious woman Siddika. She is also dubbed 'Padmarag' ('Ruby') by the founder of Tarini Bhavan ("loosely translatable as Salvation Hall" (Bagchi "Ramabai and Rokeya" 76)), an independent institution for the welfare and education of women where Siddika spends most of the story. Siddika was presumably dropped off there by her brother and learns valuable skills that can help her become self-reliant and lead an

independent life. Through the story, it becomes clear that *she* was the brother: she had donned a disguise to escape the notice of her late brother's murderous business rival. A man called Latif, whom Siddika and some of the teachers of Tarini Bhavan nursed to health during their holiday, turns out to be her betrothed, whose uncle had thwarted their marriage plans. Towards the end of the story Siddika—or Zainab, as she turns out to be—finds some peace by nursing her brother's murderer after a lethal horse-riding accident and upon seeing his regret and despair at his own actions against her and her loved ones. To learn the particulars of why Latif refrained from marrying her also provides some closure. But most of all, the healing balm of sisterly connection and the invaluable life lessons she learnt at Tarini Bhavan are what gives her peace and purpose. When Latif asks Siddika to marry him, she chooses to hold on to the life her brother predicted for her after Latif had cast her aside: that of a spinster or widow. As Siddika and Latif have fallen in love with one another, she is able to draw on that love and mourn it, but for the sake of women's fates across the country as well as for her own dignity, she refuses to enter into marriage after how he and other men have wronged her and her family. She will prove that a woman cannot be cast aside idly; sometimes, there are no second chances.

Modes of Transport

Padmarag, in contrast to most of "Sultana's Dream," takes place in a realistic setting of British India in Hossain's own time, particularly in the city Calcutta, current-day Kolkata, India. The many vehicles that feature include a range of wheeled and carried vehicles such as *dandis*, *palanquins*, *push-push*'s, and rickshaws, as well as horse-drawn buses, horses, carriages, and trains. The variety of transport means stands out in the novel, as are the amount of accidents and tragedies related to travel. One of Tarini Bhavan's school busses gets into an accident; Sister Saudamimi's stepdaughter drowned during a boat trip; Mr. Robinson, the man

who killed Zainab's brother, dies after a lethal fall of his horse; and Latif is attacked and left for dead during an evening walk. Travel, then, does not come without danger, yet it may also present salvation: Zainab flees her brother's estate and ends up at Tarini Bhavan; some sisters from the school find Latif and nurse him to health (they attempt similar care for Mr. Robinson, though in vain); and the busses collect students who could not otherwise make it to school.

A recurring theme is that of transport by water. Although this transport makes for fast travel and ships are necessary means, they involve a high risk. The possibility of falling overboard and drowning is ever-present during these trips. Wading into water, even shallow water, also involves such risks. Water takes many guises and plays various parts in the story. The river can be a source of purification, much like Tarini Bhavan itself, as one of the sisters notes: "'our Tarini Bhavan is like the Ganga—a single dip is enough to purify anyone'" (48). No matter someone's sickness or background, the sisters seek to help those who come to them for aid. The river is also a menacing presence, one that claimed the life of Sister Saudamimi's stepdaughter and nearly her own life, while it threatens but does not swallow Siddika and Latif as they sit on a rock at its banks one night. There is a sense of threat in the scene, but in the end Zainab has gone through too much turmoil to let the river carry her to her untimely death; instead, she herself must choose to sacrifice the prospect of a happy marital life for her ideal of a country in which women are not cast aside, constrained, and humiliated, but respected, enterprising, and valued. Water, too, represents the flow of time and the flow of life, a river that journeys on no matter which route one takes. The flow associated with water stands in contrast to the image of the well, which returns at multiple moments as a place of possible death. A place that gives life, namely water to survive, doubles as a warning of female death. It is a way out of life that nevertheless is restricted to the domestic sphere.

Yet, the most prominent means of transport in *Padmarag* I would argue to be the train. The point by Marian Aguiar and mentioned in the introductory chapter of *Mobilities, Literature, Culture* states that “as the British brought the railway to India, they carried with them a colonial modernity that had been given form in Victorian England” (18). Trains, then, are on the one hand intricately tied up with the colonial identity of British India, while on the other hand individuals can use these means of transport for their own ends and in various ways. The connotations tied to trains in Britain may partly translate to this context, yet many associations will be different. Within the story, train journeys mark both the beginning and the end of Zainab’s personal journey. First, she flees in disguise from her late brother’s estate after her prevented suicide attempt (which she undertook to keep her relatives from harm), but she is so lost in thought that she misses the connecting train and instead ends up at Tarini Bhavan. At the end of the novella, she returns to her brother’s—now her—estate, once again as herself, as Zainab, but accompanied by her betrothed Latif and his sister for most of the voyage. They know it is the last time they will meet, but the train goes too fast for them to say goodbye the way they meant to. At the end of the rails awaits a new chapter in Zainab’s life, one in which she sacrifices a possibly happy future as Latif’s wife for her larger love for the world and her countrywomen in particular. The train journeys herald new chapters in Zainab’s life and the momentous decisions that come with them, while walking arguably is part of her inner journey and her growing, sometimes wavering determination to stay true to the life her brother envisioned for her after Latif refused to marry.

Mobility of Mind and Heart

Starting at the individual social level, there are two main ways I would consider intellectual mobility in the novella: firstly, education as a way to enlarge one’s mobilities, and secondly, the movements of one’s inner world with consequences for one’s choices and

physical mobilities. With the latter I indicate the state of one's heart and mind, the exchange between someone's inside world and the external world. Education, much as in "Sultana's Dream," forms the cornerstone of Tarini Bhavan. The institution, including a school, a home for the ailing and needy, a home for widows, and the Society for the Upliftment of Downtrodden Women, focusses on receiving all who need help. Tarini Bhavan either nurses these individuals in need until they are well enough to leave, or teaches them skills in order to become self-reliant women. Knowledge is highly valued at the school, but it is a knowledge that is not merely decorative. Rather, it is practical knowledge, often in the form of skills ranging from languages to needlework. The knowledge learnt at Tarini Bhavan should not only expand the minds of their students, but also help support themselves financially; it increases their possibilities for social mobility.

When it comes to the mobility of one's inner world, various metaphors and similes help convey Siddika's thoughts and feelings. One moment when this kind of mobility plays a significant role in the plot, is when Siddika misses her train: "He [Siddika in disguise] was immersed in a deep sea of thought. Meanwhile, the train arrived and departed" (21-22). It is also narrated that "[a]lthough he was pacing, his feet barely seemed to move" (21). Siddika's inner world is so immersive and present, that the external world gets blocked out by her own thoughts. One type of mobility may be in the way of another. Siddika's inner world is described in natural terms such as seas and storms, changing the elements but often involving moving images, while her exterior remains "immovable as a mountain" (39). Much like the scorned students of the universities in Ladyland, the women at Tarini Bhavan have to learn to react wisely to external provocations, for unfounded and threatening attitudes they will face. The principal herself refuses to let false accusations shake her and instead advises her employees on how to react strategically and ethically.

The first metaphor I would like to discuss, is that of delving for knowledge, and its aquatic equivalent, diving for knowledge. The stark space of earth, in contrast to the flexible space of water, is where gems can be found. The title of the novella itself refers a ruby, and Mrs. Sen and her sisters at Tarini Bhavan work hard to polish Siddika into the jewel she truly is by cutting away layers of tragedy and mystery, heaped upon her by the world and her own disguises. In both cases of delving for gems, a hidden, static treasure is discovered and presumably put into circulation or at least moved to another space. The image of diving for knowledge I elaborated on already in "Sultana's Dream," where the women of Ladyland are said to "'dive deep into the ocean of knowledge and try to find out the precious gems, which nature has kept in store for us'" (14). This hopeful image surfaces in *Padmarag* multiple times and shows, as Siddika finds, that her troubles and hard work do not come without reward.

Mobility as Social Connection

There are myriad ways to consider mobilities in relation to social connections. The ways certain transport modes allow people to come together, the social environments created by modes of travel such as walking or train faring, or how social relationships—affected by larger social constructions and regulations in society—provide opportunities or limits for one's mobility. Hossain manages to present intricate connections between social realities and physical mobilities through at least two means; firstly, by including certain types of travel, in particular walking and train faring, as distinct spaces for conversation, connection, and contemplation; secondly, by juxtaposing the sisterhood at Tarini Bhavan to blood or marriage relations, in particular in terms of the consequences for one's life including opportunities for physical mobilities and participation in one's community. As Hossain condemns the seclusion of women by society in many of her writings and indeed describes it as the root cause of

women's suffering, a lack of physical mobility, as well as of intellectual mobility (education) and social mobility (participation in society on various levels), is implied in her critique.

Reminiscent of the walks in Ladyland, many of the walks in *Padmarag* are of a social nature. The teachers at Tarini Bhavan—with whom Siddika associates and whom she joins on their various ventures—even go on holidays to places like Kurseong, where they make long walks, much like Hossain herself enjoyed doing (Bagchi "Speculating" 73). During these hikes, they often wander around in a group that is then split up in pairs or threes, allowing for intimate conversations and room for mutual contemplation. Many meetings happen on foot, too, such as Siddika's first meeting with a sister from the school, her meeting with Latif, her meeting with her brother's murderer, and, in an account of the night she fled, of her meeting with and eluding of Latif. As I noted, the women in the novel often walk in groups, but also in threes, pairs, and sometimes alone. For one, when Siddika is watching over the injured Latif, she is joined momentarily by Nalini, one of Tarini Bhavan's sisters of the poor and a trained nurse.

> Nalini was about to leave after putting the patient to bed, when Siddika caught hold of the free end of her sari and said, 'Why don't you sit for a while? The night is nearly over.'
>
> Nalini: 'That's why I was leaving. I shall try to catch some sleep.'
>
> Siddika: 'Oh . . . have you been awake all night? But tonight—'
>
> Nalini: 'Yes, you're right. I had no duties tonight; but that wretched sleep has been eluding me. That's why I've been wandering around and dropped in to see you.' (46)

Apparently Nalini feels safe enough to wander around during her insomnia and comes to support Siddika when she is unable to rest herself. The scene not only displays solidarity

between the two, as well as Nalini's trust in Siddika to complete the task on her own, but also conveys the confidence and safety that rule the halls of Tarini Bhavan. An important note here is that the sisters are not, in fact, at the school in this scene, but at a summer house of the principal, Mrs. Sen. Nonetheless, the connection between the women forged at the institution continues to characterise their relationships. This sense of safety and freedom allows one to physically roam when one's mind will not rest. In other words, when one's mind and body cannot remain in stasis, the atmosphere of Tarini Bhavan allows both mind and body to then wander in unison.

Something else stands out about the interaction between Nalini and Siddika, something that occurs multiple times in the story, namely the catching of the free end of one's sari. Saris, either in saffron or blue rather than whites that easily soil, are part of the Tarini Bhavan attire, one that adds to their image of "simplicity and generosity[,] . . . compassion personified" (32). Shoes and socks, "the badges of 'civilization'" and most jewellery with exception of some religious *shankhas* or bangles are also absent. By catching the free end of Nalini's sari, Siddika is able to physically detain her and gain her attention without touching her. The gesture emphasises the garments of the sisters, which are simultaneously traditional, practical, and modest, and the ethereal atmosphere of their community. Garments send out important social signals. The all-women environment (there are only a few male servants) and the uniform garments furthermore support a sense of equality among the women and allow them to retain dignity in a more productive and freeing form of purdahnisian practice. As Rifat Rezowana Siddiqui notes, the "modification of *purdah* into modest wear was an action that empowered women of the colonial period," as it "allowed women to come out of spatial seclusion and explore the public sphere" (27). Indeed, the modest wear allows the women within Tarini Bhavan to go about their tasks and life more freely, as well as venture into the world beyond their institution. Within the walls of Tarini Bhavan they need not fear the loss

of dignity, as the institution itself and its internal structure protect it, while the modest wear becomes a portable source of protection.

While the saris in Tarini Bhavan are chosen for their modest, practical, and traditional yet inclusive nature, Zainab's disguise as an upper-class gentleman with a Western education allows her to travel safely at night. Her train journey provides a moment of rupture, namely a rupture with her old life and identity, signalled by her disguise and her taking on another name. She can no longer be Zainab, but has to bury her old self and assume a new identity in order to stay alive. By wearing this particular attire, Zainab does not raise questions among potential fellow-travellers and is able to travel in relative safety from her brother's enemies and general unwanted attention. One significant difference about the travel episodes in *Padmarag* from those in "Sultana's Dream," then, is this that the former do not take place in Ladyland, but in a realistic setting reminiscent of 1920s Calcutta. This means that there are more dangers in travelling, particularly from ill-meaning male individuals. Travels in *Padmarag* present feminist utopian possibilities, for example travelling in groups with other women or travelling in disguise to defy gender-targeted violence, while they also expose the threat in *Padmarag*'s and Hossain's realities, threats that pose constraints on women's mobilities. Later in the story, Siddika's reconciliation to her life as Zainab and to Latif as beloved friend takes place in a train as well. This time, she wears the garments of Tarini Bhavan, taking with her the new self she found there. As her brother's murderer is dead and she is accompanied on her journey by a female friend and Latif, Zainab is able to be herself and travel in broad daylight. Although she will have to come to terms with the social pressure to lead a life of seclusion, she is willing to face those trials in order to help other women like her and retain her dignity after the wrongs of men against her.

The other type of social mobility I mentioned before involves the sisterhood forged in friendship at Tarini Bhavan in contrast to blood and marriage relationships. Familial

relationships come to the fore as crucial factors in one's social mobility, both on a societal and individual level. When it comes to seclusion and whom women were allowed to see according to different variations of purdah, the notion of the close circle of family is important. The limited social circle that is usually determined on basis of familial relationships is challenged in both *Padmarag* and "Sultana's Dream" by presenting a larger sisterhood between women based on womanhood, equality, education, and shared aims to benefit society and aid the marginalised. Many of the women at Tarini Bhavan have escaped from toxic relations with relatives, be they spiteful sisters-in-law or stepchildren, a criminally insane husband, or the general disapproval of community members after having been abducted by robbers due to the cowardice of one's husband and saved by unknown men. Md. Mahmudul Hasan identifies a critical narrative "tradition of bringing distressed women together [that] runs through South Asian literature" (85). While the women in Tarini Bhavan start off as isolated outcasts and strangers, the new reality of sisterhood echoes through in their address of each other as "di" or "bi," meaning 'older sister' in a number of Indian languages. The choice to call one another 'sister' in varying languages simultaneously suggests a person's religious and/or cultural background and their connection as part of a sisterhood, thus emphasising a sisterly connection between women from various backgrounds. This sisterhood also shows in Hossain's projects of the Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School and the Muslim Women's Association, through which she interacted, worked alongside, and provided education and aid to women from various backgrounds. In this respect, the utopian familial relationship between the women at Tarini Bhavan vouches freedom and a safe environment—both in terms of social acceptance and lack of physical threat—which is healing to the traumatised and downtrodden women who enter its gates. With this environment, the women gain increased mobility in comparison to the seclusion most women faced at home, where they were only to engage with close blood relations. Mobility within the institution goes hand in hand with

intellectual industry that helps women become self-reliant members of society, thus increasing their social mobility later in life. The mobile and the social are intricately linked in *Padmarag* and suggest through their realist setting ways through which some of the utopia foreshadowed in Ladyland might be brought to life.

Mobility as Ideological Move

When connecting utopianism as social dreaming to the political, a question that might arise is what utopias can change about certain political structures within society. Here again, mobilities play a key role in the way Hossain imagined social change within the context of *Padmarag*—and with it, her own daily context. Tarini Bhavan as a utopian space that embodies the values of Mrs. Sen and her staff serves as a starting point. One remarkable mobility associated to the school, is that it moves girls from the domestic sphere to an educational and broader social sphere. The school is still isolated from society to some extent, so to state that the children move from the private to the public sphere might be a step too far; however, the children do move from the household to a broader social circle, where they can meet and interact with other students and teachers beyond their direct family. In this way, Tarini Bhavan, in line with the train journeys and their metaphorical weight, might be considered as a station between the domestic and the public.

It is a project of its own to convey children to the school. Tarini Bhavan uses horse-drawn carriages, also called “buses” (28), to collect and return children who live too far away to travel to school on their own. This form of mobility provided by the school is key in enrolling students, especially when the general public opinion frowns upon women’s education and condemns women and girls who leave the ‘safe’ domestic sphere. When I speak of ‘the general public opinion,’ I refer to a larger public discourse of shared values predominant within a society and that can furthermore alternate within smaller communities.

This notion invokes the image of a hostile and competitive public sphere and the dichotomy of the private/public. Tarini Bhavan provides a place, a platform between the domestic and the public sphere, where girls and women can move from one sphere to the other. Beside this, the institution provides a place for the displaced; social outcasts find their way to Tarini Bhavan and seek aid from the sisters of the poor. Beside picturing the institution as a station, then, one might also see it as a safe haven with a lighthouse, which brings to mind the theme of water in the novella. The institution both welcomes weary travellers on their way from one destination to the next and shows them the way as a beacon of hope. Indeed, this image befits an institution whose name can be translated as 'Salvation Hall.'

There is another way in which Tarini Bhavan makes an ideological and political move that goes against the grain of society: they are critical of the sponsors they select. Rather than taking on every opportunity to receive fundings, the school chooses to remain independent from flawed societal structures. The money needed to keep the institution afloat comes from alumni, anonymous Muslim women, and others who wish to contribute to Tarini Bhavan's mission (31). By isolating Tarini Bhavan from the workings of larger bureaucratic and authoritarian institutions, an interesting dynamic occurs in terms of mobility. It seems that for Tarini Bhavan's mission to succeed—to educate and uplift downtrodden women and girls—the autonomous nature of Tarini Bhavan plays an important role. The leaders of the institution engage with the outside world with compassion and zealous endeavour, but on their own terms. Likewise, they welcome people into their halls on their own terms. Improving social mobility does not mean building every possible bridge between one realm and another. Instead, part of the utopian project of Tarini Bhavan may be to pave a lasting connection between the domestic and the public in favour of the women and girls rather than in favour of existent social structures. Much like the Ladylanders, the staff of Tarini Bhavan guard the boundaries of their utopia, while seeking connection to those outside of their sphere in order

to help them navigate the reality beyond this safe haven. Through their own choice of curriculum and sponsors, as well as by going into the slums and educating women there, the staff is able to carry out their ideas and ideals in various ways. The interaction with the outside world does not come without bumps in the road, but is worth the effort if it allows these women to spread their ideals and connect to society in hopeful ways.

One particular connection between Tarini Bhavan and the outside world they interact with, is through letters. Letters serve as a vehicle for communicating with others, particularly with those who are either physically far away, such as loved ones on their travels, or those who are socially at a distance, such as the parents of students or government officials. One is able to connect intellectually, emotionally, and—as proof of one's physical existence—physically through letters despite being a vast distance apart. The founder and principal of Tarini Bhavan, Mrs. Sen (also known as Dina-Tarini), receives many letters from parents with complaints about the way she runs the school and supposedly fails to educate their children, while the reactions of the staff show the incredibility of the unfounded charges. In another instance, when Siddika struggles with telling Latif her sentiments about their engagement, she manages to write him a letter instead. Letters serve as messengers as well as messages, in that way, and at times even as the agents of corrupted laws. When Rafiya Begum accepts a letter from her husband, the document she signs to accept the letter turns out to be a divorce paper; she has signed her own misfortune. In a few instances, letters and other forms of paper work play a vital role in condemning the women to a terrible fate (93-4). Mrs. Horace meanwhile suffers under the English law, which will not separate her from her criminally insane husband on grounds of the common good and the protection of marriage as an institution within their society (96).

The final form ideological motion happens on plot level and involves involuntary mobility, namely Latif's rescue of Zainab when she attempts to commit suicide. Zainab's

choice to commit suicide is a grave and desperate measure, for she, like most women within the novel, believes that she condemns her soul by taking her own life. When she is accused of having killed her brother and her nephew by the actual murderers, who hold much more power and privilege, Zainab is already so isolated and lacking in legal standing that she sees no other way to escape their threats. Meanwhile, Latif is the lawyer of the accusing party. By then Latif has contributed to Zainab's legally defenceless and ostracised position by not marrying her, but since they have never met he is unaware that the accused is his fiancé. Along the way he learns of the rotten moral disposition of his client and instead determines to save the accused. On the night the men will head out to harm and likely kill Zainab to take her property for themselves, he makes sure to get to her first and help her escape. That is when he finds her in the burning house and pulls her to safety. Zainab at first resists this rescue, as she does not know the man and has made up her mind to die both for the sake of her relatives and to escape horrible maltreatment by her brother's rivals. However, she is saved and moved—involuntarily—out of the house. There she runs off, steals Latif's palanquin (a covered litter carried by bearers) and makes for the train station, where the story begins. Unbeknownst, Latif plays a larger role in this situation than he knew. First, he had his part in condemning her to this fate, but then the tragic narrative is reversed when he actually saves her and offers her an alternative escape, one of mobility. It is this escape, set in motion by involuntary mobility, that ultimately leads Zainab to Tarini Bhavan. It is significant that after her prevented suicide attempt, Zainab disguises herself as a man, invoking for a moment her equality to her brother as his heir and *zamindar* of the estate, and perhaps even as a personification of his ghost in a metaphorical way. However, she dresses herself in the attire of an English gentleman, and further on she dons the disguise of a new female personality—that of Siddika, a woman without a home, relatives, or a story. Indeed, she states: "I live everywhere, but I live at Tarini Bhavan in particular" (39), indicating her severed ties to

home, family, and her former identity, yet she embraces a vaster community—the world—as hers to care for. In this way, the story offers an alternative to suicide, namely the escape from one's situation by burying one's identity and living another life. Towards the end, through her reconciliation to Latif and the death of Mr. Robinson, Siddika can once again become Zainab. The utopian identity she forged at Tarini Bhavan travels with her and informs her plans for the future, namely to provide education and acceptance to women in the same way that she received it in Mrs. Sen's halls. Hossain offers utopian solutions in a realistic setting, namely activities and ideals based on social dreaming. A dreaming that reality can become a better place, a belief that reality can shift to uplift the downtrodden. Although Zainab will have to return temporarily to a life of seclusion because of the current lack of women's freedom within her society, she will do this with a fierce hope, accompanied by a plan, to change reality for the better.

The Feminist Utopian Writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

In this chapter I have considered the roles of mobility in Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's "Sultana's Dream" and *Padmarag* in terms of concrete means of transport, mobility of the mind and inner world, social mobilities, political mobilities, and ideological mobilities (the latter as part of the intellectual and political). The dream frame of "Sultana's Dream" offered its characters invisible movements. In Ladyland, Hossain presents distinctions between the realms of travel in the sky—a space to observe and move from one place to another—and travel on foot in the garden utopia where one can socially interact with other members of society. The act of walking links Sultana's reality and her dream, creating familiar, utopian pockets of space and time that present increased freedom and mobility. Images of frogs entrapped in their wells and the fast brains of women show utopian potential for women in Sultana's situation to move towards one that resembles Ladyland. In the political realm, the

women of Ladyland march purposefully to guard the boundaries of their country, turning a situation of danger to one of unforeseen triumph. Using their intellect and education to defend their land, the Ladylanders are able to combat more than only the foreign—colonial—invader, namely adverse patriarchal structures and customs linked to gender-based oppression; in this way, Hossain is able to simultaneously critique faults in society as well as imagine better alternatives.

Padmarag depicts the utopian in a realist setting with its many types of transport, each with dangers and utopian possibilities. In a similar way to the ambiguous presence of water as life-giving and life-demanding, train voyages come with their own sense of threat, yet present also an escape from danger and a road to a better future as they book-end Zainab's story. At Tarini Bhavan education forms the corner stone for transforming society by increasing the social and intellectual mobilities of its students and staff in a safe environment. The use of mobile imagery, particularly for one's inner world, refutes arguments of women's sensibility as making them unfit for public life, and instead glorifies their humanity and their heart for the world as a starting point for social change. On walks, on trains, and in Tarini Bhavan, the characters enjoy particular mobilities and freedoms that differ from other usual domestic and public spaces. The found sisterhood at Tarini Bhavan creates a nurturing environment free from oppression and status-based social limitations. In modest wear, the women can roam the school grounds and beyond to bestow their gifts on persons in need. Indeed, the school embodies the hopes and ideals of Mrs. Sen for society and shifts the possible towards this ideal on a smaller scale in the form of an institution that is both isolated enough from society so as not to rely on its structures, yet connected enough to improve the fates of women in the country. With its own system of mobility, Tarini Bhavan functions as a station between the domestic and the public realm, teaching students valuable skills that might improve their chances of thriving in either sphere. Through the reversal of a tragic narrative by having the

husband unknowingly save his bride rather than condemn her to death and by having the female protagonist refuse marriage to follow her own path for the betterment of her fellow-women, Hossain shows hope where women in the narrative—and likely, women outside it in similar situations—saw none. Through both "Sultana's Dream" and *Padmarag* Hossain argues for social change and for the hopeful building of such a future in one's own circumstances, without disregarding reality's dangers and challenges. It is in view of these power structures and obstacles that the characters show their true courage and utopian abilities by standing up for change together.

Woman on the Frontline

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Speeches with force, prose taken from life, poetry of what could one day be—it is no small feat to describe the qualities, achievements, and visions of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911). Author from an early age, Harper did not let circumstances or hostile voices stop her from pursuing her ideals. As a widow with a daughter to support, she worked to provide for her family and educate people on abolitionism, women's rights, and the intersection of these in the need for rights of and support to Black women. Her travels through the United States to give lectures and her participation in the Underground Railroad network give a sense of the particular role mobilities played in her life and writings, while her cause of securing rights for women and more generally people of colour brings together utopian social dreaming and intersectional feminism *avant la lettre*. From her own identity as a Black woman writer in times of the antebellum, Civil War, Reconstruction, and post-Reconstruction in the United States, Harper's writings shed light on historical links between mobility and feminist utopian expressions during a crucial shift in American society.

Harper enjoyed education at her uncle's school, the "William Watkins Academy for Negro Youth, [a] strict liberal arts, Christian-based school" in Baltimore, and continued her education by reading books from the collection of a liberal white employer (Sherita L. Johnson 75). She wrote from an early age and published her first poetry collection at twenty-one (Frances Smith Foster *Iola Leroy* xxviii). For some time she lived at a station of the Underground Railroad with the family of William Still, who was a major force in the movement which sought to aid enslaved persons in their escape from slavery to the North. Still dedicated an entire chapter of his historical account of the movement to Harper's life and writings (Foster "Frances Ellen Watkins Harper" 43). After Harper's husband passed away

and the farm, including her means of making a living, were taken away from her, she made a career of public speaking to support herself and her daughter, as well as to advocate for the rights of Black Americans. While she was living in New England, she was hired as a "lecturer and official representative of the State Anti-Slavery Society of Maine" (Johnson 78). For this position, she moved around the country to give lectures, in the North and, insofar possible, the South. Sherita L. Johnson also discusses Harper's letters to Still as travel literature and how the moving around gave her a complicated sense of identity as a Northern Southerner and vice versa, depending on where she resided (70). In her lectures, whether these were for an abolitionist, feminist, or religious cause, she often combined her hopes for racial and gender equality; she was part of the American Woman Suffrage Association (Jen McDaneld 396), the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (Alison M. Parker 145), and the National Council of Women (Foster *Iola Leroy* xxxvii-xxviii), among others. As a woman of colour, she had endured the oppression aimed at both gendered and racial aspects of her identity. Rather than think them mutually exclusive oppressions, her standpoint can be considered an intersectional one as she recognised the particular oppression of Black women.

While the novel *Iola Leroy* presents two concrete utopias—the home of the Leroy family before the death of Eugene Leroy and the Black settlement in North Carolina towards the end of the novel—the speeches mentioned in this chapter discuss visions of a possible future that resemble these settings in theme and content. Having a home is attached to matters of citizenship and how a lack of such rights can have drastic consequences for one's home life. The settlement in North Carolina embodies aspects of a possible future that Harper strives for in her activism: legal rights for people of colour, education for people of colour and Black women in particular, and a sense of gender equality in the community which means that everyone works together to uplift the community, which will in turn function as an example for society. Meanwhile, movement in the public realm plays an important part in both the

speeches and the novel, whether this consists of traversing the public realm in search for freedom or the reunion of lost family members (*Iola Leroy*), the day-to-day aggressions based on race and gender in public transport, or the importance for women to take their stand as public speakers and advocate for their rights and those of Black Americans.

Iola Leroy

In the late nineteenth century in post-Reconstruction days (Foster *Iola Leroy* xxx), Harper published her novel *Iola Leroy, or, Shadows Uplifted* (1892). In the original introduction William Still, who was a fellow-abolitionist and friend of Harper's, makes clear that this venture was not without risk and that he initially hesitated at the idea of "'a story' on some features of the Anglo-African race, growing out of what was once popularly known as the 'peculiar institution'" (Harper *Iola Leroy* 1). Harper, who was in her sixties then, had earned a great reputation as an author, abolitionist, and educator over her lifetime; a novel—which was considered as one of the epitomes of literary form at the time in America (and Western literature more broadly) (Foster *Iola Leroy* xxxii)—could either be the crown on her work or ruin her reputation. In an additional introduction in my edition of *Iola Leroy*, Foster points out that not only was Harper's own reputation on the line, but also that of her race, as a literary failure would be used not only against her, but as an argument against the abilities of the people she represented (xxxiii-xxxiv). However, upon hearing parts of the manuscript, Still lost his reserve and predicted upon publication that her works so far "will be by far eclipsed by this last effort, which will, in all probability, be the crowning effort of her long and valuable services in the cause of humanity" (3). Foster further points out the significance of a novel written by a Black woman writer in the late nineteenth century. In a time when authors from the New South were becoming more popular and wrote stories in an attempt to romanticise the pre-war South and polish its damaged reputation, Black characters were

presented as hardly more than "'picturesque peasantry'" (xxx). To reach the same audience and refute these stereotypes, "the call [to authors] was not just for more facts but for writers who could shape those facts in ways that would appeal to the aesthetics of the late nineteenth century" (xxx-xxxi). Harper found herself with the means to write such a novel and was willing to subject her writing to the scrutiny of critics in a time when literature by Afro-American authors was being judged more critically than before (xxxi). Beside the need for better representation, there was a prejudice to counter, implied in the question whether "blacks were capable of achieving what they [white American culture] considered the higher intellectual and aesthetic levels that novels required" (xxxii). Add to that the prejudices against women writers and you have a momentous challenge. As stated before, Harper did not shy away from a challenge and instead confronted it with pen, paper, and her marvellous words and ideas. In a situation of increased strained racial relations between North and South, Harper published her novel. With a hard-won literary career and a representative function for Black Americans on the line, *Iola Leroy* testifies to Harper's courage as author and public speaker for Black American citizens and Black women in particular. Moreover, the novel attests to Harper's ardent hopes and endeavours for a better future. In a time when there is still need for utopian imagining and enterprise, Harper's novel may contribute fresh insights into a shift in American—and in extension, Western—society that is still in progress to this day.

Voluntary and Involuntary Mobilities

When discussing transport in the context of *Iola Leroy*, it is vital to pose two other questions beside which modes of transport were used: 1) by whom were they used and 2) were these mobilities voluntary, involuntary, or did they include other types of restriction? Specifically in the pre-abolition South of the United States but also in the North, people of colour would experience restricted mobilities in comparison to white Americans, ranging

from segregation on trains to imposed (im)mobility in slavery. In *Iola Leroy,* various enslaved characters meet each other on errands for the plantation owners. They meet at places like the post-office or the market, where they can connect as a community and share news about the war. There are marriages between enslaved people from different plantations, too, in which the masters play a particular role. According to the system of slavery, the masters need to give their consent for the match and enter into negotiations with the master of the other plantation on behalf of the enslaved person. Sometimes one of the enslaved persons was bought and transferred to the other plantation, so they could live together as spouses on the same grounds, but there are also marriages in the novel in which the partners lived on different plantations and needed permission to visit one another. Social mobility—moving from the status of unmarried to married with its legal consequences—and physical mobility—moving from one plantation to another, whether this is of a more permanent or visiting nature—are then tightly bound together and regulated in the institution of slavery. Beside this, the legal implications of marriage in this context differ, too, as marriage did not mean that either of the spouses enjoyed legal protection or that they could not be parted. The importance of involuntary mobilities and immobilities in the narrative is further implied in its references to slave narratives (Anna Pochmara 2) and the tragic mulatta narrative, identified by Pochmara, Hazel V. Carby (73), Siddiqui (64), and Patricia Bizzell (392). Pochmara notes of the mulatta novel that it "depicts female mobility and emphasizes women's agency" and the novels Pochmara discusses, among them *Iola Leroy*, "represent enslavement, bondage, and forced travel, which highlights the dramatic difference between white women's relegation to the private sphere and status of black female slaves as private property" (4). The genre and tradition of the mulatta novel imply a link between gender, identity, and mobilities that is drastically different to white feminist narratives and should be taken into account when reading *Iola Leroy*.

There is a particular mode of travel that exposes ideological constructs underlying slavery and segregation, as well as gendered oppression: public transport. As discussed in the earlier chapter on Hossain's writings, public transport exposes larger constructs of racial and gender discourse. In *Iola Leroy* this is no different. Before Iola is aware that her mother is of mixed racial heritage and a manumitted woman, her siblings and she are brought up to believe they are the white children of a plantation owner and they enjoy many privileges. While Iola and her brother Harry reside in the North to pursue education, their father passes away, and his cousin Alfred Lorraine claims the inheritance and reduces the family to slavery. Lorraine forges a telegram from Iola's mother to urge Iola to come home. The principal, who acts as her guardian and knows of Iola's mixed heritage, unfortunately falls for the ruse and even hastens her departure. Consequently, "Iola and Bastine [Lorraine's attorney] took the earliest train, and traveled without pausing until they reached a large hotel in a Southern city" (103). While Iola sits in a "large, lonely parlor" before she is brought to her private room, she eventually falls asleep. This section reflects on the life she has lived and the perils ahead:

> In her dreams she was at home, encircled in the warm clasp of her father's arms, feeling her mother's kisses lingering on her lips, and hearing the joyous greetings of the servants and Mammy Liza's glad welcome as she folded her to her heart. From this dream of bliss she was awakened by a burning kiss pressed on her lips, and a strong arm encircling her. Gazing around and taking in the whole situation, she sprang from her seat, her eyes flashing with rage and scorn, her face flushed to the roots of her hair, her voice shaken with excitement, and every nerve trembling with angry emotion. (103)

Indeed, once arrived in the South, the attorney shows his lack of respect towards her as well as his attraction. This horrendous moment, which encapsulates violence on grounds of race and gender, takes place at an in-between space, a stop on their journey, when there is no one to protect the young woman. Iola is outraged and threatens that her father would "'crush [him] to the earth'" if he knew, but Bastine is unimpressed, knowing her father is dead, and instead states that he is her guardian for the present (104). Despite her rage and indignation, Iola as a young woman in the late nineteenth century had no choice but to travel with him. Travelling alone would be fraught with dangers, too, and would harm her social status. This reminds of Peter Adey's statement about the experience of mobilities and immobilities based on mobilities politics (83; 90). While Iola could technically run away from the attorney, there is no socially proper way to do so, nor does she have her own means to acquire transport. During her journey, she "preserved a most freezing reserve towards Bastine," but this is the extent of her counterattack, for once she arrives home, she learns the awful truth of Lorraine's scheme.

The quotation above also shows the affordance of literary stylistics to juxtapose similar gestures in a different situation; where the kisses and embrace of her father, mother, and the enslaved 'Mammy Liza' fill her with a sense of safety, peace, and love, the gestures by Bastine fill her with anxiety, peril, and outrage. Through the parallel, the novel is able to pose the question of how someone would dare to use gestures that could make a home the happiest place on earth with such horrid intentions, and the juxtaposition presents two otherwise realistic situations as extreme opposites, much like a dream and a nightmare. The moment foreshadows Iola's experiences with gendered violence in the form of sexual assault and rape by plantation owners during her enslavement. These experiences are discussed in outraged yet euphemistic terms by the former enslaved man Tom, who also petitioned for Iola's rescue with the Unionist Army (Bizzell 391). Iola's beauty is named as the reason for

her involuntary travel from one plantation to another, being bought and sold continuously (42). While these experiences are only recounted and referred to in veiled terms, it becomes clear that the violence and oppression Iola endures during her enslavement is aimed at her intersectional identity and her lack of legal rights as an enslaved, Black woman. Her involuntary mobilities, too, connect to this new identity, yet Harper is careful to show her dignity and agency, too, through her resistance and unbroken spirit.

Types of Mobilities Before, During, and After the Civil War

Throughout the novel, there is a shift in mobilities, both in the transport modes used, by whom, and how freely, from the antebellum to the Reconstruction period. The mobilities of enslaved people in the antebellum period and early Civil War are characterised by defiance, ingenuity, and a need for secrecy. In the market place, they use a code language to update one another about the state of the war: "In conveying tidings of war, if they wished to announce a victory of the Union army, they said the butter was fresh, or that the fish and eggs were in good condition. If defeat befell them, then the butter and other produce were rancid or stale" (9). Robert, an enslaved man who was taught to read by his mistress, uses his skill to read the papers and tell the news to other enslaved people. While most of the enslaved people on the plantation cannot read, Linda, the cook, reads the news in her "'ole Missus' face'" (9), knowing a sad face meant a victory for the Unionists and a happy face one for the Secessionists. It was at the time illegal for enslaved people to congregate without permission from their masters, yet this did not stop them from coming together in secret. In the novel, under the cover of night, enslaved characters use their own houses or abandoned places of shelter for this purpose. There enslaved people from various plantations come together, discuss the proceedings of the war, and decide on their next course of action.

During the war, usual structures of mobility are upset and new, particular mobilities come into play. On the frontlines, the soldiers might be injured in battle, which momentarily or more permanently impairs their physical mobilities. In the professional role of a nurse, women have a different mobility on the work floor than before, looking after unknown patients and performing their duties independently. This new field of agency includes women of colour and Iola, once she has been rescued from slavery, becomes a nurse. Men of colour can sign up for the Union army, too, and in doing so contribute to their abolitionist cause. One particular mode of transport associated with the war within *Iola Leroy* is that of the gunboat, “an armed ship of shallow draft” (*Merriam Webster*). Secret ways of communicating and travelling were part of the Civil War, too, such as the use of drying laundry as code language (129). The mobilities and modes of communication remind of the secrecy with which the enslaved people could rebel in antebellum times, but this time two predominantly white regimes are fighting each other, while in the cases of enslaved people, they were undermining one oppressive regime through secret mobilities. What is at stake in the war echoes through the novel: the beginning of a new, better era, both for Black Americans in particular and society as a whole.

During the Reconstruction, racial relations remained strained, as Foster states about the last decade of the nineteenth century, but the cause abolitionists had fought for was achieved: slavery in the United States was officially abolished. A parallel occurs in the novel between meetings in the early days of war and after the war. Where enslaved people first had to convene in secret in whichever space was available, after the Unionist victory they can convene in a house of their own and travel to and from there freely with cars—carriages drawn by horses—of their own. Rather than using code language and hushed voices, the convened openly enter into debates on the future of their race and the future of society as a whole. In the meeting, men and women present their papers, poems, and speeches on the topic

of their race's future in America. Beside a transport vehicle, the car or carriage becomes a space and pastime in itself, a private space in public. Driving around the city or the country becomes a leisurely activity, during which individuals can learn more about each other through conversation while admiring the views. The marriage proposal of Dr. Frank Latimer to Iola, as well as Iola's brother Harry's proposal to Miss Lucille Delaney, take place during car journeys, through the city and the country. Dr. Latimer also acted as a chaperone of sorts to the latter couple, taking them to theatres and the likes. The car allows Frank and Iola to meet outside the domestic sphere or the company of friends and family to have a private conversation about their futures. While not all matters in society are resolved to satisfaction—segregation and discrimination were still part of the everyday—the image presented at the end of the novel is a utopian one, an exemplary community that might inspire society to change.

Mobility in Words

Iola Leroy makes use of various metaphors that involve mobility to reflect on aspired change in American society and to consider changes in the course of individuals' lives. One of these metaphors is that of the bridge. A saying used by two formerly enslaved persons in the novel is 'to believe in the bridge that carries one over.' Uncle Daniel, an elderly Black man and a central figure in the enslaved community, states that he cannot leave the plantation to find freedom with the Union army, because he promised his former mistress to look after her son. When she asked him for his promise, he narrates, "'I war almost ready to cry. I couldn't help it. She hed allers bin mighty good to me. An' I beliebs in praisin' de bridge dat carries me ober'" (21). Even though Miss Anna had wanted him to be free, she could not go against the will that held Uncle Daniel in bondage. Even though Uncle Daniel wanted to leave and gain his freedom, he had promised he would look after Miss Anna's son—the master of the plantation by then—and as it turns out, this Master Robert had entrusted him also with a

large sum of money for safekeeping while he was fighting in the war. The bridge here works both ways, then: both parties must keep their promises and their possibilities to move are restricted, while the ties between them also provide freedoms and restrictions dependent on circumstance. This moment in the story shows ties between enslaved people and the plantation owners that reach beyond status or power, but rely fundamentally on sympathy and entwined ways of life. However, the institution of slavery remains interwoven in these relationships as long as it exercises its power; therefore the power relations remain off-kilter. Later in the novel, the phrase appears again, now said by Aunt Linda, a Black woman and former cook at a plantation. When she recalls her former mistress, she states that "'. . . I ain't got nothin' agin her. She neber struck me a lick in her life, an' I belieb in praising de bridge dat carries me ober'" (159). Although the phrase does not appear too often, it encapsulates a particular view on life for the former enslaved characters. Freedom was desirable above all else and slavery was a most horrible institution—the consensus there is irrefutable. Amidst struggles and appalling laws, however, various characters have a nuanced view on life before and after liberation. The individuals involved in slavery have various stances towards the system, ranging from fanatic support to quiet or outspoken discontent, and Harper shows relations between enslaved people and white plantation owners to oftentimes be more complicated than a clearcut us versus them.

Such complications of relations between Black and white characters also happen on an identity level for characters of mixed racial heritage. Various people in the novel, including Iola's family (except her father, who is white), her uncle Robert, and Dr. Frank Latimer. Iola's mother Marie and her three children can all 'pass' as—appear as—white. Their racial identities are based on ancestry and when this becomes known, individuals and society more generally treat them differently. Their appearance allows them at times the choice to conceal their racial identity for the sake of privileged white positions or to openly embrace their

ancestry and support their Black countrymen. Appearance and identity, then, play different roles in their mobilities; while appearance grants them passage into certain spaces and opportunities that other Black people do not have, their identity as Black excludes them from certain social and legal rights and privileges. Appearance and concealment of identity together form a precarious bridge into predominantly white spaces, such as universities and the white ranks of the army. Once Lorraine reveals the secret of Iola's family and reduces them to slavery, Iola is no longer treated as a privileged white young woman, but as an enslaved Black young woman, ending up at the other end of that social dichotomy. Throughout the story, she comes to terms with her heritage by owning her Black identity and she puts in effort to change the situation for Black Americans. Multiple times she is misidentified as white, in particular by a doctor at the hospital where she works, who falls in love with her and wishes to marry her. Upon finding out about her heritage, he is shocked at first, but wishes to marry her regardless, stating that they can keep her heritage a secret. This is where Iola shows her change of heart and where she stands: she does not want to keep her identity a secret and although she cares for the doctor and he could afford her a comfortable life, she does not wish to marry him. Finally, on a broader scope the novel in its appeal to a wide audience and a nuanced view on the situation of the United States pre-, during, and post-Civil War, functions as a bridge between author and reader, and one between readers across the country.

Harper makes frequent use of mobilities metaphors throughout the novel, in particular established expressions that consider life in terms of paths, journeys, and rivers. Then again, these expressions are also used for future hopes and the choices one can make to either move towards that future or away to another one. There are two that I wish to point out in particular, namely the metaphors that involve paths and those that include rivers or water, the latter both as moving in itself and presenting a barrier or alternate mode of transport. I will discuss some of the most impactful examples of this imagery. When Harry learns of the fate of his mother

and sister, who have been enslaved, it was "as if two paths had suddenly opened before him, and he was forced to choose between them:" whether he should enlist in the white or coloured regiment of the Unionist Army to best aid his family (125). The principal advises him that, although his complexion allows him to enter either, he would have better chances at finding his mother and sister by enlisting in the coloured regiment (126). This argument wins the fight within him. The choice shapes his own sense of identity in the future and marks the beginning of his endeavours to improve the situation for the coloured citizens of his country. Indeed, he chooses the path of lesser social mobility, as the officer who enlists him observes; by enlisting in the coloured regiment, he loses opportunities for promotions within the army and acknowledges his own mixed racial heritage that no one by appearance would have guessed at (127). In another section, Iola states that her heart is full of hope and she contrasts the "'path of sin'" to the path of Christ to describe how the coloured people in her country had suffered like their Saviour had and could hope for a better future, just as His degradation was turned to power and glory (256). Once she has finished speaking, "there was a ring of triumph in her voice, as if she were reviewing a path she had trodden with bleeding feet, and seen it change to lines of living light" (257). Not only does she speak of hope with much vigour, but she embodies this hope, as does her story in the shape of the novel.

When it comes to water, the river Mississippi plays a role in the novel as a geographical landmark and concrete and symbolic border to the South. It is narrated that Robert's mother Harriet was "well satisfied to have a pleasant aftermath from life on this side of the river" (184), meaning South of the Mississippi. That the new legal situation after the Civil War made it possible to live in the South as free people shows the significance of crossing such a natural border, much like the Hebrews crossing the Red Sea in Harper's speeches. To describe how Marie and Eugene Leroy lived in their isolated home, it says that "Marie's life flowed peacefully on" as she contemplated how the situation for enslaved people

might be improved, while Leroy in his circumstances and the institution of slavery had "learned to drift where he should have steered, to float with the current instead of nobly breasting the tide" (86). Where he could and should have made a difference, Leroy chose to make the best of a bad situation when it comes to slavery and running the plantation. Both husband and wife live in a utopian dream of a home, but just outside and connected to their own wealth is an institution both of them despise, as well as a hostile public sphere ready to tear their utopian ideal down.

Dr. Latimer later on in the novel talks of Iola in terms of Homer's *Odyssey*, stating that despite her setbacks she declined an offer of marriage and a wonderful life to cast her lot with her race: "'she bound her heart to the mast of duty, closed her ears to the syren song, and could not be lured from her purpose'" (263). Harper casts a woman in a symbolic role traditionally played by a man. Iola reminds of Odysseus, tossed about by fate on her quest to find her home and loved ones. When Harry has spoken of Miss Lucille Delaney as his ideal woman and Dr. Latimer states that she would make "'some man an excellent wife,'" Iola reacts jokingly but also with sharp wit, "'Now isn't that perfectly manlike . . . Did any of you gentlemen ever see a young woman of much ability that you did not look upon as a flotsam all adrift until some man had appropriated her?'" (242). Dr. Latimer responds with equal wit that any world's work is better done when shared than alone, and his question whether she would not agree hints at his feelings for her, and hers for him. The image of wreckage of ship or cargo gone adrift until reclaimed paints an adequate picture of the legal status of women in Harper's time. Without rights or forms of legal protection beyond ties of family or marriage, women frequently did not have the means to wander between those stations in life or choose alternate courses. Iola, however, finds her footing and purpose; while the separation between her and her family was not voluntary and her mobilities were thwarted through enslavement,

she retained agency throughout different situations in life and has become an independent woman, reunited with but not dependent on her family.

Concrete Utopias and Utopian Visions

There are certain spaces in the novel that accommodate projects of social dreaming, such as escape from slavery, reconnection with loved ones, and abolition of slavery. Spaces like these include secret prayer-meetings, Unionist army camps, (Northern) schools, hospitals, conferences (both religious and professional/scientific ones), stations, and homes. All of these spaces are connected to the ideals of freeing and socially uplifting Black Americans. Unionist army camps and hospitals during wartime eventually allowed Black Americans to enlist. There they could make a career and contribute to social change for the sake of freedom and abolition of slavery. Before and during the Civil War, prayer-meetings allow enslaved persons from various plantations to gather, exchange information about the war, and together decide on which steps to take next. After the war, prayer-meetings are still held for their religious value and as meeting places for people who have been separated from relatives and friends due to the war or slavery. At such a meeting, Robert finds his mother (183), and at another, Iola finds her brother Harry again (194). Harry and his mother had been reunited at his hospital bed, after he was injured in the war (191). Robert and Iola meet each other after the war at a station when they are both travelling to find their missing relatives (149). Religious, often Christian Methodist, conferences play a similar role and Iola, in the company of a bishop, is able to safely travel to the South to find her mother (187). At the schools in the North and professional conferences, characters of various racial backgrounds and views on the institution of slavery are able to meet and debate. The people of colour in these spaces, however, often are those who are able to pass as white, and Iola writes home of an incident where a girl had to leave school after her mixed racial heritage was revealed and parents of

fellow-students objected to their children being taught in the same schoolroom (91). Then again, the school set up by Miss Delaney does include women of colour and serves as a meeting space for women to learn and work on their careers. After the war, meetings at people's homes remind of prayer-meetings, particularly the *conversazione* at Mr. Stillman's residence. During this conversazione, the attendees recite poetry, deliver speeches, and read essays on the future of their race (246-61). Both men and women speak at this meeting and seem to speak as equals at that, as each person has something to contribute to their shared aim of furthering "the welfare of their race" (246). Together, the attendees discuss politics, morality, and possibilities for the future in a spirit of hope and enterprise. Different meeting spaces require different types of mobilities, whether these are secret walks by night to prayer-meetings or a walk from one house to another for the conversazione.

As a final connection between utopian projects and mobilities, I wish to pay a closer look at a concrete utopia in this novel. Different to the utopian home of the Leroy family, which is based on a concealment of identity and isolation from the public sphere, the utopian community Iola moves to near the end of the novel is an open, Black community that embraces its identity and serves as an example for what society might look like. After the war, the former owners of a plantation had died, either from its battles or from the inability to deal with its losses. Together, a group of Black men had bought the plantation and divided it amongst themselves. Significantly, at the place of their last prayer-meeting and on the spot where they had endured pain and heartache, they built a paradise where the "school-house had taken the place of the slave-pen and auction-block" (152), where the people at work are content and the children laugh. In North Carolina—which was both part of the South and in name can be considered the Northern counterpart to South Carolina—people have managed to build what was deemed impossible in both the South and the North before that moment. Harper's wish in her speech "We Are All Bound Up Together" to not have to fight all the

time comes true in this community, and her conundrum of whether to move away from the South to a possibly better life in the North or stay in the area she knows with the people she loves is solved, too. Rather than projecting utopian dreams onto a far future or distant past, or projecting them on the North or South as larger signifiers, this utopia includes equality among its members independent of race and seems to include women in its proceedings, for example in Iola's new position as teacher at Sunday-school and helper at church. Utopia is then and there. Even though the members have not yet attained the legal rights they strive for, nor equality or freedom of racial prejudice in the larger social sphere of their country, their community does embody such ideals and is another step towards their ideal. The community serves as a utopian mooring in a changing country, a place where people can settle and join in the uplifting of their fellow-man—and with it, their social mobility as free citizens. As in the speeches, Harper shows the home and the local as a starting place for societal change. Education both of the mind and heart makes for wise and just citizens that will bring about a brighter future. One step at the time, one meeting at the time, one community at the time, the characters in the novel work towards their ideal of a unified and just country. It is interesting that the novel shows both the dreaming of such a community and its manifestation in the novel's reality. Different dreams stem from each situation and once they are brought about, new aims are set and dreamt of. This is what utopian dreaming as a method can look like, as imagining and possibly bringing about shifts in the paradigm of the possible. Rather than accepting the situation as it is, the characters in Harper's novel reach beyond for a better life in their time.

"We Are All Bound Up Together" and "Woman's Political Future"

Harper—much like Hossain after her—was a prolific, multifaceted author. As Foster states, the author was by the time of the *Iola Leroy*'s publication well-known for her shorter

stories and her speeches, and she initially broke through with poetry (Foster *Iola Leroy* xxviii-xxix). I believe that insight into the topics Harper wrote about and the imagery she used can deepen one's understanding of her utopian aims and enrich the reading of her oeuvre. I will focus on two speeches from different points in her career, namely "We Are All Bound Up Together" (1866), one of Harper's first public speeches on the topic of women's rights, and "Woman's Political Future" (1893) later on in her career in post-Reconstruction days. The first speech, given at the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention in New York on May 1, 1866, dates from the early hopeful days of Reconstruction after the abolition of slavery and discusses the inequality of women before the law. With her own experiences of gendered and racial oppression, as well as other examples, Harper gives a sense of the situation for Black Americans after the Civil War. The second speech, delivered at the World's Congress of Representative Women at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, addresses issues of double oppression for women of colour and how, though white feminists and feminists of colour share the aim of greater gender equality, there is a need for white feminists to support women of colour in their particular struggle, too. Rather than discuss the case study texts individually, I focus on recurring themes related to utopia and mobility that unite them, as well as the particular affordances of their literary form as speeches.

Politics of Movement

Particularly in "We Are All Bound Up Together" (hereafter referred to as "Bound Up") movement and modes of transport play a crucial role in Harper's narrative and arguments. Harper makes a distinction between the pleas of white women, who "speak here of rights" and women of colour like herself who "speak of wrongs" (Harper 195). She then illustrates this situation with the way she is treated in public transport:

> Let me go to-morrow morning and take my seat in one of your street cars — I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia — and the conductor will put up his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride. . . . Going from Washington to Baltimore this Spring, they put me in the smoking car. . . . They did it once; but the next time they tried it, they failed; for I would not go in. I felt the fight in me; but I don't want to have to fight all the time. To-day I am puzzled where to make my home. I would like to make it in Philadelphia, near my own friends and relations. But if I want to ride in the streets of Philadelphia, they send me to ride on the platform with the driver. (195)

There is a contrast between the way she is treated in New York and Philadelphia. This section includes a utopian wish, a glance at an alternative future framed as a desire: "I don't want to have to fight all the time." Harper shows that she is willing to put up a fight for her rights and those of others, but also wishes that it was not so, that she did not have to fight. In her address to the convention, she might address the women themselves to join this fight and work with her towards a situation in the United States where they will have to fight no longer. Interestingly—based on the notes in the edition of the speech provided by Iowa State University—this section of the speech about public transport seemed to draw some of the most direct responses from the crowd. To Harper's remark that she does not know whether New York conductors would behave this way towards a woman of colour, a person indicated as "A Lady" states that: "They will not do that here" (n.p.). Harper directly responds with "They do in Philadelphia" (n.p.). The fact that people are treated less maliciously in one part of the country does not mean that the problem is solved; far from it, for it shows how the country is still divided after the war and that one might have to choose between living in a known, beloved place where they will be treated ill, or living in a place far away from the

known where they might be treated better. Harper's statements that she was put in the smoking car and would be sent to ride on the platform with the driver are received with "Loud Voices" and "Cries" that call out "'Shame'" (n.p.). The combination of Harper recounting her personal experience and discussing her treatment in the South draws response from the audience at the Northern conference. After her account of the events, she asks the question: "Have women nothing to do with this?" (Harper 195), which echoes the beginning of her speech and the turn her speech will take towards women's rights and responsibilities.

Harper's case of the smoking car is not the only mistreatment. She points out a recent example of a coloured woman who took a seat on a car in Philadelphia: "the conductor stopped the car, and told the rest of the passengers to get out, and left the car with her in it alone, when they took it back to the station" (195-6). This example Harper follows up with a similar situation from her own life, where she took a seat on a car and the conductor told her to take another seat. Her reaction was to "scream 'murder'" and what follows shows both the pernicious attitude of the conductor as well as Harper's wit: "The man said if I was black I ought to behave myself. I knew that If he was white he was not behaving himself. Are there no wrongs to be righted?" (196). These last three sentences I wish to dive into deeper, for they show the social situation Harper and the conductor find themselves in within the context of public transport, as well as the utopian endeavour Harper undertakes through her speech. First on the conductor's stance, I wish to point out that the conductor states his sentiments aloud: he tells her what to do based on her racial identity—and more importantly, he equalises her racial identity with the status of a lesser citizen who is bound to certain rules that do not apply to white citizens. The statement that she "ought to behave" herself implicates negative consequences in case she does not in a similar way that penalties may be a consequence to law. Despite being an American citizen—based on the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which was passed hardly a year before Harper's speech—

Harper battled against the consequences of a 'second-class' citizenship based on segregation. The response Harper offers here to the conductor's words is razor sharp, turning his words against him and reminding him of his station in his own view. However, she is not able to articulate these thoughts out loud: she states that she "knew" this, but not that she *said* this. As a Black woman travelling alone on public transport—as I assume she did here, but even in company, the situation might hold—she was not in a safe position to speak up against the white male conductor. The fact that she frames her response on stage at a convention about women's rights shows the utopian affordance of this platform. It is utopian in the sense that criticising and offering dreams of an alternative situation here may change the reality under discussion. She asks her audience whether there are no wrongs to be righted. Clearly, there are, and through these examples Harper openly justifies why she speaks of wrongs at a convention that discusses rights, for she has been wronged—as a woman and as a person of colour.

Harper presents another case that is related to mobility, the treatment of women of colour, and the utopian future that Harper envisions. She describes the treatment of Harriet Tubman in public transport. Tubman earned the nickname 'Moses' due to her efforts for the Underground Railroad to bring former slaves to freedom. She was, Harper describes, "a woman who has gone down into the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty" (196). As Patricia J. Sehulster points out, the Biblical figure of Moses and the story of how he led the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land recurs in Harper's writings (1137-38). To give the name of such an important male figure to a woman—in a similar gesture as Iola's equation to Odysseus—is a feminist move and can be considered, I would add, a utopian move. As Harper emphasises, Tubman had earned her nickname by "acting out" rather than "lying about it" (196), which indicates that the name holds specific power and status that was not claimed but bestowed because of her efforts. This

notion fits neatly into the religious—particularly Methodist Christian—framework of Harper's efforts, which emphasised "active, applied Christianity" (Sehulster 1140). Harper further underlines Tubman's status in the United States and how this clashes with her treatment in daily life:

> That woman who had led one of Montgomery's most successful expeditions, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American army, had her hands all swollen from a conflict with a brutal conductor, who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every black man in the land, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel. (196)

Moses's treatment by an unidentified conductor clashes with the importance of Tubman and her widely recognised actions. In a similar vein, the situation for Black Americans during the Reconstruction was still far removed from the ideals of freedom they together with the Union Army had pursued. Much like Moses in the Old Testament leads God's people from slavery to the Promised Land, people like Tubman led enslaved persons to freedom, but the Promised Land itself is not there yet. It is in sight, for people like Harper and Tubman, who dream of a better future for their country; it is the not yet, in the way that Ernst Bloch speaks of the utopian 'not yet' (Ruth Levitas *Method* 109). The United States of their dreams still had to be built on a wasteland with potential. Harper speaks about her own treatment and that of Tubman in this speech in the context of women's suffrage and why she brings to attention wrongs rather than rights in society. She ends her speech on the notion that it is well for white women to gain the right to vote, that they need it, but also that there is still much injustice in society:

> While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America. (196)

The speech is met with applause, as was her statement that Moses had earnt her nickname. The speech nuances an outlook on Harper as a feminist and underlines the intersectionality of her quest; while she argued for women's suffrage, she also pointed out how Black Americans were mistreated and that suffrage for white women alone would not be enough to move towards a better society. Through examples of Black women's treatment in public transport in times of peace—in other words, examples from the everyday for Harper and her contemporaries—she is able to concretely discuss a much wider societal issue and demonstrate the urgency to undertake action.

Mobile Imagery

Beside the concrete examples of her own treatment in public transport and that of Harriet Tubman in "Bound Up," Harper also makes use of mobilities-related imagery for conveying the situation of the United States and the way forward in "Woman's Political Future" (hereafter referred to as "Future"). When Harper speaks of the three great evils in society—intemperance, the lack of legal protection or rights for women, and lawlessness—she uses particular imagery to describe the second evil: "the social evil sending to our streets women whose laughter is sadder than their tears, who slide from the paths of sin and shame to the friendly shelter of the grave" (213). In "Bound Up," Harper discusses how she was evicted from her house and stripped of everything she owned except her children after her husband

passed away. This is one way in which the social evil can be understood, namely the maltreatment of women by society, particularly when they were not protected legally by a man and can be cast out into the streets. The description above from “Future” points towards a different fate than Harper’s, however, namely that of the ‘fallen woman’—a woman with a damaged reputation. The damaged reputation and consequential severing of familial and friendly ties pushed women to other means to survive. One way to read “whose laughter is sadder than their tears” is that the women were forced into prostitution to support themselves financially, which included keeping up a façade of pleasantries for their customers in order to generate income. This image has a strong connection with mobilities: firstly, the women are “sent” to the streets, having nowhere else to turn; they have become mobile without a mooring, without a home or base of their own. Secondly, their lives in this imagery “slide,” rather than that the women move themselves. This implies an involuntary course of events, which rings of causality or external pressure rather than agency. Thirdly, their lives move “from paths of sin and shame to the friendly shelter of the grave,” suggesting that their roaming ends in the grave, where they have a home and are safe from further harmful travel. The involuntary mobility of the women in this image connects to their legal and social status in society; physically they are condemned to roam as they find themselves socially stuck and lost without a mooring.

In another use of mobilities-related imagery, Harper presents a looming danger in the suffrage system. When she argues that the United States do not just need “more voters, but better voters,” she explains why:

> To-day there are red-handed men in our republic, who walk unwhipped of justice, who richly deserve to exchange the ballot of the freeman for the wristlets of the felon ; brutal and cowardly men, who torture, burn, and lynch their fellow-men, men whose

> defenselessness should be their best defense and their weakness an ensign of protection. More than the changing of institutions we need the development of a national conscience, and the upbuilding of national character. (211)

More and better voters were needed, because there were likewise voters out there who did not deserve such a right based on their moral character. In contrast to the suffering fallen women from the earlier image, these "red-handed men" show malicious forms of agency and power: they "torture, burn, and lynch." For these crimes they should be restrained as criminals and with that, their right to vote should be taken away; however, in the lacking situation of Harper's contemporary America, these men "walk." They are not just allowed to roam, but to do so unchecked and unpunished. Their "unwhipped" mobility is part of the threat they present to the defenceless and weak. While someone of sound moral character would protect rather than hurt the defenceless and weak, these men take advantage of the situation to wreak havoc. What the nation needs, Harper accentuates, is to educate people morally and to build a national conscience and character based on sound values. There are more images of mobilities that I could go over, such as the ploughing of muddy channels or how women open doors, but as there is but limited time, I will leave that to others. As both the images of fallen women and red-handed men demonstrate, Harper recognises wrongs in her society and presents what should be, how women should have rights and untouchable men who commit crimes should instead be restrained. The same sentiment holds for the public transport examples: freedom and the Promised Land were in sight, yet first wrongs should be recognised and righted rather than overlooked. Through concrete examples of mobility as well as images, Harper presents established wrongs in society to her audience and shakes these rusted systems up by dreaming of a better place and time.

Time and Space of Dreams

The section above mainly focused on injustices in nineteenth-century American society, but how does Harper envision a better future—how does she imagine the transformation of her country into a Promised Land? For a start, I will look at the Biblical framework for Harper's utopian vision. As said before, the figure of Moses and the voyage of the Hebrews to the Promised Land are recurring motifs in Harper's writings and relate to Black American cultural imagery. The story of Moses includes a society that oppresses and enslaves the Hebrews while they reside in Egypt, then a forty-year journey with its own toils and tribulations, and finally the destination of the Promised Land. As one might read in the Bible, the story of the Hebrews does not end there, but is one story arc within a larger collection. There are other utopian spaces that occur in Harper's speeches, such as the Garden of Eden and Heaven. These Christian narratives also play an important role in the identity formation of Black Americans before and after the abolition of slavery (see Kathryn Gin). Since the Garden of Eden or Paradise features more overtly in "Future," I will restrict my discussion to this utopia, but Heaven is important to keep in mind as a utopian frame of reference. Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise after they had tasted the Fruit of Knowledge, and they roamed into the world beyond the home they could never return to. Particularly for African-Americans and other people of colour who were uprooted and enslaved in colonial times, the enforced separation from an idyllic homeland they could not return to, poses a strong similarity. At the end of "Future," Harper states that the women of the world should unite and "respond to the song of the herald angels of peace on earth and good will to men" (213). The latter refers to the story of how angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ and with Him, the arrival of hope and the prospect of peace on earth and good will to men. With a united purpose of uplifting the human race, Harper states, "Eden would spring up in our path, and Paradise be around our way" (213). Eden and Paradise are

mentioned separately in this final sentence, which can be read as a tautology—they are the same consequence of this action—or as two different places. If you see the image as Eden springing up in the path already blazed by these women—in their footsteps, as it were—then that might be a past utopia that could regrow and thrive once more, while Paradise is the utopian future land before them. In either case, the paradises seem to be connected if not the same and are projected onto the future. The ideal past becomes a map for the future—not a blueprint, but a vision. As peaceful and idyllic as it once was, so the future must be again.

As a common aspect of the references to the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt and the severed link between enslaved African-Americans and their homeland(s), the theme of home and homeland plays a vital role in Harper's discussion of the lacking present and utopian future in these speeches. Firstly, in "Bound Up" Harper opens the speech with an account of what happened to her family when her husband unexpectedly passed away two years before. She describes standing in "the shadows of my home" (194)—an image that foreshadows the bleak events to follow. Because her husband died in debt, everything was taken away from her, including her means of earning a living. Even though she was a widowed mother of one and stepmother of three, "the very milk crocks and wash tubs" were taken away with which she used to "make butter for the Columbus market" when she had been a farmer's wife (194). Even her bed was taken from her when a neighbour she had once leant money to swore before the magistrate that Harper was a non-resident (194). With her children in her arms, she set out to search for a new life. She states that her husband would not have had to endure such treatment had she herself passed away instead, and therefore concludes this segment with the statement: "I say, then, that justice is not fulfilled so long as woman is unequal before the law" (194), which directly addresses the topic of the convention on women's rights.

Later on “Bound Up” features the section I have discussed before, namely on Harper’s treatment by conductors and how she is not sure where to make her home. The home as a starting place and destination for everyday life, as the right of a citizen, and as a hub or mooring amidst mobility, plays a crucial part in a person’s life. In this speech, Harper refers to the loss of such a place and the injustice—and consequently, I would add, sense of hopelessness—that can threaten a person’s existence. In “Future,” the home is discussed in different terms. Here the home plays a role in the founding of a just society or a lacking one, depending on the home. Harper explains how the social and political advancement of women will not “make home less happy, but society more holy” (210), followed by the nuance that society needs better voters, not just more or only women to vote. Later on Harper boldens in her claim: “More than the increase of wealth, the power of armies, and the strength of fleets is the need of good homes, of good fathers, and good mothers” (212). Rather than an aristocracy based on blood, talent, or wealth, society should look for “aristocracy of character,” Harper argues, “and it is the women of a country who help to mold its character, and to influence if not determine its destiny” (211). Not only should more people be able to vote, the voters should be taught better values, and not only should more people be educated, but they should be educated in the right ways and taught just morals. Men and women from all backgrounds and positions in society should work together to make a better nation. Women’s suffrage and women’s rights can play a crucial part in that process, as Harper acknowledges, for they increase possibilities to work together and diminish the wrongs that society may do to its citizens. Home functions as a necessary mooring at first sight, yet also functions as a starting point for change, as the ground in which good ideals and morals are sown that may later come to fruition in the lives of their inhabitants.

For the final utopian category in these two speeches, I return to the division of the United States between North and South. Harper states how she is treated in Philadelphia

(South) and a lady from the audience states that she would not be treated as such in New York (North). The speeches take place after the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, in a time marked by division and segregation as well as efforts to close the gap between citizens. Before and during the Civil War, the North of the United States was considered by many enslaved people and abolitionists in the South as a better place, a paradisical place—a utopian space, and one that was hard to reach, too. As stands out in *Iola Leroy*, this perspective from the South made the North into a utopian place that signified freedom to many. Meanwhile, Harper in these Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction speeches does not enforce this utopia of the North or a dystopian image of the South, but instead treats problems in society as those of society as a whole, North and South united. Yes, people were still treated differently and Harper clearly speaks of her ill-treatment in the South, but her remark that she is not sure how people would treat her in New York shows that she refrains from accusing or glorifying one place for the sake of the other. The constitutional problem of how Black citizens were treated applied to the whole of society. This presentation of the problems of the United States, as well as Harper's treatment particularly in the South, shows a continuation of the North/South divide and the tempestuous transformation into a united country.

In the two speeches discussed in this section of the chapter mobilities, lacks in society—or in this case, I would like to call them 'wrongs'—as well as utopian ideals hook into one another in pursuit of Harper's nuanced, intersectional feminist approach. Through examples of public transport, the author diagnoses wider societal issues in citizenship of and attitudes towards Black Americans. In a time when national heroes could be beat up by anonymous conductors and many daily interactions required hope and resistance to keep going, Harper dreams with her audience of a land where they will not have to fight anymore. She uses her utopian platform to say aloud what she might not be able to say in other situations and to dream with like-minded individuals. Through Biblical imagery she speaks of

a future they could build together, their own Promised Land after slavery, a Garden of Eden growing on war-torn land. In other instances, she uses mobile imagery to advocate for fallen women who are lost and tossed about by circumstance and malice, and to condemn the red-handed men who roam free unpunished. Rather than argue for women's rights apart from discussions on race, Harper draws connections between the aims of the suffragettes and those of abolitionists; she places the advocation of women's rights into a larger context of societal issues and opportunities. She discusses wrongs to imagine rights, rather than overlook one in favour of the other. The home may be a starting place for progress—steps that lead towards Paradise—as may the collaboration between North and South as one country. Rather than stand powerless, individuals together can bring about change on a national scale, and rather than stand divided, the country can only become new together.

About Changing What Is and What Could Be

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was not only a prolific author, but also a versatile social dreamer and activist. In the novel *Iola Leroy* and the discussed speeches she reviews similar topics and approaches in different ways, both in how she uses her medium and platform, and through which examples she critiques societal issues. While the North before, during, and after the Civil War may seem like a utopia compared to the stark realities of slavery and segregation in the South, Harper also points out injustices that concern the whole country and refrains from glorifying one part of her country in favour of the other without dismissing each's faults and fortitudes. She had the courage to write a novel far into a hard-earned career under the scrutiny of the general public; *Iola Leroy* encompasses grand historical changes she lived through in her country, yet also manages to critique lacks in society and imagine better alternatives. The voluntary and involuntary (im)mobilities in the novel point out cruelties and injustices in the institution of slavery, yet do not always coincide with a lack or gain of

agency—for hopeful, ingenuous ways can be found to work towards that utopian future the characters dream of along with their author. In the novel, too, public transport and forms of travel unveil social dynamics in the public realm, particularly in the opportunities and treatment of Black women. Stylistics manage to present to the reader the shock characters such as Iola, Marie, and Harry undergo in finding their fates turned because of their racial heritage and lack of legal protection. Before, during, and after the war mobilities change and shift for the characters depending on their geographical location and legal situation. Through metaphors such as bridges, paths, and water, Harper identifies the courses of her characters' lives, as well as their dreams. Meeting spaces such as prayer-meetings and conversaziones enable likeminded individuals to convene and imagine a better future together, as well as come up with concrete steps to such an ideal. Each meeting can bring about a shift in the possible, each gathering a step towards Paradise. In the concrete utopia of the settlement in North Carolina, a paradise within a starker reality is built, where the citizens are free and can work on their ideal home. With new mobilities and enhanced agency, the inhabitants of the settlements form a living example of the future they strive towards for their country.

In "We Are All Bound Up Together" and "Woman's Political Future," Harper discusses the inequality of women before the law and the double oppression of women of colour in society. Through examples from her own life, such as the eviction from her home after her husband's death and her treatment on public transport, she brings the battles she faces in the everyday to her audience. How is it possible, she asks, that a national hero such as Harriet Tubman can be lauded by the country but abused in public transport? Travel exposes larger societal issues and the lacks in her country's administration from which she dreams of the not yet, of what could be. Harper uses her stage to voice critique and hope to audiences who will listen to her in spaces where she can speak freely. By using Biblical imagery of important figures, like Moses, and utopian spaces such as the Promised Land, the Garden of

Eden, and Heaven, she gives shape to an envisioned future in terms her countrymen know. In identifying the unjustly fallen women in society and the free red-handed men who decide the country's political future, she pleads for larger causes, such as the just treatment of women in both the law and social sphere, as well as a broader sense of justice to strive for. While one home was lost, a new one may be gained, and from such a home just citizens may be raised.

Mobilities and Utopian Strategies

Comparing the Works of Harper and Hossain

By analysing writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, I have had the opportunity to study the roles mobilities in these works and potentially in the larger utopian visions of their respective authors. While the authors—from their own perspectives, contexts, and circumstances—critique their societies and imagine alternatives, a comparison of their approaches may help answer the question of what roles mobilities may play in feminist utopian writings more broadly.

The (Un)Freedom of Mobilities and Intersectionality

Both Harper and Hossain show in their texts an array of similar voluntary and involuntary physical (im)mobilities caused by oppression, as well as context-specific ones. "Sultana's Dream" involves a critique of women's confinement to the zenana and practices of purdah that do not serve society, as these restrict women's interaction with the public sphere and enforce immobility. Even though ambitious and intelligent women were mocked by their male countrymen, Ladyland's universities provide the means and the army to drive away the invader and save the country. In *Padmarag* Zainab is forced to leave her home and that of her brother after she inherits the estate and his function as zamindar, for the powerful business rivals of her brother would be able to harm her and take the estate for themselves without consequence. Her rescue by Latif changes her situation, so she disguises herself as a man to travel and dons the disguise of Siddika to find sanctuary at Tarini Bhavan. When she is able to return home, she does so with new purpose, but also with the knowledge that social customs prescribe a life confined to the domestic sphere. She is willing to brave these circumstances in

the hope of changing the lives of women around her as the women at Tarini Bhavan have changed hers.

When Harper discusses the political future of women in her speeches, she points out how their increased participation in the public sphere can help develop the nation towards a utopian society. Meanwhile in Harper's reality widowed or single women of colour could be driven from their homes, as they had no legal protection, and forced to live a mobile life without a place to rest their head. On public transport women of colour could be denied a place on the vehicle or forced to travel under degrading circumstances due to racial segregation, and could even suffer abuse at the hands of conductors without negative consequences for the abusers. Iola, too, finds herself a single woman forced to travel with a presumed guardian figure who assaults her on her train voyage to the South—an incident foreshadowing her gendered and race-related violence during her enslavement. Indeed, the speeches discuss situations after the abolition of slavery, an institution, as *Iola Leroy* shows, that was driven by and thrived on mobility politics. As Anna Pochmara states of mulatta narratives, "women's bondage is represented not only as confinement and immobility but primarily as an enforced movement" (4). Within this system enslaved people had no say in where they went or stayed, nor autonomy over their own bodies, while any social ties could easily be severed or enforced on the whim of a slaveowner. Illegal escape to the North, engaging in relations with those in power (such as Marie's marriage to Eugene Leroy), and secret gatherings to discuss steps to a better future, seem a few ways to escape the system.

Opposing Oppression and Imagining Justice

Despite the adverse circumstances—and simultaneously, particularly because of these circumstances—both Hossain and Harper imagine ways to overcome involuntary (im)mobilities and move towards a more hopeful space and/or future. In "Sultana's Dream"

the Queen of Ladyland commands that women should be educated at their own universities, a decree that lifts women's restriction to the home and invites them into a public space to improve their social mobility. In a situation where no such royal stood up for the women of her country, Sultana is able to travel to Ladyland through the medium of her dreams—a fictional device that increases her mobility. The foreign invasion of Ladyland shakes up the patriarchal structures of its government and instead becomes an opportunity for the women of the country to change their situation or die trying. Through their education and intellect, they are able to defend Ladyland and take over rule in a practically violence-less coup. With men in the mardana, the inhabitants are able to observe purdah and the women can claim a place of their own in the public realm. Aided by a garden-like utopia for those on foot and air-cars to traverse vast distances, every scientific invention serves to improve society and its governance. Zainab, meanwhile, needs to don various disguises during her travels before she can return to her own identity—namely the disguises of an elite gentleman to safely travel by train and the disguise of Siddika to hide from her brother's murderers. However, her identity shows more and more in Tarini Bhavan, where sisterhood, the predominantly female society of its inhabitants, and modest dress makes for a safe environment where she can uphold her modesty and engage with (semi-)public spaces. Once her life is no longer in danger from Mr. Robinson, she can reveal her true identity. The sisters regularly take trips to another part of the country, travelling *en groupe* by train and enjoying long walks together wherever they go. On such wanderings beyond the school they are able to help others, among them injured men and women in the slums whom they teach skills and crafts, and their bus system helps convey more girls and women from the domestic to the semi-public school space. Different than in Ladyland, the reality of *Padmarag* shows the dangers, including gender-specific threats and more general perils, of travel as well as their utopian potentials.

In the novel *Iola Leroy* various figures work together to move towards that utopian future held behind lock and key by institutions such as slavery. Harper looks back to the years when the institution of slavery and lack of legal representation denied people of colour any autonomy beyond the agency they could assert in illegal gatherings and escapes. Through the Civil War and the years following the historical event, Harper traces the same spirit of segregation and prejudice in society—not only in the South, but also in the North. Simultaneously, a counter-movement of those who support abolition and the education and freedom for all citizens appears North and South and along various tiers of society. As with the war on Ladyland, the Civil War provides a rupture in the everyday organisation of the country and the monumental opportunity for rapid change. Unfortunately, the change of America's constitution and the situation for Black Americans and women were not as swift as those in Ladyland, but large victories were won and in the novel the abolition of slavery already makes it possible for some freed people to start a local utopia of their own. Through the figure of Iola, Harper takes elements from the tragic mulatta narrative and improves its hopefulness, allowing her protagonist dignity, happiness, and purpose in the end, showing that the shadows of the past need not cloud forever the brighter days of one's future. In her speeches, Harper links the (im)mobilities of women to their lack of legal rights as well as to the need for women's suffrage. The first solution would protect women, their families, and their belongings, and attach consequences to ill-treatment. However, this gender-specific form of violence and oppression in the cases Harper discusses overlap with the segregation of society and the lack of rights for people of colour in the United States at the time. Through her intersectional feminism Harper supports both the improvement of the rights of people of colour as well as those of women in general. Women's suffrage could add—Harper purposely says that she cannot predict the outcome—to a more just society if the women turn out to be good voters. If many men who have committed criminal offenses against unprotected citizens

are allowed the power to vote, she sees no reason not to extend the power of the ballot to people of colour and women who might do good. By presenting figures such as Harriet ‘Moses’ Tubman of the Underground Railroad as national heroes, Harper shows how acts of rebellion and civil disobedience can serve justice in an unjust society, while the ultimate aim is to change society to become a better place.

Woman in the Public Sphere

In the writings of both Hossain and Harper, the role of women in society—also related to the presence of women in the public realm—is scrutinised and serves as a site of oppression, resistance, and hopeful action. In “Sultana’s Dream,” the utopian journey begins the moment Sultana accepts Sister Sara’s invitation to walk outside that night—something she would not have done by day for the sake of purdah. However, the moment she steps into Ladyland, it is broad daylight and everywhere she encounters women who are outside. The men, who had wilfully entered seclusion for their own safety during the invasion, have now become stuck in that sphere and excluded from the public realm. These swapped roles offer a reflection on the condition of Indian women in Hossain’s time. Once Sultana argues that it is unsafe to go outside in her own society, Sister Sara mercilessly points out a key part of Sultana’s situation and where possibilities lie through her question, “‘Why do you allow yourselves to be shut up?’” (5). Sister Sara turns the foundations of seclusion in Sultana’s society upside down and shows their shaky arguments; seclusion is not logical or in women’s best interest, nor is it inevitable. Instead, this experienced immobility might be overcome, as the inhabitants of Ladyland have through pursuing education and defending their country, thereby becoming its rulers.

In *Padmarag*, Zainab’s brother already trains his sister for a more public function—that of running the estate. While her brother’s influence is depicted as a beneficial and

positive one, Zainab is involuntarily cast into the public sphere after his death. Once saved by Latif from death, she disguises herself as an upper-class man through the attire of an English gentleman to traverse the country more safely than if she had been a woman. At Tarini Bhavan, which functions both as a public space and a safe environment of its own, Zainab is over time able to reveal her true identity and leave behind her imagined, homeless identity of Siddika. During her time as Siddika at the institution, she has learnt many things and discovered new aspects of her own identity, which she takes with her in the form of her new pursuit, her modest garments, and her determination to spread the love she found at Tarini Bhavan to others in the world beyond. Zainab's move in the narrative from the confines of the domestic to the hostile public sphere, then to the safe public space of Tarini Bhavan, and ultimately back to her hometown once the main danger has ceased, presents a narrative that moves from home to the world and back again. However, something has drastically changed in Zainab's approach to life, as she no longer desires matrimony to Latif for her own safety, comfort, or happiness, but instead embraces the world and provides love instead. While Zainab knows that she will have to go into seclusion for some time first, her horizon has expanded to a universal scope, and she pours from her experiences at Tarini Bhavan and her relationships with the sisters and Latif to uplift others.

In *Iola Leroy*, the home is considered as a utopian space of its own—both as a safe space and as the foundation for a better future. Particularly Iola's home in the South becomes a utopia in the classic sense of the word, as the precarious situation becomes fixed in the past, when she and her family could still be together and happy under the legal protection of her father. After Iola and her brother go North for their education and their father dies, the household will never again be the same. The hostile public realm invades the home through corrupted legal means as Lorraine and his relatives lay claim on the estate and inheritance, and enslave Marie and Iola. Her younger sister Gracie dies at the desperate prospect of

enslavement and the sudden change of situation, while Harry enlists in the Unionist Army to bring down the institution that holds his mother and sister in chains. Considered property rather than citizen in the eyes of the law, Iola finds herself tossed about in the public realm, involuntarily moving from one plantation to the next, where she endures the gravest mistreatment. Her rescue by the Unionist Army sets in motion a series of voluntary mobilities as she works in the hospital during the war and travels around the country to find her family after that. The difference between the Leroy family home as a utopia and the settlement in North Carolina that Iola finally ends up living at, is that in the first case, secrecy and negation of identity are key to living an undisturbed, secluded life. In the latter case, slavery can no longer cast its shadows over the homes, even if segregation continues in the public sphere. As with Tarini Bhavan, the North Carolina settlement is a community of its own, both a public sphere and one that differs from other places in society through its likeminded inhabitants and their shared mission to uplift society and its members. Iola no longer needs to conceal her identity, but instead is able to employ her talents and skills for the improvement of her community.

In the speeches, much of the mistreatment endured by women of colour takes place in the public sphere, in the form of discrimination on public transport, Black women's evictions from their home, the lack of legal rights, and social ostracism. Such mistreatments in the public sphere serve as examples of the crooked constitutional values of society and how the spirit of segregation still reigned in many facets of life. The role of the domestic in Harper's writings generally serves slightly different functions than in Hossain's writings. While both authors present homelike spaces where the protagonists can feel safe and welcome, it is in Harper's speeches and novel that the home functions more as a safe space from society. The home is influenced by society, such as in Harper's eviction or the social evils she names, but likewise great contributions can be made from there to a better society, for example through

moral education. The home is a place of refuge and safety—and one that is not always a given. This private space is often contrasted to the public realm where power structures are more apparent. Meanwhile, in Hossain's writings homelike spaces like Tarini Bhavan—which involves both domestic spaces and public ones—play a vital role in providing shelter and a safe environment, and the focus lies on the public sphere for change, while the home also functions as a site of oppression through practices of seclusion. In Harper's speeches and *Iola Leroy*, the need to engage with the public sphere to change society resounds, too. Harper addresses the need to speak up for change and particularly the need for white women to emerge from the domestic to engage with the public realm for the rights of all women. Where women unite for a shared purpose, change can be effected in society, so Harper's hope sounds, and one way to do this is by entering the public arena together.

Mobility Types and Their Intersections

In this section I wish to discuss answers to two of my sub-questions, namely concerning what types of mobility can be found in these writings, and how the presented mobility types interconnect in these narratives. Throughout my analyses I have made use of categories of mobility such as intellectual—which included education and mobility imagery to describe one's interior world—, physical, social, political and (related to the political) ideological moves, in addition to the separation between voluntary and involuntary mobilities. In all case studies, these different layers of mobility and immobility are meaningfully connected, either in causal relations as a restriction on one front resulting in a restriction of another, or as a freedom in one way that might provide the tools for more freedom in other areas of life. When we look at the hostile structures that Hossain and Harper critique in their writings, we can start to unpack some of these relations. In the case of Hossain's writings, she criticises practices of a patriarchal society that oppresses women in tandem with the colonial

oppression of British India. As Rifat Rezowana Siddiqui points out, while the notion of purdah is not inherently bad nor regarded as such in Hossain's texts, some of the practices are seen as harmful, as these stem from interpretations that support a patriarchal power structure and undermine women's agency by limiting their opportunities to interact with the public sphere (27). In the case of Harper's writings, the interlocking oppressive systems are on the one hand a patriarchal system that limits women to the domestic realm and forces them to legally depend on male relations, and on the other hand the institution of slavery and after abolition the segregation of freed citizens of colour from white American society. In both contexts, women of colour find themselves oppressed based on two aspects of their identities, as brown women who are also colonial subjects or as Black women or more broadly women of colour in a segregated society. The authors follow particularly the struggles and challenges of characters in these intersectional categories, while they also present how oppressive systems negatively affect other citizens who face either racial or gendered oppression or, as allies, dare to stand up to these regimes.

Now, as the definition of mobilities studies I handle indicates, mobilities in their social and spatial aspects are studied within their cultural environment. In that sense, one might look upon these types of mobilities as facets of an individual's mobility—as dimensions of mobility, if you will—much like different characteristics together make up one's intersectional identity. These identities and particularly how society views them largely determine one's challenges and opportunities when it comes to mobility. While characters such as Sultana and Zainab are able to perform various mobilities that go against the grain of their society, their movements are usually restricted to some extent by social expectations and customs, resulting in their resort to secrecy for defying power structures, such as Zainab's crossdressing train voyage to save her life or Sultana's notion that she might be able to walk outside with her friend at night because no man would see her then. In order to be considered

respectable women in their society, both Sultana and Zainab have to return to the domestic sphere, but both come armed with utopian hopes and the memories of alternative situations, ones they may yet return to either in reality (Tarini Bhavan) or dreams (Ladyland). Their newfound freedom of mind—an increased intellectual mobility—may allow for an increased sense of agency; in the case of Zainab, she finds her goal to improve society at Tarini Bhavan, where she also learns some tools with which she could make a difference, while in Sultana's case one can only guess at her reaction to the dream of Ladyland. Increased opportunities to interact with the public sphere might increase their mobilities and chances to alter the political situation around them, as well as allow them to challenge hostile ideologies with their own thoughts.

In *Iola Leroy* and the case of Harriet Tubman's involvement in the Underground Railroad, persons too often have to resort to secrecy to defy the institution of slavery and serve a truer justice than that of the law. As the institution legally denies enslaved characters any autonomy of movement, secret meetings and escapes from South to North are some of the ways to move towards a utopian destination. Even when Marie has been manumitted, educated, and legally married to a white citizen, the hostile public sphere and the ties to her past do not lose their power. She and her husband withdraw from the social sphere to a large extent—a community that is rather indifferent to them—and the family receives no support when Lorraine takes their inheritance and enslaves them. Later the Unionist Army, alarmed by the enslaved man Tom Andersen who felt for Iola's case, take Iola away from her enslaved situation and present her to a new life of different opportunities as a nurse and later as a teacher. A change in the politics on national level—the abolition of slavery—makes for an increase of mobilities of many kinds, including the physical mobility for Iola to go search for her mother and for freed people to independently travel through the country, the intellectual mobility to be educated and learn to read and write, and the social mobility to hold a job—to a

certain extent, that is; indeed, while the law changes, prejudices and hostilities maintain in the social sphere to some extent and it is a challenge for Iola to find a job and earn her income. Nevertheless, she and the other attendees of the conversazione seek to change the political, ideological, and social circumstances in their society. With the abolition of slavery, a part of their utopian dream has been realised, but much remains to be done. Like Tarini Bhavan, the utopian settlement in North Carolina is both isolated from the hostile public sphere and serves as an example to it, presenting in its existence an alternative way of life.

Concrete Utopias and the Utopian

In discussing utopia in Hossain's and Harper's writings, I make a distinction between concrete utopias and the utopian—instances that are equally products of social dreaming, but do not necessary form a concrete settlement or society. Examples of the first category are Ladyland in "Sultana's Dream," Tarini Bhavan in *Padmarag*, and the utopian community in North Carolina in *Iola Leroy*. Ladyland exists between dream and waking, vision and future, as an alternative reality for Sultana and her peers. The utopia combines technological ingenuity with attention to and respect for the ecological world, reverses roles in the public realm by isolating men and liberating women, and the Ladylanders continuously seek to improve their society. Tarini Bhavan is equally painted in stark contrast to the protagonist's daily reality as a haven where ostracised and fled women can find sisterhood, purpose, and peace. Again, the utopian space is populated by almost exclusively women, apart for some carefully selected male employees, an occasional visitor, and the injured or sick in need of aid. *Iola Leroy*'s utopian settlement in North Carolina literally builds a new future on the old site of oppression, a thriving Black community on a former plantation. The collaboration between men and women comes to the fore in Harper's novel and her speeches, the need for good mothers *and* good fathers, the need for women's rights *and* the rights for Black persons

more generally. In this utopian community, women and men work together to build a new future on every tier of the community's organisation. Iola becomes a Sunday school teacher and assists the young pastor in his endeavours for the community, including planning "meetings for the especial benefit of mothers and children" (278). Where Zainab refuses to marry Latif for the higher purpose of uplifting other women, defending her dignity, and setting an example, Iola does marry, yet her courtship with Dr. Frank Latimer is based on equality and shared callings to build a better future for their Black contemporaries and future generations.

For the second category of utopia, porous boundaries and flexible definitions come again into play, for while Harper's speeches do not refer to one concrete utopia, the hopes and dreams amount to a specific image—a utopian image—of a better future for the United States. The future Harper imagines from a situation of lack includes improved civil rights for women, families and homes as solid units of (moral) education for a new generation, and an end to segregation. In the other texts, too, utopian moments can be found—hopeful actions, reflections, arguments—that might not constitute a concrete utopia, but do imply social dreaming. Patricia Bizzell speaks of "utopian moments," in the context of *Iola Leroy* and other novels, "when we see the protagonists come into their own as public speakers" (394). Bizzell demarcates Iola's speaking at the conversazione as a utopian moment, where she addresses, after all she has endured, "a like-minded community of young black men and women" who seek to uplift themselves, their fellow-citizens, and their society (397). The sympathising crowd treat one another as equals and share ideas to further the fate of their Black contemporaries and society, in contrast to the oppressions, inequalities, and rigid ways of thinking that kept the institution of slavery in place for a long time. Hazel V. Carby discusses Harper's hopeful vision that "women were potentially capable of transforming society" and the important place of the home as site of moral education and improvement

within this transformation (69). Education and upbringing here play a key role as they help define one's framework through which to see the world and relate to others. Sultana's dreaming, Zainab's escape to Tarini Bhavan and her voluntary voyage to her hometown with renewed purpose, Iola's search to reunite with her family and her efforts to claim independence as a working woman, Harriet Tubman's actions for the Underground Railroad and Harper's public speeches to further her cause—all of these can be considered utopian endeavours, enterprises undertaken with a hopeful aim of changing reality for the better. How utopianism pervades these narratives in a variety of ways, including concrete utopias and utopian enterprises, visions, and moments, showcases opportunities for utopian forms and how authors may critique and imagine through their social dreaming. They show utopia as method in its purest form, as expressions of social dreaming and desire for change.

Kin-aesthetics and Affordances

What can these case studies individually and compared to one another tell us about the roles of mobilities in feminist utopian writings, then? Of course, these are five writings by two authors and to make generalisations as to the essential place of mobilities in feminist utopian writings would be an inappropriately essentialist and as such unproductive stretch. However, these texts show a variety of approaches to the relationships between mobility and utopia that could sharpen our eye for such tactics in other writings of a similar nature. For one, the authors use literary techniques to defy limits of the possible in their circumstances. The dream-frame in "Sultana's Dream" allows Sultana to escape her seclusion and enter a vision of what could be, thus possibly expanding her horizon of what is possible. Meanwhile, the juxtaposition of Iola's dream and nightmarish reality on her train journey combine the treatments of persons whose experiences would usually be vast apart—the white plantation owner's daughter and the Black orphaned woman—through the perspective of one and the

same person; this shows how society treats her based on identity and appearance, and in doing so Harper presents the unjust segregation of society, and the legal and social consequences for people with different intersectional identities. The three fictional texts under discussion mix genres and twist them to create new, hopeful narratives that both include critique and hopeful dreaming. “Sultana’s Dream” pours a narrative of a utopian society into a fable mould, contrasts it to reality, and includes sharp criticism through satire. *Padmarag* reminds of realist and sentimental novelistic traditions, but also includes poetry, philosophy, and social critique, while overturning the tragic heroine narrative to a more hopeful and enterprising one. A similar turn takes place in *Iola Leroy*, where the tragic mulatta narrative and the slave narrative are given a hopeful, utopian destination in a sentimental novel that includes speeches, letters, poetry, and social critique. Finally, in the speeches, too, familiar narrative forms through Biblical references help the readers imagine a new society and contrast their present with a future that could be. By describing utopia and steps it might take to get there, the authors communicate at that point unreachable situations as possibilities, shifting the paradigm of what is possible. Both Hossain and Harper make use of their various platforms to connect with their audiences and share with them steps that might lead to a brighter tomorrow.

Mobility imagery can remind readers and audiences of their own agency and ability to take steps towards a better future. Such imagery places unreachable utopias in characters’ and audiences’ paths as imagined possible futures, visions of the not yet that could be moved towards. Furthermore, mobility imagery to describe one’s life course or inner world links the interior of the individual and their actions to an external world where they could potentially make a difference. Societal change comes from within, whether it is through the home and raising of just citizens, such as Harper emphasises in her speeches, or the selfless actions of an individual that ripple into the lives of those around them, as is the case for Zainab and Mrs.

Sen. Similarly, one choice of a person in power like the Queen in "Sultana's Dream" based on her conviction that women should be educated, leads in the long run to the realisation of Ladyland.

On a plot level, mobilities and immobilities of the characters indicate their situation in society as well as their resistance to unjust systems. While some examples of involuntary mobility, such as an enslaved person's being sold from place to place, lock them in a similar situation again and again due to their place in the system of slavery, others—such as the rescue of Zainab from her pyre—present new opportunities and plot development. In Zainab's case, she at first did not want to flee, as she had determined to die, but finally changes her mind and leaves her town. I would call her rescue, because of her stance, an involuntary mobility, while her agency turns it into a voluntary one when she flees from Latif and her town. Beside involuntary mobilities, voluntary travels and changes of scene in "Sultana's Dream," *Padmarag*, and *Iola Leroy* serve plot functions, bringing the characters in touch with new people, new situations, or new discoveries. In the speeches, too, accounts of journeys and mobile figures serve a point—although one might not call a realistic account a plot—namely to present consequences to segregation and gender-based oppression. Harper's own account of being evicted from her house as well as the image of the roaming fallen women who are driven to the margins of the social sphere with no way out but death point to larger flaws in society, as do the restrictions and dangers of mobility on public transport.

In each story and speech, characters deploy various forms of mobility to advance their utopian goals, while they also endure forced mobilities and stasis through practices of intersectional oppression. The characters and audiences are made aware of the power of education and literacy, both forms of intellectual mobility. Writing plays a particular role in *Padmarag* and *Iola Leroy*—both for the better and worse—as writing letters in particular allows people to communicate without being physically near or able to travel. In themselves

these utopian texts present critiques, hopes, arguments, and imaginations to their readers, thus expanding their horizon of the possible from their own context, probing them to reconsider one's options and look farther ahead. The fact that these authors wrote their utopian narratives down or had their speeches recorded is largely the reason why we are able to discuss their visions at present and how their ideals are able to journey across time and space to audiences to this day.

A Hopeful Alternative

In this chapter I have discussed but not exhausted the similarities and differences between the feminist utopian writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper in their use of mobilities to critique circumstances in their societies and imagine ways to overcome these. In "Sultana's Dream" and *Padmarag*, Hossain criticises practices of seclusion based on purdah that sever women from society, and criticises the disdain for women's education and the dangers of travel for a woman alone. Through imagining safe educational and social spaces, such as the universities and country of Ladyland and the school of Tarini Bhavan, characters like Sultana and Zainab encounter utopian possibilities to dream of and strive for from their own realities. Harper in her speeches and *Iola Leroy* critiques the oppression of women and the segregation between white and coloured Americans, particularly through segregation and the (remnants of) the institution of slavery. She argues for legal rights for women and consequences for those who harm them, for the suffrage of both Black Americans and women, and shows how real-life people and characters in her novel defy systems of oppression through secret mobilities, acts of rebellion and resistance, and by lifting one another up by investing in their communities through education and good deeds.

Both authors show how different types of mobilities—the intellectual, social, physical, and political—tie together within power structures that dictate the experienced politics of (im)mobility that Peter Adey discusses (90). Hossain and Harper both criticise patriarchal structures that oppress women and exclude them from society, while the first pays attention to the lot of women of colour in a country under colonial rule, while the latter does so in a country oppressed by segregation in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery. In relation to the way these oppressive systems overlap, intersectional identities come with their own intersectional (im)mobilities; yet, both authors hopefully express ways in which restrictions from these oppressions—as well as larger social systems themselves—might be overcome. Here lies the urgency and power of their utopian practice, in their dual vision on adverse circumstances of their present and hopeful imaginings of alternative situations.

The texts by Harper and Hossain can alert scholars and readers to possible strategies to actively engage with these circumstances, criticise them, and present options for improvement, as well as utopian aims that may be out of reach at one point in time, but to which the imagination and eventually reality can be shifted. For the reading, studying, and writing of such utopian feminist texts, these case studies provide ingenious ways to critique and imagine through the use of mobilities. Through language and literary devices, the authors defy the limits of the possible in their direct circumstances and present to their audiences the impossible—or rather, the not yet possible. Mobile imagery brings the impossible closer to one's experience and the focus on education, intellectual mobility more broadly, social networks of like-minded individuals, and political action show how far the ideal of one person or group can go in changing reality for the better. Mobilities of various kinds drive the plot and argumentation of these case studies. Particular journeys unveil intricate social structures in the public—and in extension, domestic—realm. Finally, both authors acknowledge some of the power writing, education, and literacy have in such endeavours, both in the defying acts of

their characters and in the ways in which their own ideals and words can still reach readers across space and time; they have given their ideals vehicles with which to fly far beyond their own reach.

Final Remarks for Further Research

Beyond the roles that mobilities can play in these texts, the case studies have led me to ponder the aims and abilities of feminist utopian writings, as well as the utopian affordances of travel and mobilities more broadly. There are many ways in which one can elaborate on the research done in this thesis. For one, by continuing to compare narratives with utopian mobilities from various contexts and in doing so expand the narrative of what a feminist utopian text may look like. Indeed, more studies could be done that cross time—for example, placing these historical writings next to contemporary ones—and space, as well as across a variety of media. Such projects have been done before to varying extents and they have fuelled my enthusiasm to write this thesis. The intersection of mobilities and utopian studies, as well as broader interdisciplinary research across mobilities studies, humanities, and gender/feminist studies shows great promise, and the need for social dreaming does not fade. In this thesis, I wanted to investigate in particular how Harper and Hossain hopefully imagined alternatives from their respective situations and times, and how mobilities might play a crucial part in their endeavours and the concept of utopia—the unreachable ideal. How to traverse the unreachable to find utopia? I wonder, and indeed I marvel at the efforts of Hossain and Harper, who do so in their writings and worked, driven by hope, to realise these aims in their lives. There is much to be learnt from authors of the past and hope to be drawn from seeing some of their ideals come true over time. Without turning away from the hurtful and awful, these utopian writings urge their audiences to criticise their circumstances and imagine beyond them a better alternative. If I can stress one point in this thesis, it is that the

power and possibilities of feminist utopian writings are complex and many and that their hopeful endeavours should not be underestimated or ignored. Indeed, I hope this thesis leaves those who read it, much like its author, a bit more hopeful than before.

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