

A Monastery of Their Own: Imagining a Utopia from the Aëthnic Union to

*Urania*

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Abstract:

*Urania* was a radical 20th century queer journal that focused on dismantling the ideas of “sex” (gender in modern terms). They believed that there should be no such thing as a man or a woman, and that all should live freely and neutrally as they wished. The beginning of these ideals did not start with *Urania*, and was in fact preceded by a little-explored group called the Aëthnic Union. This project explores the importance of the Aëthnic Union to the early twentieth century scene of radical politics, and then goes on to explore the development of the ideal of a *Uranian* utopia throughout issues of *Urania* from 1919 to 1926. It explores the ideas the contributors of *Urania* held up as the pillars of their utopia; pacifism, femininity, and education, and argues that the reason for their *Uranian* utopia never materialising was the fundamental differences in class politics amongst the main editors and contributors of *Urania*.

## Introduction:

“I know not what the younger dreams –  
Some vague Utopia”<sup>1</sup>

So wrote WB Yeats in his poem “In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz”. Yeats had been besotted with both women from their youth, especially Eva Gore-Booth, and in this poem he reminisced about their youthful beauty. “Some vague Utopia” is what he imagines Eva Gore-Booth dreamed of in her last years before her death in 1926, despairing that she had then become “withered old and skeleton gaunt”. A “vague utopia” is unfair to Gore-Booth, who spent her years steadfastly fighting for a better world that was clearly defined by her political activity in education, pacifism, and women’s suffrage. It is, however, an apt summary of the motivations behind the creation of *Urania*, a unique twentieth-century queer journal. *Urania* started in 1916 and ran until 1940, publishing issues bi and later tri-monthly. It was, in its own words, a journal for those who were “firmly determined to ignore the dual organisation of humanity in all its manifestations.” There would be “no ‘men’ or ‘women’ in *Urania*.”<sup>2</sup> The journal was created by a group consisting of Eva Gore-Booth, a Suffragist; Irene Clyde, the pseudonym of closeted transgender lawyer Thomas Baty; Esther Roper, a Suffragist and Eva Gore-Booth’s life partner; Jessey Wade, an animal right’s activist; and Dorothy Cornish, one of the first proponents of Montessorian education.

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<sup>1</sup> W. B. Yeats, "In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz", *The Winding Stair and Other Poems*, 1933, URL: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57605/in-memory-of-eva-gore-booth-and-con-markievicz> accessed 10/08/22.

<sup>2</sup> *Urania* No. 13-48: R(SR)1162, (Jan/Feb 1919 - Sept/Dec 1924), 1929-1940, No. 13, (January - February 1919), p. 1

This dissertation explores how the editors and contributors of *Urania* envisioned their utopian future, completely unique from any other at the time, and how they envisioned the physical utopia they could potentially create for like-minded souls. This utopian idea started with the creation of the Aëthnic Union and then later was moved to the pages of *Urania*. In letters and articles they discussed what they wanted from the future, and what their utopian community would look like. Their utopia never came to pass. Irene Clyde's political leanings on the subject of class split the core group and caused uproar in the pages of *Urania*, and Eva Gore-Booth's death in 1926 was an extreme loss of inspiration for the other members of *Urania*. *Urania* stopped publishing in 1940, the members all returning to their original interests. In the pages of *Urania* they paid homage to the feminine, condemned war and violence, and imagined new ways to teach children where masculinity and violence would be shunned and femininity and peacefulness would be adored. The journal itself was the closest thing *Urania* got to a utopia where marginalised voices were free to express themselves.

This research project aims to do two important things. The first is to track the development of the *Uranian* utopia through the creation of the Aëthnic Union, exploring how the members of the networks created by the Aëthnic Union brought their ideas to *Urania*, whilst emphasising the importance of the Aëthnic Union as a previously unexplored source of information about *Urania* and early twentieth century radical networks. The second is to explore what ideas became the core of *Urania's* utopian ideals, and how these ideas were expressed between the pages of *Urania*. To do that, it is important to emphasise the importance every member of *Urania* held in the creation of the *Uranian* utopia, not just the more prominent voices of Eva Gore-Booth and Irene Clyde.

The source for the title *Urania* is hard to pinpoint. It could have been taken from the name of the Greek muse Urania or from the work and ideas of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German writer and pioneer of sexology. In his 1862 writings Ulrichs coined the term ‘Urning’ to refer to a man with a female soul and who therefore felt sexual attraction towards men.

For we all know that Love is inseparable from Aphrodite, and if there were only one Aphrodite, there would only be one Love, but as there are two goddesses there must be two Loves... The elder one, having no mother, who is called the heavenly Aphrodite [Aphrodite Ourania] - she is the daughter of Uranus; the younger, who is the daughter of Zeus and Dione - her we call common... The love who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite... is apt to be of women... But the offspring of the Heavenly Aphrodite [Aphrodite Ourania] is derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part... Those who are inspired by this love turn to the male.<sup>3</sup>

Ulrichs took the names of the Aphrodites to create the nouns ‘Urning’, for homosexual males, and ‘Dioning’, for heterosexual males. Soon enough ‘Urning’ became ‘Uranian’ in English. It is somewhat confusing that a journal so devoted to the love of the female would take up the mantle of a love of men for men, so the title could also be related to Greek muse Ourania. There should be no confusion between the muse Ourania [Urania] and the goddess Aphrodite Ourania [Heavenly Aphrodite]. Ulrich took his term ‘Urning’ from the goddess Aphrodite Ourania. The muse Ourania [Urania] was the Greek muse of astronomy. Clyde and Gore-Booth showed a clear love of the mythical and celestial throughout *Urania*, right from the first issue where Greek inspired poetry was included amongst the content.<sup>4</sup>

The use of “queer” to discuss the content of *Urania* follows in the stead of the Ulrich interpretation of *Urania*’s naming: originally “queer” was simply used to refer to homosexuality, particularly homosexual men. However, the modern usage of “queer” in academia has expanded to refer to fluid and undefinable ideas of sexuality and gender.

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<sup>3</sup> Hubert C. Kennedy, ‘The “Third Sex” Theory of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs’, Licata, Salvatore, Petersen, Robert P., *The Gay Past: A Collection of Historical Essays*, (New York : Harrington Park Press, 1985), pps. 103-111, p. 106

<sup>4</sup> C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, (Thames and Hudson: London, 1961), pps. 104-105  
*Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), p. 4

“[According to Eve Sedgwick] queer refers to "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality, aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.”<sup>5</sup>

The content of *Urania* covers a broad spectrum of ideas of gender and sexuality; they talk of lesbianism, gender-nonconforming men and women, of cross-dressing and abolishing gender completely. *Urania* does not talk of A Sexuality or of A Gender. It embraces some ideals, rejects others, warps and remakes definitions as it goes. As part of the reminder that *Urania*'s ideals and content are still relevant today, this work will use the term queer to refer to *Urania* and its content, alongside the term lesbian to describe the relationships they venerated.

All works that study *Urania* must only work from issue thirteen and onwards. This is because the first twelve issues, arguably the issues that could hold some of the most important content, are not in any archive. This is a real blow to any study of *Urania* as the first issues would be those most dedicated to the true intentions of *Urania* when it started. From content in the surviving issues, we are told that these lost issues include more discussions about the differences between *Urania* and the preceding Aëthnic Union, an issue co-edited by Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper before they stepped away from *Urania*, and more letters from readers, supporters, or opponents. The format of the journal was varied and could in some ways be considered a precursor to modern zines: a selection of newspaper clippings; extracts from books; snippets of poetry; letters published and responded to; and articles written by the editors all painstakingly retyped by the printers in India. Irene Clyde reigned supreme over the editing of *Urania*, whilst the other members appear mostly in letters, mentions, or acknowledgements of influence. The content changed from issue to issue as did the ideas published. Tales of crossdressing, women's education, marriage and divorce, and much more

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Whittington, "QUEER." *Studies in Iconography*, vol. 33, 2012, pp. 157–68. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23924280>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.

littered the pages. *Urania* was a fight for an ideal that even *Urania* itself could not agree on. The future was many things. The future was a place of pacifism, vegetarianism, and Montessorian education. People in this future would be kind to animals, and they would be completely sexless. Sexless, a fickle ideal that changed from issue to issue, that was argued in every page of *Urania*. Previous studies of *Urania* have discussed the core minds behind it, their views of marriage, male to female transsexuality, lesbianism, suffragism, but *Urania* was more than a sum of its parts. It was a call for a new world, a *Uranian* future woven from the threads of emerging radical ideologies of the time.

To complete the aims of this thesis, research had to start back at the beginning, before *Urania* was even a concept in the brains of its creators, and focus on who was a part of it, and what political views they shared. It would be an understatement to say that *Urania* was the result of an utterly tangled web of figures and political beliefs. The ability to understand *Urania* relied on the ability to understand where it stood in the political movements of the time, and in order to do that *Urania* needed to be viewed through the networks that surrounded and constructed it. Therefore, the starting place of this thesis was not *Urania* itself, but the time period and radical movements that *Urania* grew from, the worlds that *Urania* inhabited, and previous literature on *Urania*.



## Literature Review and Historiography:

The research undertaken for this project ended up becoming interdisciplinary, and contained shortcuts through histories of space, networks, gender, sexuality, and detours into sociology, utopias, subjectivity, and religion. In the end, the best place to start was the city of London itself, where the minds of *Urania* first met and the Aëthnic Union blossomed. The introduction of Matt Houlbrook's work on the queer history of the physical spaces of London provided a solid place to start thinking about networks in the queer world that *Urania* perilously occupied. It seemed that the city of London had created a space where many different strands of radical and unconventional political beliefs could interact, where those of means could take time to meet and talk and theorise about the future and the importance of radical politics. Likewise, Mary Louise Pratt created a space for this work to consider the creation of the contact zones where people learn and interpret learning in their own ways, and recognise themselves in the works they study. This thesis considers how *Urania* was positioned in the contact zone of many different political ideals and movements, but also in turn made itself a safe space for those who sought shelter.

Groups need places for healing and mutual recognition, safe houses in which to construct shared understandings, knowledges, claims on the world that they can then bring into the contact zone.<sup>6</sup>

*Urania* was the safe house in the contact zones of feminism, homosexual activism, gender theory, vegetarianism, theosophy, and more, where people could express their views anonymously, play with new ideas, consider, rethink, rework, and discard the cultural norms of the outside world.

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<sup>6</sup> Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*, Introduction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), URL: <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/354601.html>, accessed 10/08/2022  
Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Ways of Reading*, 5th edition, ed. David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrofsky (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), p. 40

To start the exploration of these contact zones, this thesis had to engage with the history of radical movements in Britain. Sheila Rowbotham provided necessary context on important radical figures in the same circles such as Edward Carpenter, and the mass mobilisation of women into a political space in the years leading up to the creation of *Urania*. Her work on Carpenter revealed a perspective of privilege that later became incredibly important when considering Irene Clyde's involvement with *Urania*, and her study of women in radical politics provided important context on both how contemporary and radical the ideas put forward in *Urania* were. Women entering politics was not new, the discussions of women leaving the home and entering into public space, public discourse, and the political discussion were not unique to *Urania*. However, the discussions on gender and sexuality in *Urania* were truly radical for the time and made *Urania* and its editors stand apart from their contemporaries.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning of radical movements in Britain, as far back as 1891 when the Humanitarian League was started, ideas such as opposition to vivisection, hunting, and other forms of cruelty to animals were included in the radical umbrella of the new world. With these ideas came the turn towards vegetarianism, a diet that would not harm animals and provided a new way to live. Vegetarianism and animal rights activism were subjects that united many of *Urania*'s contributors, and at least Gore-Booth, Wade, and Clyde were vegetarian throughout their lives. The literature surrounding the vegetarian rights movement was one of the first starting points for constructing the *Uranian* network of radical movements and figures. James Gregory provided a history of the vegetarian movement, an indication of the start of some of the ideas that were later popularised at the time of *Urania*,

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<sup>7</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A life of Liberty and Love*, (Verso: London, 2008)  
Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day*, (Verso: London, 2010)

and an insight into the more feminine-aligned side of the vegetarianism movement that *Urania* would have empathised with. Elsa Richardson provided context for the world that Jesse Wade took part in and introduced some of the important players of the vegetarian movement that were later located in the networks of the Aëthnic Union and *Urania*. Julia Twigg provided greater detail into the company that Wade kept and how her ideas of vegetarianism, animal rights activism, and her work with *Urania* all condensed into an interest in the ideas of rational dress. Finally, Leah Leneman's work was a hugely important source for this weaving of networks and the context of the suffrage movement, vegetarianism, and *Urania*.<sup>8</sup>

In a similar way, vegetarianism became a gateway into the study of how important the feminine was to many in these radical political networks. *Urania* celebrated the queer and nonconforming: those who defied gender norms, those who defied sexuality norms, and those who changed genders. Whilst *Urania* at first glance presents itself as queer, it soon reveals itself to place the love between women as the pinnacle of this nonconformity. The importance of *Urania* as an overwhelmingly lesbian centered journal cannot be understated, and needs to be analysed as an important facet of *Urania's* utopia. Lesbian history requires looking for unexpected sources of information, and this area of *Urania* was no exception. Three contributors who provided a new perspective on lesbian history and movements were

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<sup>8</sup> Sheila Rowbotham, "Edward Carpenter 1844–1929: A Very Modern Victorian." *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism*, no. 7, Raymond Williams Society, 2009, pp. 8–19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26920252>.

Julia Twigg, "The Vegetarian Movement in England, 1847-1981: a Study in the Structure of its Ideology", Thesis, London School of Economics, University of London, 1981, URL: <http://www.ivu.org/history/thesis/index.html>, accessed 10/08/2022

Leah Leneman, "The awakened instinct: vegetarianism and the women's suffrage movement in Britain", *Women's History Review*, vol 2 1997,, 271-287, DOI: 10.1080/09612029700200144

Elsa Richardson, "Man Is Not a Meat-Eating Animal: Vegetarians and Evolution in Late-Victorian Britain." *Victorian Review* 45, no. 1 (2019): 117-134. doi:10.1353/vcr.2019.0034.

James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*, (Tauris Academic Studies: London: 2007)

Peichen Wu, Pauline C. Reich, and Atsuko Fukuda. Their articles explored the work of the Japanese 'Seito' group of feminists and writers, active at the same time that Irene Clyde lived in Japan. This feminist group defied gender roles and sexuality norms of the time, engaging in literary debates about the place and roles of women in Japan. Whilst they were an introduction to a parallel growth of radicalism across the world from the Aëthnic Union and *Urania*, Peichen Wu provided an introduction to Adrienne Rich's "lesbian continuum" by framing the Seito society's interactions and homosexual relationships within this continuum. Adrienne Rich, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Judith Bennett all contributed extremely influential theories when considering ideas of historical subjectivity and understanding the contexts of lesbian relationships within *Urania*. They all provided their own perspectives and alternative viewpoints on lesbian history and the theory of romantic female friendships which helped to clarify historical nuances of love, romance and passion that are lost in a modern day perspective that perceives sexuality as the dominant identity. These ideas helped to conceptualise the approaches to women loving women in *Urania*; a modern approach that focused on physical sex would be irrelevant when considering these ideas in the context of *Urania's* content.<sup>9</sup>

The most influential lesbian scholar I encountered in my research was Martha Vicinus. Of the twelve sources I used to construct this literature review of lesbian history, six of those sources

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<sup>9</sup> Peichen Wu, "Performing Gender along the Lesbian Continuum: The Politics of Sexual Identity in the Seito Society." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, no. 22, 2002, pp. 64–86. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/42772182](http://www.jstor.org/stable/42772182), accessed 10/08/2022.

Pauline C. Reich, and Atsuko Fukuda. "Japan's Literary Feminists: The 'Seito' Group." *Signs*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1976, pp. 280–291. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3173444](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173444), accessed 10/08/2022.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual." *Signs* 1, no 1 (1975): 1-29.

Judith M. Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 9, no. 1/2, 2000, pp. 1–24. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3704629](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704629), accessed 10/08/2022.

Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1980, pp. 631–660. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3173834](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173834), accessed 10/08/2022.

were by Martha Vicinus. Her work covered the historical roots of the modern lesbian, ideas of lesbian perversity in the Victorian era, an enlightening historiography of lesbian history, and possibly the most influential piece of lesbian history I consumed in my research; this excerpt of Vicinus' review of Lisa L. Moore's work *A Usable Past*.<sup>10</sup>

[Moore] suggests that the recovery of the lesbian past must include offhand remarks, fragmentary observations, and gossip: Listening to gossip means believing what you hear, see, touch, and feel; being unapologetic about what you love; and paying attention to what you're scared of. It means trusting hunches, intuitions, gaydar. It means using the discipline, rigor, and patience of a dedicated scholar, a besotted fan, and an obsessed lover. It means believing in the importance of the act and process of telling a story as much as in the literal and historical facts the story contains. ...Of course our archival "recovery" projects are not meant to serve the long-dead objects of our research. What we are recovering is a usable past for ourselves, based on rumors, fragments, secrets, and secretions.<sup>11</sup>

This approach to lesbian history reflects the approach taken to research into the Aëthnic Union and later *Urania*, and also reflects the influence that Alison Oram's later work on *Urania* had on this thesis. *Urania* is such an intensely personal source that it has required a gossip-oriented mindset. Small asides must be considered in the context of community rifts and then considered for the modern reader who finds parallels between the radical communities of the early 1900s and the LGBTQ+ communities of the 2020s. Reading *Urania* like a modern zine helped to recontextualise the dreams and ambition involved in creating a utopia. Modern zines are mostly associated with youth interest in alternative subcultures such

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<sup>10</sup> Martha Vicinus. "The History of Lesbian History." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2012, pp. 566–96. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23720195>, accessed 10/08/2022.

Martha Vicinus, "Lesbian Perversity and Victorian Marriage: The 1864 Codrington Divorce Trial." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1997, pp. 70–98. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/175903>, accessed 10/08/2022.

Martha Vicinus, "'They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1992, pp. 467–97. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178078>, accessed 10/08/2022

<sup>11</sup> Martha Vicinus, "A Usable Past." *The Women's Review of Books*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2012, pp. 14–15. JSTOR, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41553312>, accessed 10/08/2022

as punk music but putting aside the age, time, and subject, *Urania* seems to follow the spirit of the zine:

[Zines] offer glimpses of the interests, concerns and opinions of youthful milieux. Yet they further allow insight into cultural preoccupations and socio-political understandings. Flick through their yellowing, stapled pages and alternative cultural narratives are recovered, hidden voices are heard, cultural networks are pieced together and formative political awakenings discovered: ‘visual and verbal rants’ freed from the pressures of censorship, editorial dictates, subbing and deadlines.<sup>12</sup>

*Urania* was run by post-Edwardian radical thinkers, those who pushed for far more than the progressive movements of the time. They were the radical thinkers of the radical thinkers who made their own space in print and dreamed of bringing that space into physicality. This desire to escape to a better place is a sentiment shared by many millennials, queer and not. In 2019 seven Chinese women made the news after buying a house together to “grow old and raise families” in.<sup>13</sup> Though these women are not lesbians, this rejection of the heteronormative nuclear family is an aspiration shared by many modern queer people, and was also shared by the members of *Urania*. Throughout the years the utopia has manifested in many different ways; the manifestation and expression of the desire of those imagining it. A utopia for one could be dystopia for another. The utopia of *Urania* was an expression of the desire of the editors, which is why it suffered from so many problems. Could the similar but myriad desires of five people ever produce a single utopian outcome?<sup>14</sup>

The existing literature on *Urania* is limited, and can often be categorised into works that focus on *Urania* and works that focus on the people involved in *Urania*. There are some

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew Worley et al. “Introduction: Adventures in Reality: Why (Punk) Fanzines Matter.” *Ripped, Torn and Cut: Pop, Politics and Punk Fanzines from 1976*, edited by The Subcultures Network, Manchester University Press, 2018, pp. 1–12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv18b5q46.7>, accessed 10/08/2022, p. 2

<sup>13</sup> New York Post, nypost.com, “Seven Chinese Girlfriends buy Mansion to Retire and Die Together”, <https://nypost.com/2019/07/03/seven-chinese-girlfriends-buy-mansion-to-retire-and-die-together/>, accessed 10/08/2022

<sup>14</sup> John Carey, *The Faber Book of Utopias*, (Faber and Faber: 1999), p. xi

other explorations of *Urania* that focus on its place in British lesbian history, as a part of the work of Gore-Booth, as a source for early twentieth century gender and sexuality history, and as part of the early twentieth century religious and spiritual movements. The earliest work discussing *Urania* and Irene Clyde is Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai's chapter "Fantasy and Identity" in their 1993 book *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals: British Women Writers, 1889-1939*. Their journey started with an exploration of Clyde's two non-*Uranian* works; a science fiction fantasy novel from 1916 about a female British explorer who stumbles into a land of genderless yet feminine people, and a 1934 collection of non-fiction essays on sex, gender, and marriage that summarise Clyde's own view of gender. The rest of this chapter is an explanation of their uncovering of Clyde's "true" identity as Thomas Baty, and their involvement with the Aëthnic Union and *Urania*.<sup>15</sup>

Emily Hamer takes up the baton of *Urania* and the Aëthnic Union next in her exploration of the history of British lesbians.<sup>16</sup> Whilst her book is more of a whistle-stop tour, it does stop and rest on Gore-Booth, Roper, Clyde, the Aëthnic Union, and *Urania*. Most of the information in this work is a repeat of the research done by Patei and Ingram and is in fact mostly inaccurate regarding the Aëthnic Union, the dates it was established, and the information available about it. These inaccuracies have caused the Aëthnic Union to go overlooked as an important part of *Urania*'s history and as an important part of the early twentieth-century radical movement, downplaying its popularity and the people who chose to take part. Part of the motivation of this dissertation is the intent to highlight the Aëthnic Union as an important part of feminist history, that played its own long-lasting role in the

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<sup>15</sup> Angela Ingram and Daphne Patei, *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals: British Women Writers, 1889-1939*, (University of North Carolina Press: 1993), pp. 265-290

<sup>16</sup> Emily Hamer, *Britannia's Glory: History of Twentieth-century Lesbians*, (Continuum International: 1995), pps. 68-75

scene of early twentieth-century radical ideologies that included the homosexual activism movement, the rise in socialist and labour movements, and the suffrage movement.

Past that, the most prolific historian in the field of *Urania* and Gore-Booth is Sonja Tiernan, who explores numerous facets of *Urania*'s content in her works. One article discusses *Urania*'s view towards marriage, identifying it as “a radical challenge to the presumed systems of heterosexuality and [explores how] the journal portrayed female same-sex marriages as superior.”<sup>17</sup> This line of opinion regarding the inferiority of heterosexual relationships and the superiority of lesbian relationships is one that was directly endorsed by Eva Gore-Booth and Irene Clyde, and must have been supported by Esther Roper, Jessey Wade and Dorothy Cornish as there was no objection or movement to distance themselves from this position. Another article is an analysis of examples of “female to male transsexuality” [FTM] in the early 1900s, using *Urania* as a main source. This unique status as a source for stories of FTM transitions shows truly how radical *Urania* was for the time, documenting and celebrating these events. This article also included the first ever bibliography of the journal including publishing locations and dates making it an invaluable item in the historiography of *Urania*. Where Tiernan focuses more on the work, politics, and life of Eva Gore-Booth, she still expands on how *Urania* advocated for various political positions that were sometimes opposed to or at odds with the prominent vocal sections of suffrage movement, especially the movement spearheaded by the Pankhursts that focused more on physical force and action, an antithesis to the pacifist beliefs of *Urania*. Importantly, in all of these works, Eva Gore-Booth's link to the Pankhursts, her education and guidance of Christabel especially, are highlighted where the Pankhursts tried to expunge it. The

Pankhursts had a history of removing other ‘troublesome’ voices of the movement like Sylvia

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<sup>17</sup> Sonja Tiernan, “‘Engagements Dissolved:’ Eva Gore-Booth, *Urania* and the Challenge to Marriage”, Mary McAuliffe, and Sonja Tiernan, *Tribades, Tommies and Transgressives: Histories of Sexualities Volume I* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. 128



and Adela, Emmeline Pankhurst's youngest daughters whose close links with the Labour movement and socialist views made Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst fear they would tarnish their reputation and the reputation of the suffragette movement. This resulted in both women being removed from the WSPU. (Women's Social and Political Union)<sup>18</sup>

Alison Oram's article on *Urania's* radical political support of lesbianism is one of the few examples of a case study of *Urania* itself, instead of as a source to support an argument. Sadly, like most of the works about *Urania*, most of the article is spent exploring the hows of *Urania*: the editors, the context, some of the content, the readers. There is little exploration of the actual content of *Urania*, besides a section on letters written to the journal and how the editors interacted with their readers. It does, however, track the engagement in *Urania* by readers; starting strong in the 1920s, dipping in the early 1930s, then experiencing a revival by the 100th issue in the late 1930s. Most of the content is devoted to working out where *Urania* sat in the literature and ideologies of the early 19th century and this has been really interesting when discussing *Urania's* real world impacts and what it gave to society at the time. Most importantly, this work provided a template for this thesis' study of the journal itself and the society it interacted with. Instead of solely focusing on the content of *Urania* I followed Oram's example and explored the ideologies shown in *Urania*, the editors, and the

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<sup>18</sup> Sonja Tiernan, "It should not be so easy to Construct a Man: A History of Female to Male Transsexuality" in editor(s) Sonja Tiernan and Mary McAuliffe, *Sapphists and Sexologists: Histories of Sexualities Volume 2*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, pp. 56-70.

Tiernan, "Engagements Dissolved", pp. 128-44

Sonja Tiernan, "No Measures of 'Emancipation' or 'Equality' will suffice: Eva Gore-Booth's Revolutionary Feminism in the journal *Urania*", Sarah O'Conner, Christopher C. Shepard, *Women, Social and Cultural Change in Twentieth Century Ireland: Dissenting Voices?*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2009), p. 168

Geoffrey Bell, "Sylvia Pankhurst and the Irish Revolution", *History Ireland*, (28 December 2015), URL: <https://www.historyireland.com/sylvia-pankhurst-irish-revolution/>, accessed 10/08/2022.

Lewis, Gifford, "Booth, Eva Selina Gore- (1870–1926), suffragist and poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004, accessed 10/08/22. URL:

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-37473>

people and groups they associated themselves with. This gave me a wide view of the many facets of *Urania* and its contributors and helped locate the trend of utopian ideals through the Aëthnic Union to *Urania* <sup>19</sup>

Judith Anne-Smith's thesis is a case study for the exploration of the term "Uranian", and focuses far more on the spiritual, religious and theosophical side of *Urania*. Anne-Smith pinpoints the saturation of spirituality in *Urania*, a phenomenon she calls "mystico-science". It has been the best source for truly understanding Irene Clyde and Eva Gore-Booth's influence on *Urania*, picking up on an important distinction that many other works missed: to *Urania* "sex" was not a thing of the body, it was a thing of the soul and the soul was the thing that *Urania* cherished most of all. This insight into the importance of the soul in *Urania* both emphasised the importance of Theosophy to *Urania* and gave an insight into the motivations and beliefs of Irene Clyde and Eva Gore-Booth. *Urania* could not be considered without the insight that to *Urania* the soul and the body were separate things. One could become more feminine by embracing a feminine way of being, never mind the body one was born with. The body was an insignificant shell, what mattered was the nurturing of the *Uranian* soul. <sup>20</sup>

There are a number of works that mention Irene Clyde as a part of the life of Thomas Baty, the most prominent being Peter Oblas' works devoted to Thomas Baty's life and legal works. In both there are asides to consider the alter ego of Irene Clyde and their work outside their governmental work that included their books written as Irene Clyde, *Urania*, and other work in the expat community in Tokyo. Shinya Murase's biography gives more time to Clyde, taking more from Baty's own autobiography to explore Clyde in the context of Baty's life,

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<sup>19</sup> Alison Oram (2001) "Feminism, Androgyny and Love between Women in Urania, 1916-1940", *Media History*, 7:1, 57-70, DOI: 10.1080/1368800120048245

<sup>20</sup> Judith Anne Smith, 'Genealogies of Desire: "Uranianism," Mysticism, and Science in Britain 1889 - 1940', (Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia 2005), pp. 43-58

and explore some of the aspects of Baty's politics that have been left of other works such as Baty's lifetime spent on theories of feminism in international law.<sup>21</sup>

### Methodology:

The most difficult question in dealing with a group biography of *Urania* is the many ways in which they defied social conventions of the time, and what that meant for this research and any interpretations made. Firstly; neither Dorothy Cornish nor Jessey Wade ever married. Both women were willing to have their names attached to a journal that took on a proudly lesbian stance, placing female same-sex relationships above all others. It is possible then, to make a short leap to an assumption that both these women were also lesbians. As a lesbian historian it is appealing to assign modern labels to historical figures, but I could never know how these women truly felt about their sexualities. To help account for this issue I did research into the subject of historical subjectivity, and how as a lesbian historian I could research the lives of these women and consider their histories in a respectful manner.

Geoffrey White discussed how modern studies of history take influence from sociology, creating unique practices that resonated with the narrative being created by this work in regards to gender, sexuality, and the identities of the historical figures being studied.

[These practices] link personal identities with larger imagined collectivities” and... results in “historical narratives that not only represent who "we" are in relation to others, but who "we" are in relation to ourselves through time-past, present, and

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<sup>21</sup> Shinya Murase, “Thomas Baty in Japan: Seeing Through the Twilight”, *British Yearbook of International Law*, Volume 73, Issue 1, 2002, Pages 315–342, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bybil/73.1.315>, p. 338

Oblas, Peter, ‘In Defense Of Japan In China: One Man’s Quest For The Logic Of Sovereignty’, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 3, 2, (December, 2001), pps: 73-9

Oblas, Peter, ‘Britain’s First Traitor of the Pacific War: Employment and Obsession’, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, 7, 2 (December, 2005), pps: 109-133, accessed 10/08/22, URL: [https://www.nzasia.org.nz/uploads/1/3/2/1/132180707/7\\_2\\_6.pdf](https://www.nzasia.org.nz/uploads/1/3/2/1/132180707/7_2_6.pdf)

future... Successful (or, rather, effective) historical narrative not only represents the past, it represents it as real, natural, important, relevant, and authoritative.<sup>22</sup>

I cannot be certain about the sexualities of these women, but I can be sure that they were part of a community that centred on women and female-female love. The two works on lesbianism that most influenced this work were by Adrienne Rich and Judith M. Bennet.<sup>23</sup> Adrienne Rich's groundbreaking article *Compulsory Heterosexuality* was where she coined her theory of the "lesbian continuum", a theory that started the approach in this work to the sexualities of those involved with *Urania*.<sup>24</sup>

Lesbian existence suggests both the fact of the historical presence of lesbians and our continuing creation of the meaning of that existence. I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range through each women's life and throughout history of women-identified experience; not simply that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical support . . . we begin to grasp the breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical definitions of "lesbianism."<sup>25</sup>

Rich's approach to lesbian identity is as a continuum of women sharing lives together, not centred on men. This theory creates a way to study female relationships without centering them on men, but is too limited for the needs of this project. Instead, there is a broader alternative in Judith Bennet's "lesbian-like".

In any case, I am suggesting not the use of "lesbian," but instead the use of "lesbian-like," a hyphenated construction that both names "lesbian" and destabilizes it. The "lesbian" in "lesbian-like" articulates the often-un-named, forcing historians who might prefer otherwise to deal with their own heterosexist assumptions and with the possibility of lesbian expressions in the past. Yet at the same time as the term forthrightly names the unnamed, the "like" in "lesbian-like" decenters "lesbian," introducing into historical research a productive uncertainty born of likeness and resemblance, not identity. It might therefore allow us to... incorporate into lesbian history women who, regardless of their sexual pleasures, lived in ways that offer

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<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey M. White, "Histories and Subjectivities." *Ethos* 28, no. 4 (2000): 493–510.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/640613>, pps. 494, 496, 497

<sup>23</sup> Bennett, pps. 1–24

<sup>24</sup> Rich, pps. 631–660

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 648

certain affinities with modern lesbians. In so doing, we might incorporate into lesbian history sexual rebels, gender rebels, marriage-resisters, cross-dressers, singlewomen.<sup>26</sup>

It is this category of “lesbian-like” that provided a place for Dorothy Cornish and Jessey Wade in historical analysis. These women were never explicitly heterosexual, nor were they ever explicitly lesbians, but they existed as “lesbian-like”, women who were unapposed to be associated with lesbianism, were friends with lesbians, were activists and spinsters when the model of English femininity was the wife who did not take an interest in the masculine arena of politics.

A similar issue vis a vis identity came up with Irene Clyde. In 1926 they composed an address to friends wherein they confessed that they “wanted to be a girl”.<sup>27</sup> To a modern historian it is easy to transpose the modern label of “transgender lesbian” onto Irene Clyde, but because Irene Clyde still publicly presented themselves as Thomas Baty to most of society, how should I refer to them? Is it transphobic to use “he/him” pronouns to refer to them in their life where they were not presenting as Irene Clyde? Friends of them noted a shift between Thomas Baty and Irene Clyde, where one faded away and the other emerged.

When he extended his hand in greeting his sombre eyes lit up, his withdrawn expression melted away. Dr Baty, Chief Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office of Japan, disappeared and in his place stood Irene Clyde, a gentle, kindly, witty, and intelligent elderly lady.<sup>28</sup>

I am a cisgender woman. To be flippant with how I approach Irene Clyde’s identity would be cruel at best and actively harmful at worst. I have a responsibility to Irene Clyde and to transgender people past and present to approach this issue as respectfully as possible.

However, to simply assign straight modern interpretations and labels would ignore important nuances of historical gender identity and sexuality and confine these figures to labels that

<sup>26</sup> Bennett, “Lesbian-Like” p. 14

<sup>27</sup> Oblas, “In Defense of Japan in China”, p.74

<sup>28</sup> Ingram and Patei, *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals*, p. 289

perhaps did not even represent them. Jen Manion's work explores the lives of people assigned female at birth who lived and married as men. These "Female Husbands" created problems for the heterosexual, gender binary systems they lived in that shook the foundations of how men and women, and the roles of husband and wife, were defined. Throughout the book Manion uses the concept of "trans" as a verb.

a practice... to redirect the reader "away from the recognizable cross-dressing *figure* to multiple forms of cross-dressing *practices*." To say someone "transed" or was "transing" gender signifies a process or practice without claiming to understand what it meant to that person or asserting any kind of fixed identity on them.<sup>29</sup>

Part of Manion's process of using "trans" as a noun involves using "they/them" pronouns for the female husbands she discusses, and this is a practice I have taken up for discussions of Thomas Baty. When referring to Thomas Baty I will use the pronouns "they/them". When referring to Irene Clyde, I will use the pronouns "she/her". One could claim that Irene Clyde was transgender, one could also claim that Clyde was perhaps genderfluid, switching between male and female, or even non-binary. These arguments are not mine to be made. Instead, I will let Clyde's own words speak for themselves.

From my earliest years I hated sex. The reason was that I wanted to be a girl. I saw that ladies, while admittedly more graceful and sweet than men, were also just as determined and noble. I could not bear to be relegated to the ranks of rough and stern men.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Jen Manion, *Female Husbands: A Trans History*, (UK: Cambridge University Press: 2020), p. 11

<sup>30</sup> Oblas, "In Defense of Japan in China", p.74

### The Creators of Urania:

Dorothy H Cornish is a figure who has not left much of a mark on history. Born in 1870 in Lincolnshire, she moved to Manchester with her father at age six. At twenty-five she moved to Sienna in Italy and stayed in Italy for most of her life. She died in 1945, in England.<sup>31</sup> That is all the biography of her life in the Brontë Society Transactions contains. A fan of the Brontë sisters with a formidable mind, she spoke fluent enough French to translate works for the Brontë sisters throughout her life, and enough Italian to live in Italy and act as a translator for Maria Montessori, endeavouring to bring Montessori education to the UK.<sup>32</sup> The only overtly political statement she ever made was signing the UK Suffragist's 1914 Open Christmas Letter, a collaboration of British suffragists writing to German and Austrian suffragists in a show of pacifism, support, and solidarity.<sup>33</sup>

She is known mostly for her translations of the work of others. In Maria Montessori's biography Rita Kramer writes about Dorothy Cornish as Maria Montessori's "English Voice", described by students as a "bony, colourless caricature of the English schoolmarm," who Montessori fondly joked about. "Sometimes [Montessori] would break off to stamp her foot

<sup>31</sup> "Some Notes on Contributors", *Brontë Society Transactions*, (1952), 12:2, p131, DOI: 10.1179/bronsoc.1952.12.2.131

<sup>32</sup> "Museum Attendances: Some Comparisons", *Brontë Society Transactions*, (1950), 11(5), 336–341, DOI:10.1179/030977650796550074

<sup>33</sup> Emily Hobhouse, Dorothy Cornish, Eva Gore-Booth, Esther Roper, *Open Christmas Letter*, 1914, (Manchester Branch of N.U.W.S.S, Manchester Public Libraries, accessed 10/08/1922, URL: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/manchesterarchiveplus/11350682363/>)

and say “No, no!” if she felt Miss Cornish hadn’t translated a phrase correctly,” even as Montessori “appreciated [Cornish’s] understanding of her ideas and her skill at translating.”<sup>34</sup> In *Urania* she found a voice. One of *Urania*’s most devoted supporters she attended meetings of the Aëthnic Union from the beginning and wrote letters from Italy to bring to life debate in *Urania*’s pages. *Urania* was there to hear her words. In the safety of the pages of *Urania*, amongst friends who understood her, she dreamt of paradise.

Jessey Wade is most well known for her animal rights activism, and her position as a chair and creator of numerous animal rights charities including the Cats Protection Society. It was still hard to curate a biography of her. Like Dorothy Cornish, her life is mostly defined by her volunteer work on the boards of many animal charities, instead of her personal life. She was born in December 1859, but it is not known where she was born, when she moved to London, or when she actually started associating with the animal rights movement. She was a personal friend of Ernest Bell, a renowned animal rights activist, and was his secretary until his death in 1933. Wade started her animal rights activist career as the Honorary Secretary of the Children’s Department for the Humanitarian League in 1906. The Humanitarian League was founded in 1891 by Henry Salt, Ernest Bell, and other animal rights activists of the time. In Bell’s obituary in the December 1933 issue of the *Animals Friend*, the editor notes that “For thirty-six years, as his private secretary and friend, Jessey Wade was associated with Mr Bell,” which meant that they started their life-long partnership and friendship in 1897.<sup>35</sup>

In 1910 she contributed to the *Votes For Women* “£100’000 Fund” by “collecting cards” and it can be assumed that like Dorothy Cornish she took part in the suffrage movement in other

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<sup>34</sup> Rita Kramer, *Maria Montessori: A Biography*, (Putnam: New York: 1976), p. 294

<sup>35</sup> Editor, “Editorial Notes”, *The Animals Friend*, October 1933, Vol. 39, p. 285



ways.<sup>36</sup> In 1909 she spoke at the International Congress on Anti-Vivisection alongside Ernest Bell, focusing on the topic of rational dress and the wearing of feathers.<sup>37</sup> She joined the Aëthnic Union in 1911 and supported *Urania* from 1916, but the rest of her personal life was dedicated to animal rights causes. In 1927 she founded the Cats Protection Society, the same year she co-founded the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports, and then in 1932 the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports.<sup>38</sup> She spent her time spread between many different organisations and publications: editing *The Little Animals' Friend*, the children's branch of the *Animal's Friend* journal, for over 50 years, writing her own pamphlets and books and regularly writing letters to newspapers to appeal to the readers to join the animal rights movements. Her life's devotion was to animals, and yet somewhere the Aëthnic Union and *Urania* appealed to her too.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Contributions to the £100'000 Fund", *Votes for Women* - Friday 20 May 1910, p.7, The British Newspaper Archive, URL: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002187/19100520/071/0007>, accessed 10/08/2022

<sup>37</sup> "The Animal Congress", *Globe*, Friday 09 July 1909, p.2, The British Newspaper Archive, URL: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001652/19090709/013/0002>, accessed 10/08/2022

<sup>38</sup> "Ninety Years of Dedication To Cats". *Cats Protection*, published 16/05/2017, URL: <https://www.cats.org.uk/cats-blog/ninety-years-of-dedication-to-cats>, accessed 10/08/2022.

<sup>39</sup> "*The Humane Education Society Council for Protection of Animals*", 1935, p.33, accessed 10/08/22, URL:

<https://ocr.lib.ncsu.edu/ocr/mc/mc00456-001-bx0003-041-001/mc00456-001-bx0003-041-001.pdf>

"Pamphlets", *Pall Mall Gazette*, Tuesday 23 April 1912, p.9, The British Newspaper Archive, accessed 10/08/22

URL: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000098/19120423/109/0009>

"Books Received", *The Scotsman*, Monday 13 August 1917, p.2, The British Newspaper Archive, accessed 10/08/22, URL:

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000540/19170813/051/0002>

"Breaking Their Spirit", *Leeds Mercury*, Thursday 04 February 1926, p.4, The British Newspaper Archive, accessed 10/08/22, URL:

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000748/19260204/105/0004>

"Travelling Fairs and Cruelty", *Leeds Mercury*, Monday 13 September 1926, p.4, accessed 10/08/22, URL: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000748/19260913/076/0004>

"Elephants on the Road", *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, Thursday 28 November 1929, p.8, accessed 10/08/22, URL:

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000687/19291128/174/0008>

"A Friend of Animals", *The Children's Newspaper*, February 21, 1948, The British Newspaper Archive, accessed 10/08/22, URL:

[https://archive.org/details/The\\_Childrens\\_Newspaper\\_1509\\_1948-02-21/page/n1/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/The_Childrens_Newspaper_1509_1948-02-21/page/n1/mode/2up)

Irene Clyde is not a name most people know. Her public persona, Thomas Baty is more known amongst historians but mostly for their work as a lawyer and legal scholar. They had numerous works of legal literature and their life was covered by two different biographers. Their work as Irene Clyde is contained mostly in two books and the three hundred or so pages of *Urania* left. It is in her work as Clyde that her true life, her true thoughts and personality seeped through, but it is still important to consider her life as Thomas Baty.

Baty was born in 1869 in Cumberland, England. Their father died when they were seven, so they grew up close to their mother and their younger sister. They were able to attend Oxford university on a scholarship, obtaining a B.A with Honours in 1892 and gaining their Doctorate of Civil Law in 1901, then transferring to Cambridge university, receiving an L.L.C (English Doctor of Laws) in 1903. This was the start of a prolific career in law and legal writing. By 1911 they were working in Temple, London, and were able to gain access to the radical political scene of the time, already having published their 1909 feminist fantasy novel *Beatrice the Sixteenth*. Whilst in London they started the Aëthnic Union, but in 1916 they took a job as Japan's Legal Advisor that required them to move to Tokyo with their mother and sister. Their mother died a short time after arriving in Japan. They would live in Japan for the rest of their life, only returning to England for brief holidays. Their work in Japan was mostly uneventful, allowing them to spend most of their time interacting with the foreign community in Japan and editing *Urania*. In their time as an employee of the Japanese government they were awarded the Order of Sacred Treasure, and appreciated for their legal knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Murase, p. 318  
 Oblas, 'Britain's First Traitor of the Pacific War', p.118

It must be clarified that their work was uneventful aside from one piece of legal work that changed their relationship with the British government forever. The majority of their work consisted of writing legal opinions, and one legal opinion that Baty came to during their work was that China was not worthy of recognition as a state under international law. This view was used by the Japanese government as a justification for the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1932. Baty held this legal position throughout said invasion, the creation of Manchukuo, and the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. When the Second World War broke out and the British Embassy attempted to repatriate them, Baty and their sister remained in Japan and Baty continued their work for the Japanese Government. Their sister died in 1944 and after the war Baty was ostracised. They were stripped of their British nationality as an alternative for standing trial for treason during the war. They had their passport revoked and left to live out the rest of their life in Japan. They died in 1954, alone and isolated from the rest of the foreign community in Japan. Their life was an unusual one by all standards, and this unique political existence bled into their political views as Irene Clyde.<sup>41</sup>

Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper are often mentioned together, being a well known couple, but it seems that Esther Roper's remarkable work is often overshadowed by her more well-known partner. Esther Roper led a groundbreaking life before she even met Eva Gore-Booth, and was the one who encouraged Gore-Booth to devote her life to politics. Roper was born in Cheshire in 1868, the daughter of working-class parents Revd Edward Roper and Annie Craig. Her father became a CMS (Christian Missionary Society) missionary in Africa and both Roper's parents left for Africa soon after she was born. She was left with her grandmother until she was four and then moved to a CMS children's home in London

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<sup>41</sup> Murase, pps. 315–42  
 Oblas, 'In Defense Of Japan In China'  
 Oblas, 'Employment and Obsession'

with her brother. Not much else is known about her life until she turned eighteen and was admitted to Owen's College in Manchester as one of the first female students to attend an English university. During her time at the university she started a newsletter for the female students of the university. She graduated in 1891 with a B.A, then became an officer of the Social Debating Society and then in 1893 became an Associate of Owen's College.

Her venture into the Suffrage movement started as soon as she left university, and in 1894 she became the secretary for Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage. She worked herself hard enough that in 1896 she went on holiday to Italy to recuperate from stress, and it was there that she met Eva Gore-Booth. She was one of the first proponents of suffrage campaigns aimed at working women, and between 1894 and 1905 she worked hard to promote women's suffrage amongst Manchester's working women. She continued her suffrage work in Manchester until 1913 when she and Eva Gore-Booth moved to London, and joined the Aëthnic Union, possibly as a way to connect to the radical scene in their new home. After Eva Gore-Booth's death in 1926 Esther took over the task of editing and publishing Gore-Booth's work. She died in 1938 and was buried next to Gore-Booth.<sup>42</sup>

The final member was Eva Gore-Booth. *Urania* was just a footnote in a life filled with suffrage work and every fight for justice she could find to throw herself into. Gore-Booth was born in 1870 into a more privileged life than most, the daughter of a baronet and land-owner in Ireland. The family had a strain of rebellion in it, as her father was an arctic explorer, and two of her siblings, Josslyn Gore-Booth and Constance Markievicz also gave up their privileged lives in devotion to social movements and, in Constance's case, revolution.

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<sup>42</sup> Margaret M. Jensen, "Roper, Esther Gertrude (1868–1938), suffragist." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004, accessed 10/08/22.  
<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-50081>

Gore-Booth was home educated and took an interest in women's suffrage and charity work in her earlier years, taking part in her family's charity work and making efforts to discuss women's suffrage in Sligo county. Her health was an issue throughout her life, and in 1856 an illness prompted her to travel to Italy to recover. Here in Italy she met Esther Roper. If Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper had never crossed paths in Italy it is possible that Eva Gore-Booth would never have found her way into activism. She might have stayed on her solitary path of privilege and guilt, with no idea how exactly to pay her penance. Esther Roper opened her eyes to the difference one woman could make with her words and her actions, and thus spurred her into action.

Eva Gore-Booth decided to leave Ireland and move to Manchester with Esther Roper, moving in with Esther and her brother. At first she followed Esther's lead in focusing trade unionism and suffrage, but soon found her own path in adult education for women in Manchester. Her work led her to become the mentor for Christabel Pankhurst but Christabel disagreed with Eva's pacifism and patience and left her to pursue ever-increasing militancy, slandering Gore-Booth's work as "temperament without direction."<sup>43</sup> Together, Roper and Gore-Booth were hard workers devoted to their causes, and the causes that anyone brought to them, whether they be flower-sellers, barmaids or pit-brow workers. They also devoted time and energy to attracting working class women to the suffrage movement.

Outside of the suffrage movement Eva Gore-Booth was a prolific writer and poet, focusing on themes of Christian mysticism, nature, distaste for materialism, violence and militancy. At the outbreak of the First World War she and Esther Roper devoted time to pacifist causes, and Gore-Booth became a representative of the "No-Conscription Fellowship for conscientious

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<sup>43</sup> Lewis, "Booth, Eva Selina Gore-" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

objectors”, appearing at their trials by tribunal. She also took part in the Women’s Peace Crusade, travelling around Britain doing talks. By now she and Esther Roper had moved to London and were then able to attend Aëthnic Union meetings in person in 1913. After the war ended her health had taken too great a toll to continue her work in the peace and suffrage movements and she retired. She died in 1926, two years before women were granted the vote in Great Britain.<sup>44</sup>

The editors and contributors of *Urania* came from all walks of life. From working class to middle to upper class, from a variety of family formats that would not prescribe to the ideal Edwardian family image, from Ireland, Manchester, Cumberland, and Lincolnshire. They all ended up in London and at the Aëthnic Union. Individually they were all unique and intriguing personalities in their own way, but one thing connected them: their firm belief in a better world. The creation of the Aëthnic Union and *Urania* is that of a group of people who saw a better future for themselves and others, and were willing to put in the work to create it. Together they formed the base of the utopian community that *Urania* yearned to send out into the world. The study of individual histories became an important benchmark in this research. *Urania* was never a monolith, could never be a monolith. To ignore the individual and read *Urania* as a whole means missing intricate details that provide startling insight into the different political views of the time.

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis, "Booth, Eva Selina Gore- (1870–1926), suffragist and poet." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

### The Growth of *Urania*:

It is easiest to look at *Urania* as a dot in an overlap in a Venn diagram of movements and ideologies. The sections of this Venn diagram include Immanentism, feminism, vegetarianism, theosophy, animal rights, and sex reform, and *Urania* lies somewhere in the cross section of all of them. The early twentieth century was a time of drastic and fast paced change. Many people looked for a reason that these things were happening, a way to justify throwing off the shackles of the past. For many people in this period, the theory of Immanentism provided an explanation. Mark Bevir, Joy Dixon, and Leah Leneman all encounter the theory of Immanentism in their works, expressed in different ways by different people but always coming back to the same ideal: that the new social movements of the twentieth century were bringing together societal change for the better. Bevir focuses on Labour Churches as a starting point for Immanentist theory. He argues that Immanentism was the result of Victorians reconciling their faith with the newly discovered evolutionary theory by turning to an Immanentist view of God wherein God intervened in the world in spontaneous ways such as evolutionary theory. This theory then developed into the view of “the operation of a universal spirit conceived as a progressive force.” God’s work in the world was present in women’s suffrage, in vegetarianism, in antivivisection, and more.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mark Bevir, “The Labour Church Movement, 1891-1902”, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr, 1999), (Cambridge University Press), pp. 217-245, p. 221

The line between Immanentist theory and Theosophical theory is a fine one. Immanentist theory followed the assertion that a single Christian God created change in the world through social movements. Theosophy instead took from Eastern religious theory, using ideas of reincarnation and karma to create a new spiritual belief.

An immanentist and evolutionary vision of spirituality: the universe, seen and unseen, was One Life, which evolved to consciousness (in a series of immensely complicated cycles) through a diversity of forms, governed by the mechanisms of karma and reincarnation. These teachings, theosophists claimed, were the divine wisdom, the esoteric truths of all religions, philosophies, and scientific systems.<sup>46</sup>

It is easy to see how Theosophy attracted forward thinking and radical members of early twentieth century society, bridging the gap between spirituality and progress. It was readily embraced by Eva Gore-Booth, and found its way into the pages of *Urania* where Gore-Booth and Clyde emphasised the importance of the soul and embraced non-Christian theories and philosophies. Another important facet in the growth of Theosophy amongst activists and forward-thinkers is that “the “First Object” of the Theosophical Society, and the only item to which members were required to subscribe, was a commitment “to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.” For suffragists, vegetarians, pacifists, sex reform activists, and more, Theosophy provided a society of like-minded people eager for change.<sup>47</sup>

Most importantly, there was a long-lasting link between early twentieth-century feminism, animal rights movements, and Immanentism. Leneman highlights links between the suffrage movement and vegetarianism, and an important voice brought up in her article is that of Louise Lind-af-Hageby, a Swedish-British anti-vivisectionist. Miss Lind-af-Hageby talks

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<sup>46</sup> Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*, (John Hopkins University Press: 2001), p. 4

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



about how the discovery of evolution was a crucial step towards the growth of these social movements.

[The discovery of evolution] taught that if there is this kinship physically between all living creatures, surely a responsibility rests upon us to see that these creatures, who have nerves as we have, who are made of the same flesh and blood as we are, who have minds differing from ours not in kind but in degree, should be protected, as far as in our power lies, from ill-treatment, cruelty and abuse of every kind.<sup>48</sup>

This importance placed in the new theory of evolution follows Bevir's work, showing how different groups of people reacted to the new theory of Immanentism. Vegetarians and animal rights groups took a kinder relationship with animals, women's suffrage groups took a more equal place with men, and socialists like Edward Carpenter took it as proof of an universal bond.<sup>49</sup>

Edward Carpenter was a socialist writer, a campaigner for homosexual equality, a campaigner for women's suffrage, and a campaigner for Labour movements in early twentieth century England.<sup>50</sup> In 1910 he spoke of his joy at the success and growth of vegetarianism, Theosophy and the women's movement, putting forward the hope that "these small streams... would all converge and move as one great mighty river, which would sweep along for the purification and betterment of humanity."<sup>51</sup> It is clear that Carpenter viewed his socialist work as only one facet of a larger moving change that was comprised of many different movements, with Keith Nield noting that he had interests in: "vegetarianism, sex-reform, anti-vivisectionism, pantheism, economic organisation, socialism, anarchism, Marxism, biological theory, music, poetry..." Carpenter is therefore a great example of how

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<sup>48</sup> Leneman, p. 281

<sup>49</sup> Bevir, p. 221

<sup>50</sup> Chushichi Tsuzuki, "Carpenter, Edward (1844–1929), campaigner for homosexual equality and socialist writer." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. 23 Sep. 2004; accessed 10/08/22, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32300>

<sup>51</sup> Leneman, p. 282

Immanentism inspired a unified force of these different social movements, and how many of those in the networks surrounding the Aëthnic Union and *Urania* did not devote themselves wholly to one cause, but supported many as a push towards overarching changes in many areas.<sup>52</sup>

Across the women's movement, vegetarianism, theosophy, and other movements, the importance of the feminine was being emphasised. In the early 1900s spiritualist James Burns brought together femininity and spirituality, appealing to women “possessed of domestic insight, refinement and womanly sympathy”, and even earlier than that James Hibbard was appealing to the “innate female kindness” and “refined feelings” of women to turn to vegetarianism.<sup>53</sup> Joy Dixon paid attention to the strong links between feminism and theosophy in England that influenced politics in the United Kingdom.

Immanentist teaching of the One Life [opposed] liberal definitions of the distinctions between individual and community, secular and sacred, and public and private. For many women, this immanentist vision sustained a feminist culture in which personal and political transformation were inextricably linked.<sup>54</sup>

Frances Swiney, a feminist, writer, and theosophist wrote about how the theosophist ascension of the soul resulted in losing all the “masculine” traits and that the aim was to ascend to a higher, feminine stage. She bemoaned how many of the leading women in the suffrage movement who were seen as pioneers in feminine emancipation appeared more masculine than feminine in their ideals and methods. Her theory was this was a result of these women being relatively young souls that had only just emerged from the masculine stage of their soul and continued to cause trouble for their more enlightened, more evolved, more feminine sisters in the suffrage movement. For Louise Lind-af-Hageby, vegetarianism and

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<sup>52</sup> Keith Nield, “Edward Carpenter: The Uses of Utopia”, *Prose Studies*, (1990), 13:1, 17-32, DOI: 10.1080/01440359008586388, p.1

<sup>53</sup> Gregory, p. 163

<sup>54</sup> Dixon, p. xiii

animal rights rested strongly on women, and this opinion seemed to be shared by others in the movement. At a vegetarian dinner held in Lind-af-Hageby's honour, the chairman put forward his belief that "the day that women get the vote will be the day on which the death-knell of vivisection will be sounded". This showed the influence of the belief that women's natures were kinder and sweeter and also helped to tame the men of society, the feminist side of the angel in the home theory. This emphasis on the feminine and the creation of *Urania* in a crucible of feminine influence and importance may not be a network as per se the networks of vegetarianism, Immanentism, or the suffrage movement, but it was one of the most influential ideas that drove the content of *Urania*, the politics of Irene Clyde, and the eventual ideals of the *Uranian* utopia.<sup>55</sup>

The Aëthnic Union and *Urania* lay within in the venn diagram of all these ideas, influenced and influencing in turn, creating and debating and arguing about progress, tradition, and a new world, taking its cues from the people that created it, and they from the networks they associated with. These networks, the people that the creators associated with, these influences, are integral to *Urania*, and helped to influence the later development of the *Uranian* utopia.

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<sup>55</sup> Dixon, p.169  
Leneman, p. 280

### The Aëthnic Union:

*Urania* did not spring fully formed from seafoam, like Aphrodite Ourania, or from Zeus' head like Athena. Instead, the seed of the journal and the thoughts shared started in the creation of the Aëthnic Union in 1911. The Aëthnic Union has been treated as a footnote in the history of *Urania*, a short-lived group that seemingly had no impact besides bringing together Irene Clyde, Eva Gore-Booth, Esther Roper, Jesse Wade, and Dorothy Cornish. One of the original sources of information on the Aëthnic Union is Ingram and Patei's *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals*, where they put forward that the Aëthnic Union was "newly formed" in 1912 and stated its long-lasting ideal to sweep away the superstructure of sex. A few years later, Hamer built on the research of Ingram and Patei to state that "There is a flier for the first meeting of the Aëthnic Union... No further records of the Aëthnic Union exist and it appears it existed only for a few months."<sup>56</sup>

There is more information about the Aëthnic Union that Patei, Ingram and Hamer missed that paints a picture of vibrant society that predated *Urania* and was in fact the crucible for *Urania's* creation. The London School of Economics includes an archival collection called The Women's Library, which holds records from Millicent Fawcett's personal library of the London Society for Women's Suffrage (L.S.W.S). These include folders of correspondence with different groups, including the Aëthnic Union and the documents in these folders tell a much longer story than has been told before. In 1911 Thomas Baty wrote to the L.S.W.S discussing plans for the already existing and steadily growing Aëthnic Union, with

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<sup>56</sup> Hamer, p. 69

advertisements put in *The Common Cause* that had already “bought us some members.”

Attached to the letter is a flier advertising the Aëthnic Union, putting forward the unique philosophy of sex removal.

Those who are anxious to maintain that the ideal is a single ideal, combining sweetness and independence, are invited to join in an association for mutual support called the “Aëthnic Union... The Union has already some 30 members who have instituted an MS. magazine, the “Phoenix Feather” and have organised successful meetings, where an “aëthnic” atmosphere really prevails... The Greeks have no specific word for sex. Instead they have *genos*, *phyle*, *ethnos*... *ethnos* is more often a ‘race’. The last term provided the Aëthnic Union with its name.<sup>57</sup>

It is clear then, that the Aëthnic Union was already in existence and thriving a year before Patei, Ingram, and Hamer claim it started. It was a place where a new, sexless ‘race’ of people could come together and talk. Here in 1911, five years before *Urania* was created, and many years before the idea of a utopia truly flourished in the pages of *Urania*, were the first discussions of a new ideal: a sexless utopian race.<sup>58</sup>

This file on the Aëthnic Union spans from 1908, where Thomas Baty makes their first tentative correspondence with the L.S.W.S, through 1911 where the Aëthnic Union is first mentioned, to 1914 where the correspondence peters out just before the outbreak of the First World War. In nearly every letter written by Thomas Baty between these times, the Aëthnic Union is mentioned as holding meetings. The Aëthnic Union was active for three years and held meetings “every two months, on the last Thursday of January, March, May, July, September, and November.” Altogether, around twelve meetings of the Aëthnic Union happened during its lifespan. This paints a completely different picture than that in previous literature: the Aëthnic Union was an ongoing society, holding regular meetings, with regular attendees who took part in debate and discussion about their plans to sweep away gender. The

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<sup>57</sup> 2LSW/E/15/01/01, Aethnic Union, London School of Economics Women’s Library Archive

<sup>58</sup> 2LSW/E/15/01/01, Aethnic Union

Tiernan, *No Measure of Emancipation*, p. 168

meetings were organised and planned with a set programme, to avoid low attendance, and took input from many of the members on subjects to be discussed.<sup>59</sup>

The Aëthnic Union also had connections to larger suffrage publications such as the *Freewoman* journal and the *Common Cause*. The *Freewoman* was run and edited by Dora Marsden, once a suffragette, and whose radical political views in the suffrage circle did not align with more mainstream and middle class ideals. This created a welcoming space for a wide range of contributors; radical feminists, suffragists, and anarchists like “socialist and radical suffragist Ada Nield Chew, Teresa Billington-Grieg (another ex-WSPU paid organiser), Rebecca West and Stella Browne (both of whom were socialist feminists), novelist H.G. Wells, activist Edward Carpenter, and anarchists Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop.” The *Common Cause* was not edited by Millicent Fawcett, but it was aligned with the message of the NUWSS. The *Common Cause* was far more devoted to the political and legal side of the suffragist cause, and its content often contained legal issues concerning women’s suffrage such as passing or not of bills, notes from debates in parliament on women’s suffrage including detailed lists of the MP’s before and against said bills, notes and details on various meetings past and future of women’s suffrage across the country, studies of anti-Suffragists and notes on their arguments, reviews of suffragist literature, details of the financial status of the N.U.W.S.S, and of course the letters page in which a familiar name, the Aëthnic Union, first appeared.<sup>60</sup>

Irene Clyde sent letters to both the *Freewoman* and the *Common Cause* advertising the Aethnic Union. Both newspapers obliged to publish the advertisements, although the

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<sup>59</sup> Aethnic Union

<sup>60</sup> Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Sexuality and the Early Feminists*, (The New Press: New York: 1995), p. 268  
National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, *The Common Cause*, April 04 1912. JSTOR, [jstor.org/stable/10.2307/community.29696179](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/community.29696179), accessed 10/08/22

*Freewoman* seemed to misunderstand Clyde's vision for the group. The article advertising the group stated that "One man this week, writing concerning an "Æthnic Society", states that he belongs to a union which seeks totally to eliminate all sex considerations from among its members, because it suits their temperaments to do so." Clyde responded within days with the slightly testy response "I do not quarrel with you for saying in "Topics of the Week" that the members of the Aëthnic Union endeavour to eliminate the ideas of sex "because it suits their temperaments to do so." Will you please, however, very kindly let me make it clear to your readers that I used no such phrase myself?" The editors of the *Freewoman* were slightly taken aback, responding that "We have looked up in last week's Topics the passage that referred to, and we do not think that the phrase "because it suits their temperaments to do so," could reasonably be mistaken for a quotation." What exactly did the editors mean by "suits their temperaments to do so"? Were the *Freewoman's* editors implying that it was some kind of difference in temperament from the 'regular' person's temperament that would lead to someone eliminating all sex considerations? The Aëthnic Union, at its beginning, was an idea that was encouraged by two radically different suffrage publications and groups, but was not wholly understood.<sup>61</sup>

The evidence positions the Aëthnic Union as more than a niche side-note in the alternative thought movement of the early twentieth century, or simply an interesting dabble on the part of Clyde and others. The meetings attracted members from all circles of twentieth century radical thought. Most of the documents concerning members of the Aëthnic Union listed names with initials and last names only, and only occasionally included prefixes to discern gender, which makes tracing many of them difficult. Ones with unique or familiar names are

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<sup>61</sup> "On Affirmations", Dora Marsden, *The Freewoman*, February 15 1912, p. 243, URL: <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr518445/>, accessed 10/08/22  
 "The Aëthnic Union", T. Baty, *The Freewoman*, 22 February 1912, pps. 274, <https://modjourn.org/issue/bdr518277/>, accessed 10/08/22

easy to follow, but the three different Westbrooks (B, F, and J.D) are harder to pick out of a census. The members that were traceable show a wide reaching web of left-wing politics and ideologies.

Ernest Bell attended the September 1913 meeting of the Aëthnic Union. He was a lifelong friend of Jessey Wade and a well known animal rights activist, chairing the Humanitarian League which still exists today, as well as contributing to a huge number of animal rights charities that included but was not limited to the Animals' Friend Society, the Anti-Vivisection Society, the Cats Protection League (now known as Cats Protection), the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports (now known as the League Against Cruel Sports), the London Vegetarian Society, the National Anti-Vivisection Society, and the Vegetarian Society. His interest in the Aëthnic Union led him to read "Are the sexes complementary?" at the September 1913 meeting to start the discussion.<sup>62</sup>

Another similar figure attending the September 1913 meeting was Alice Marie Drakoules (née Lambe), also a prominent animal rights activist, and her husband Dr Platon Drakoules (also Drakoulis). Alice Drakoules founded Band of Mercy, the children's group within the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1887 and hosted "representatives of intellectual and spiritual movements" in her home in London from 1891. She was part of the movement establishing the Humanitarian League with Henry Salt, Ernest Bell, and Jessey Wade, and a founder member of the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports, and the Animal Defence and Anti-Vivisection Society (where she met her second husband Platon Drakoules). She was also friendly with Louise Lind-af-Hageby, highlighting the strong link

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<sup>62</sup> Virginia Smith, "Bell, Ernest (1851–1933), publisher and animal welfare campaigner." Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. 23 Sep. 2004, accessed 10/08/22. <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-40996>.



between sex-reform ideas, feminism, and vegetarianism. Whilst her attendance can be traced to her shared work with Jessey Wade and Ernest Bell, the attendance of her husband is somewhat surprising. Dr Platon Drakoules was a Greek socialist politician, one of the pioneers of the socialist movement in Greece, the founder of the Greek Anti-Carnivore Society, and once a lecturer at Oxford University. His wide range of political interests is another pin in the network of the Aëthnic Union and the people its ideas attracted.<sup>63</sup>

A later member of the Aëthnic Union, joining a few months before the group would dissolve in January 1914, was Dr Frances Hoggan. She was the first British woman to gain a doctorate in medicine in Europe, at the time 71 years old and retired. She had a winding road to her status as a doctor, studying in Zurich when the British medical register was closed to anyone from private tuition and women being completely restricted from public tuition. Her academic achievements in Zürich were exceptional: she completed the medical course in three years rather than the expected five, was the second woman to defend an MD thesis before the entire medical faculty of Zürich University, and became the first British woman to obtain a European MD degree. After graduating she travelled Europe to further her clinical training and then set up in practice in London, as a qualified but unregistered medical practitioner. Her position as a practising but unregistered medical practitioner was resolved in 1877. Throughout her life she championed causes such as better education of girls, especially medical education, and was a loud voice in the 1870s antivivisectionist movement. She and her husband George were founder members of Cobbe's Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection from 1875. Frances Hoggan returned to London after the death of her husband in May 1891. She continued to take an active interest in a

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<sup>63</sup> Hilda Kean, "Drakoules [née Lambe; other married name Lewis], Alice Marie (c. 1850–1933), humanitarian and campaigner for animal welfare." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; accessed 10/08/2022, URL: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-50748>

range of contemporary social issues including the women's suffrage campaign and racial inequalities in the United States and southern Africa. She died in 1927.<sup>64</sup>

A link in the Theosophist-Feminist chain is the member Ethel Rolt-Wheeler, an Irish writer, poet, and Theosophist. A prolific author in a range of subjects, she contributed to numerous journals such as *The Theosophical Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The London Magazine*, *Irish Book Lover*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Anglo-Saxon Review*. She also wrote articles on the women's suffrage movement for *The Englishwoman's Review*, and wrote a number of books, including *Ireland's Veils* and *Women of the Cell and Cloister* which were both advertised in the November 1913 issue of *The Phoenix*. The choice by Baty to advertise *Woman of the Cell and Cloister* rings to the themes of religion and the desire for something like a religious order for those who feel the same way later expressed in *Urania*.<sup>65</sup>

As is prone to happen in any radical political circle, the Aëthnic Union became victim to ideological tensions and splits. Splits between radical and moderate groups of ideologies are not uncommon, and were seen constantly in the Suffrage movements. The suffrage movement itself had split into the Pankhurst's WSPU and Millicent Fawcett's NUWSS in 1903 due to Emmeline Pankhurst becoming impatient with the NUWSS's non-violent ideology and more patient approach to women's rights. It is unsurprising that similar splits of ideology along the lines of radicalism would occur in niche corners of sex ideology as well.<sup>66</sup>

The biggest split that occurred prompted the creation of *Urania*. It is hard to tell when the split developed in the Aëthnic Union, as few records exist about the situation. The most there

<sup>64</sup> "Obituary: Dr. Frances Elizabeth Hoggan", *Br Med J* 1927; 1, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.1.3450.357-e> (Published 19 February 1927), accessed 09/08/2022

<sup>65</sup> "Ethel Rolt-Wheeler", Wikipedia, URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel\\_Rolt\\_Wheeler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel_Rolt_Wheeler), accessed 09/08/2022

<sup>66</sup> Lewis, "Booth, Eva Selina Gore" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

is to go on are an article in an early issue of *Urania* and a sentence in one of the two issues of the Phoenix. The November 1913 session of the Aëthnic Union commenced with two readings. Ernest Bell read a piece entitled “Are the sexes complementary?” an expected topic for the Aëthnic Union, whilst Dorothy Cornish read “The Parable of the Worshippers.” The Parable of the Worshippers has nothing to do with gender. It is instead a biblical parable about worship, humility, and ego. It is about tempering oneself, and not putting yourself above others. It seems then, that only two years after coming into being, the Aëthnic Union was encountering issues. Without any elaboration in the newsletter it is impossible to tell who is being chastised for self-righteousness, and the topic has been dropped by the next newsletter.

It is only many years later, in a 1919 issue of *Urania*, that some of the pieces start to come together. In *Urania* issue 14, Irene Clyde put together an article entitled “A Symposium”, a follow up to a previous article in *Urania* issue 4, now lost. One paragraph explains the changes that had occurred since the days of the Aëthnic Union.

It is now some time since definitions (in a hundred words) of the object and purpose of the Aëthnic Union from members. Not many replies, we understand, were received, but the following have been put at our disposal by the former Registrar of the Union, and our readers may wish to compare them together. It should, however be made clear that URANIA has no connection with the Aëthnic Union. URANIA’S platform is perfectly unambiguous, and is printed above.<sup>67</sup>

This statement contains in it a number of important revelations. First of all, Irene Clyde has moved to collecting definitions of the object and purpose of the Aëthnic Union from others, and not giving them herself. Secondly, Irene Clyde is now the “former Registrar of the Union”. As *Urania* “has” no connection with the Aëthnic Union, it can be assumed that the Aëthnic Union was still alive, under a different Registrar, no longer associated with *Urania*,

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<sup>67</sup> *Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), p.2

and those involved with *Urania* were now making specific strides to distinguish themselves from the Aëthnic Union. In the Symposium, four members of the union put forward their views of the purpose of the Aëthnic Union. All are credited with initials, although only one member can be definitively traced back to the Aëthnic Union of 1913; M. Fitzherbert, keeps more of the original ideals of the Aëthnic Union, answering with a clear balance of

Theosophist influence and *Uranian* ideology:

Principle - (a) The emphasising of the dignity of humanity, and the consequent necessity to discourage the lower animal instinct, by the removal of the artificial distinctions which have resulted in the oversexing of men and women, in a subjected womanhood, a vicious manhood, and a diseased race. (b) The affirmation of a belief that in the essential oneness of humanity, duality of sex being possibly a mere passing phase in the evolution of the race.<sup>68</sup>

The Uranian determination to completely remove ideals of sex is balanced by the

Theosophist belief that the duality of sex is simply a passing phase towards Oneness. It is the most *Uranian* answer out of all the responses.

The other three answers, from C.E.P, F.G, and A.M. run the gauntlet of Aëthnic approaches to sex. C.E.P says that the Aëthnic Union would help create a “fresh dawn, when women will be free and courageous, and men honourable and just, so that they may work together without mistrust, rejoice together without fear, and love each other without transgression.” F.G’s answer is that “Our Union is to help us to think of and act towards others as souls capable of ideals which alone find highest, purest expression when unfettered by consideration of sex”, and A.M. argued how the members of the Aëthnic Union see the ideas of men and women.

[We see men and women] not as superior or inferior beings, nor, most emphatically, as in any way individual beings, but being as complementary and essential one to the other, even as each blade of a pair of scissors is to the other, the two forming a perfect instrument; and the object of the Union is to enable men and

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<sup>68</sup> *Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), p. 2

women to meet on a level platform in personal friendship and co-operation for the advantage of themselves, their neighbours, and the world.<sup>69</sup>

All of these would have seemed satisfactory, even exciting answers to Irene Clyde four or five years ago, and yet now they seem to incite derision. Later in the issue, in a piece titled “The Megatherium”, Clyde unleashes a scathing attack against people who insist on maintaining the “Scissors Definition” that A.M. earlier put forward.

There are those who assert that the characters conventionally assigned to the two halves of humanity are complementary. They even derive a certain morbid satisfaction in fitting the supposed severed halves together, and watching the frayed edges meet, as a thoughtless child might fit to the body of a bird’s torn wing. In this view, the two halves are exactly equal... [This view], more dangerous if less repulsive, postulates an exact equality in excellence, although insisting on difference in nature. It is a priori improbable that of two types one should not be distinctly preferable to the other. It is my view that the feminine type of character is undeniably so... I believe that in the future people will look back on the “complementary” types and will laugh with a little shudder at the grotesque idea of “manliness”, as we laugh and wonder at the Mastodon, the Dinosaur, and the Megatherium!<sup>70</sup>

It is easy to find where Clyde’s disdain lies with this response; in the assumption that men and women can be put on equal footing when the feminine is so much more beloved by Clyde. It is a stark reminder that *Uranian* beliefs no longer align with those of the Aëthnic Union. For the rest of the Aëthnic definitions, it is hard to find where the split between the Aëthnic Union and *Urania* lies. The split seems to lie between those who were happy to simply accept the abolishment of sex roles, and those who wished to push further into the abolition of sex itself. In the end, Aëthnic Union members seemed dedicated to abolishing the idea of how men and women should act and be treated, whilst those in *Urania* wished to go further and to abolish the idea of men and women altogether. It is interesting to note that for once Eva Gore-Booth found herself on the side of those impatient with those content to only change things a little at a time. The creators of *Urania* had passed through many different

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<sup>69</sup> *Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), p. 2

<sup>70</sup> *Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), pps. 4-5

networks, taking influence and support from vegetarians, socialists, suffragists, feminists, and theosophists but they seemed no closer to putting forward the ideal of a sexless utopia than when the Aëthnic Union started. Discouraged by the co-opting of the original goals of the Aëthnic Union, the core group of Clyde, Gore-Booth, Roper, Wade, and Cornish turned to creating a new mouthpiece that could not be co-opted or diverted towards less radical ends. *Urania* was theirs to control, theirs to write, theirs to publish. Their message would not be diluted a second time.

## Building a Uranian Utopia:

Between 1919 and 1926, *Urania* was hopeful. They wrote letters to one another and gathered letters from readers. They dreamed of a better future and a place to be themselves and slowly they constructed that world and argued for it in the pages of *Urania*. *Urania* put forward many different avenues towards utopia: vegetarianism, women's education, the abolishment of gender roles, the love of women, the hatred of war, the Montessori method and alternative education, the destruction of marriage, and the ending of sex as a social expectation. In the end, three ideas encompassed the *Uranian* utopia the best: the importance of good education, the end of gender roles and the rise of the gentle, kind, and feminine, and the end to war and the rise of pacifism. These three ideas were *Urania's* pillars, the foundations of the developing utopia, weaving into one another to create an ideal world where the believers in *Urania* could live peacefully. They could have been an uniting force under which all members could agree. During these seven years the discussion turned towards the construction of a physical space which all who shared *Urania's* ideals could inhabit, but that space never came to be.

An important theological belief that underpinned these three pillars, and one that was referenced constantly across the varied topics of *Urania*, was the prioritising of the Soul over the Body. In order to truly understand the *Uranian* motivation behind the removal of sex conventions, it is important to understand that *Urania* followed the Theosophical ideas of the soul: the ideal was a higher plane, neither feminine nor masculine, and ascended from the trivial human ideas of sex. The ideal was divine and unsullied. Irene Clyde's most common insult was that a thing caused "soul-death", and this was levied against sex, bad education, war, and masculine dominance and much more.

The idea of the *Uranian* utopia started early, a leftover from the days of the Aëthnic Union, in *Urania's* 14th issue covering March-April 1919. The second issue available to read, it has one of the few instances of the “Letterbox” between 1919 and 1926 wherein the editor responds to letters sent by readers. Besides positive postcards and letters, *Urania* also received letters from “one or two persons... who were known to be unfavourable to our ideas [and asked for the discontinuance of the periodical]” One of these unfavourable postcards was from someone who believed that *Urania's* ideas would only become practical in “about A.D. 101'920”, and another was from a reader who believed that the writers of *Urania* “required a sense of proportion”. *Urania's* response is an interesting one to a modern eye.

If any proof for our “sense of proportion” is needed, surely it may be found in the fact that we do not insist on our principles in any ridiculous way of daily life. We desire a fuller freedom - but we recognise that it can best be obtained in concert, and not by obtruding startling novelties on the average citizen.<sup>71</sup>

A large part of modern activism involves the act of “normalising” radical ideas through small movements: an increase in awareness about the use of pronouns, for example. *Urania* rejects this act of “obtruding startling novelties on the average citizen,” they instead “desire a fuller freedom” that would be achieved in one fell swoop. Here the idea of the *Uranian* utopia starts to truly develop with the knowledge that to achieve their freedom they would have to construct their own space. This space did not yet have a name or a location but it was an undoubted fact to those that created *Urania* that they could not achieve their utopia in amongst the disapproval of the regular world.

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<sup>71</sup> *Urania*, No 14, (March - April 1919), p.3



### Pacifism:

Even as they started to create their utopia, those in *Urania* knew that there was a problem that they had to contend with. However hard they tried, they could not escape the most despicable horror of all: war. War was every horror, every type of violence, committed against the whole world. For Esther Roper and Eva Gore-Booth, it destroyed the lives of women who lost their husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers and caused endless despair at home. For Jessey Wade and the other vegetarians of *Urania*, the war of humans spilled over to animal companions across species. For all, the violence against other humans for little reason seemed pointless and hideous. It is a sad thought then that *Urania* started on a hopeful and bittersweet note regarding the end of the Great War.

As we go to press, we have another reminder from a deeply valued coadjutor (assistant) that our columns of Star-Dust are full of military news. That was inevitable - in the circumstances but such items are growing “fine by degrees and beautiful less” and we had already written in this issues Military section the hopeful words “account closed”. May it never be reopened! <sup>72</sup>

The Great War was over and was starting to fade away, the normal, peaceful, and beautiful world was returning. It is a sad thought that in less than twenty years the military section would have to be unwillingly reopened but this segment encapsulates a somewhat overlooked importance in the *Urania* utopia: the value of hope and optimism. The members of *Urania* were not simply happy to sit around and moan about the state of the world. They worked tirelessly to change the world each in their own ways. In *Urania* it was a sin to sit back and be resigned. At the peak of the Great War Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper were travelling the length and breadth of Britain to attend peace meetings for local people and share the horrors of the war.<sup>73</sup> In *Urania* Irene Clyde took this up with print, sharing accounts of the

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<sup>72</sup> *Urania*, No 14, (March - April 1919), p.3

<sup>73</sup> “Women’s Peace Crusade”, *New Crusader*, Friday 16 November 1917, p. 3, URL: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000595/19171116/023/0003>, accessed 09/08/2022

war and opinions pieces in an attempt to ignite the need for pacifism and remind people of the true cost of war. *Urania* did not shy away from the horrors of war, instead choosing to embrace them as a persuasive tool for the need for pacifism. Horrible truths were necessary to save people from more useless wars.

Issue 19 of *Urania* was devoted to accounts of the Great War, through journalistic endeavours and a favoured format of *Urania*, poetry. *Urania* chose to use the poem *War and Peace* by Israel Zangwill as their first piece, a brutal description of the horrors seen on the front line that emphasised how war destroyed lives indiscriminately.

Ear-cracking cannon-claps made devils'-thunder,  
Mixed with the hiss and flare of foul explosives  
And screams of disemboweled men and horses.  
Green o' ver the soil a ghastly vapour glided...  
Death boomed at once from earth and sky and ocean,  
And men of every race, black, white, or yellow,  
At death-grips clawed and stabbed and bit and throttled.<sup>74</sup>

Another harrowing and impactful piece shared was by American journalist William G. Shepard titled "The Dusk Of The War Gods". An autobiographical account, it told of Shepard's visit to the front lines of the Great War and his experiences afterwards with those who went to war and came back changed forever.

Dying or killing are not the most terrible things that war brings to a man, woman, or child... There was one sight - one manifestation of the horrors of war - that I could not accustom myself to view without a mental shudder: the sight of vast bodies of men marching or camping... The impression that they were like animals, like herded unthinking beasts was so strong upon me... To be turned into such a man is worse than death... "I've quit writing... Something's happened to me. I can't ever write again. I don't even try to do it. Anyhow, what's the use? It's all war... No more books or music and no more women. I'm rotting mentally... I'm rotting and I can't help it." Not all the bad things of war happen to human bodies.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Urania*, No 19, (March - April 1920), p. 2

<sup>75</sup> *Urania*, No. 19, (March - April 1920), pps. 3-4

Perhaps *Urania* shared this piece simply because of the impressive and haunting description of war. More likely, however, it was chosen because it exemplified the worst fear of the *Uranian* utopia: soul death. To live with a rotting soul was the greatest disaster that could befall a person. The effects of war were not only physical, the death and suffering of humans and animals, but they continued to decimate the soul long after the peace treaty had been announced. *Urania* could not abide even the shortest of wars, because the scars from a war that lasted days would haunt the soul forever. Still, even small wars would have been preferable to the world war that *Urania* had just experienced. Clyde railed against the futility of fighting world wars, at the levels of despair that the Great War had brought to the world.

What has been gained by the suppression of the petty warfare of the Middle Ages, and the institutionalisation of great centralised kingdoms, but the precipitation of the titanic horrors of world wars? If barons quarrelled, their retainers fought it out on a small scale... If empires quarrel, the world is filled with blackness and uncomprehending anguish.<sup>76</sup>

The themes of war and peace are a constant in *Urania*, emerging from the horrors of the Great War in the first issues, a period of hope and resolution to never experience the horror again throughout most of *Urania*, then sliding back inevitably and despairingly into the Second World War towards the end of *Urania's* existence. Perhaps it was this slide into the horrors of a new war that finally forced the dreamers of *Urania* to give up. If the world could not stop repeating horrors experienced only a few decades earlier, what hope was there for the lofty ideals of a genderless, peaceful world? If the world was suffering under the booted foot of masculine ferocity and war, what was the hope of *Urania*? What would be the saving grace of the world, make the *Uranian* utopia free of the horrors and struggles of the male-dominated world? The answer is the same as that expressed by Sappho, centuries before *Urania*.

I would much prefer to see the lovely

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<sup>76</sup> *Urania*, No. 20, (May - August 1920), pps. 2-3

way she walks and the radiant glance of her face  
than the war-chariots of the Lydians or  
their footsoldiers in arms.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Julia Dubnoff, "Poems of Sappho", University of Houston, uh.edu, accessed 10/08/22, URL:  
<https://www.uh.edu/~cldue/texts/sappho.html>

### The Feminine:

The natural opposition to the masculine was the feminine, despite how much those of *Urania* declared they wanted to remove the two entirely, and in the end this love of the feminine reigned in *Urania*. The feminine body, mind and attitude were held above the masculine type in all ways. Irene Clyde's final word on the subject was simple and clear.

The eternal Feminine persists. Until it has eradicated masculine ferocity, the raw material of War will be ready in heaps to hand, and the world will neither be "safe" for democracy, aristocracy, or anything else.<sup>78</sup>

Over and over, *Urania* lauded the beauty and power of the feminine, the highest form in the world, the thing that all should aim for. The feminine was many things: strong-willed, brave, kind, considerate, peaceful, caring, vegetarian, but always it was to be applauded. Issue 13, the first issue of *Urania* available to read, discusses many different topics, but the feminine is a central theme. The first page of content celebrates the entry into British parliament of Constance Markievicz, while on the next page an article titled "Women and the War" extolls how an expert at Harvard University and a British General were of the opinion that women would make better soldiers than men due to their "wicked toughness [and] power of endurance." On the same page, *Urania* congratulates a female Danish M.P on her election, and remembers Bozena Nemcova, a female Czech writer who wrote of the importance of the feminine.

It rests with the woman to restore the lost paradise of mankind. It is a priceless pearl which lies at the bottom of her own heart and she must enter to find it.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Urania*, No. 20, (May - August 1920), p. 3

<sup>79</sup> *Urania*, No. 13, (January - February 1919), p. 3

Later in the issue Clyde includes a poem in the style of the Greek lyricist Anacreon, an ode to the woman who needs no weapons or armour or any external power. Instead, the power of women alone is enough to conquer, to bring the world to its knees.

Ah! Then Zeus made her lovely!  
 Nor needs she any armour  
 Nor needs she any weapons  
 But fire and steel she conquers  
 She conquers, being lovely.<sup>80</sup>

She then goes on to celebrate the achievements of women in the “Star-Dust” columns, excerpts and asides from different newspapers around the world. This issue on its own contains celebrations of Japanese women who have outnumbered men to become doctors in this year's exams, 34 out of 54; a Japanese woman who climbed Mount Fuji over the New Year celebrations; French women who have responded to the government call to work the fields; the appointment of a woman to the role of Professor of History at an Indian university; and the recognition of the musical ability of a French woman who had died four months previously. All these instances celebrated women entering areas previously reserved for men and bringing with them the beauty and power of the feminine. Women were not simply beautiful for their looks or their actions, but for their potential.

If women were the most beautiful thing in the world, if the most important thing was to value and uphold the feminine, then *Urania* believed that love between two women should not only be viewed as a beautiful thing to be cherished and encouraged, but that it was the highest form of love, higher than heterosexual love. In issue 14 Clyde published an autobiographical snippet from author Katherine Tynan. In it Tynan talks of her days in an Irish convent school, and how the girls there “had our little passions, sometimes for a nun, sometimes for each

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<sup>80</sup> *Urania*, No. 13, (January - February 1919), p. 4

other.” She discusses her passion for an older girl and recalls their final meeting before the older girl left to become a nun.

In the dark corridor on the way to mass, as we passed the warm kitchen, delightful on a winter morning, she came behind me and kissed me. Oh rapture! Oh delight! Oh, ecstasy! Was there anything in more mature passions quite as good? <sup>81</sup>

This encouragement of lesbianism was a truly radical idea: two years before the Earl of Desart called lesbianism “a horror” in Parliament, *Urania* was calling it an ecstasy and a delight.<sup>82</sup>

Irene Clyde herself wrote adoringly of the love shared between women, finding it everywhere she could. In an article titled “A Railway Idyll” she describes how on her travels she encountered two young women in a railway carriage. The two women were, to Clyde’s eye, as good as being adoring young lovers. At length she talks of the way they interacted with one another, the ways they talked and how she enjoyed watching it.

Their evident absorption in each other - the indulgent protective face of the older - the anxiety of the younger to be entertaining and attractive and pleasing... one seemed to be watching a fairies courtship.<sup>83</sup>

There is no way to truly know if the two young women Clyde watched were truly in love. Perhaps they were simply best friends. Perhaps they were strangers to one another who had only met that day. What is important is that in that moment Clyde’s gaze placed them on her own internal map of women who loved women. For a moment these two young women were interpreted as being “lesbian-like” or on the lesbian continuum, allowing Irene Clyde to recognise herself in two unknowing subjects. Using them as a base Irene Clyde turns her

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<sup>81</sup> *Urania*, No. 14, (March - April 1919), p. 7

<sup>82</sup> Caroline Derry, “Lesbianism and the Criminal Law of England and Wales”, Open Learn, open.edu, accessed, 10/08/22, URL: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/law/lesbianism-and-the-criminal-law-england-and-wales>

<sup>83</sup> *Urania*, Nos 31&32, (January - April 1922), pps. 1-2

attention to the love that women share for other women, and extrapolates her despair at this love not being recognised.

Why do not poets celebrate this beautiful thing? Why do not artists praise it?... Does the world not know it, this love? Or are men too jealous to notice it? Ovid could not be content without metamorphosing Iphis into a conventional shape... Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby are treated as eccentrics... For all that, it is a real thing; love of like by like.<sup>84</sup>

The most beautiful thing in this world was the union of two women. Clyde raged at a world that refused to accept it, refused even to see it. In the world she was forced to live in the truly beautiful things of the world would be passed up for weak facisimles. The only way to achieve this world was to create it themselves. Perhaps all war could be solved and those of *Urania* could live peacefully amongst everyone else, but the love of two women would never be accepted. A separate utopia was a necessity. But where would one start in creating a new world?

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<sup>84</sup> *Urania*, 31&32, pps. 1-2

Bennett, "'Lesbian-Like' and the Social History of Lesbianisms." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*  
 Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs*



## Education:

A passion of the majority of *Urania's* editors, education also turned out to be the solution to most of *Urania's* problems. Dorothy Cornish, the Montessorian mouthpiece in English, the Montessorian of *Urania*, spent her life pushing for kinder, more soul-nourishing Montessorian education for children around the world. For Esther Roper, one of the first women to attend an English university, education was a subject close to her heart. During her time at Owen's College she started a newsletter for female students and then later became an Associate of the college, obviously intending to encourage the current students and create an atmosphere that would encourage more women to enter higher education. Eva Gore-Booth found a similar place in education, helping with the Manchester University Settlement, a radical program wherein upper class university students and staff lived in working class areas, providing education and entertainment to residents and in turn learning about the conditions working class people were living in. For most of her career Jessey Wade devoted herself to the *Little Animals Friend*, a magazine devoted to educating children on how to treat animals with care and compassion.<sup>85</sup>

Irene Clyde maintained throughout *Urania* that education could be a solution to the world's problems, most importantly war. Fresh and hopeful in 1920, Clyde discussed how important the right kind of education was for the future peace of the world.

We can only contemplate with a pitiful astonishment those who think to secure peace and quietness by bonds and promises, confederacies and law-courts... More practical are the few who insist on the importance of education. But how few, when they name education, think supremely of education in affection! Most think of fitting the child to fight its fellows in the struggle for economic power. Next to none think

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<sup>85</sup> Description of Manchester University Settlement, Archive of the Manchester University Settlement, 1892-2010. University of Manchester Library. GB 133 MUS' on the Archives Hub website, [<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb133-mus>], (date accessed :05/08/2022) Lewis, "Booth, Eva Selina Gore", Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

supremely of making it love... URANIA points to the simple fact that we can and ought to drop the distinction and cultivate the same beauty in all. Never mind whether it is possible to secure the same results in all. The point is that at present we do not try.<sup>86</sup>

Irene Clyde and Dorothy Cornish shared a dislike for contemporary schooling, and the more the ideal of the *Uranian* utopia developed, the more it became clear to the editors that they could not allow the standard British schooling in their utopia. It would leave the child with a ruined soul long before they entered the adult world and by then any efforts to help them would nearly be pointless. An alternative would have to be found, and Dorothy Cornish provided the answer. By this time Maria Montessori's ideas of alternative schooling for children had spread across the world, and Dorothy Cornish had a front-row seat to these ideas as Montessori's translator. It is clear that she truly believed in the Montessori method, and Irene Clyde believed in them as well.<sup>87</sup>

In issue 20 the *Uranian* letter-box received word from a "new friend of the movement in Natal [South Africa]."

To my mind, co-education will be the surest means of developing the sexes equally. I feel quite strongly on the subject. I have seen so much of women whose sex has been a rope tied around their necks that I long for the time that women will be utterly free and men will recognise that we are free.<sup>88</sup>

This is a letter so in line with the *Uranian* viewpoint that for once Irene Clyde has no sharp words for it, simply a response in agreement with some important suggestions.

Co-education has always been, and will continue to be, a favourite subject with URANIA - but rather as a consequence of our principles than a method of spreading them. No doubt the influence of co-education as a means of propaganda is enormously important, and scarcely to be over-rated, and we thoroughly agree with our correspondent in this. But it must be real co-education, and not a mere setting of the cages side by side, which is very much worse than useless.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Urania*, No. 20, (March - April 1920), pps. 2-3

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.3

<sup>88</sup> *Urania*, No. 24, (November - December 1920), p.3

<sup>89</sup> *Urania*, No. 24, (November - December 1920), p.3

The *Uranian* utopia could not have happened in a conventional co-educational setting. It was too little to simply integrate the boys and girls schools into one and hope for the best. Clyde held disdain for the useless attempt to “set the cages side by side”, emphasising how important it was to truly rehaul the school system instead of keeping the system but just making it “co-educational”.

When the boys sit on this side and the girls on that, when the boys carpenter and the girls sew, when the girls play skipping in one pen and the boys run races in another, when the boys go here, and the girls go there, it would really be much better for them to go to separate schools, where they would not have the fact of differentiation forever before their eyes. Co-education must be really co-educational to be of any use.<sup>90</sup>

To change the world the *Uranian* contributors had by now realised they had to start smaller. They could not graft two trees together and hope it bore good fruit. Instead they would have to breed the varieties together from seedlings, until there was no way to tell the difference and they both produced the same sweet nourishment. Any attempt at thought-planning revealed that separation was a requirement of the utopia, and co-education was the first tenet. But where would they do this? How would this happen? In the same issue, *Urania* answers this question itself with a report on the creation of “An Arcadian Colony”, an artists and writers community being formed in Japan as far away from civilisation as possible. *Urania* comments that the “utopian community is to be called Yasuyana [sic] Poliana, after Tolstoy’s estate in Russia, and the members will cultivate the soil as well as pursue their vocations, writing, or painting.” Here is a first glance at words put into motion, an example for the members of *Urania* to follow.<sup>91</sup>

A while later, in issues 37 and 38 spanning from January to April 1923, “A Montessorian” writes to *Urania*. References to a residence in Tuscany and the take up of Montessori

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> *Urania*, No. 24, (November - December 1920), p.4

methods identify this “Montessorian” as Dorothy Cornish. Cornish’s letters took up at least six pages across two issues of *Urania*, where space was tight and expensive, showing a long-lasting respect for her voice from Irene Clyde. Her writings are rambling but slowly she sets out her desire to create a new space for people with an interest in *Urania*’s new world order.

I want to found - a monastery! Only if it is to work for this life, it is to be a pépinière d’âmes, a nursery garden of souls. I want a monastery of children.<sup>92</sup>

It is this insistence on the education of children, instead of indoctrination of adults, that follows the *Uranian* path of a new world separate from the regular one. *Urania* has never spent too much time on the details of this new education, so Dorothy Cornish steps in with how her monastery would produce a new and beautifully different era of children.

I believe that, very early living in an atmosphere of love, [the child] will find the larger self that every mystic seeks... All that one can do for [the child], is to tell [the child] that we have sought, and found, the Larger Self - the Love that penetrates and possesses, and envelopes the seeking Soul... What kind of people, what kind of children, will fear ever produce?... Think of the courage of the first step walked... and of those that follow!... I would give the imagination what it needs: beauty! Beauty in all its forms... And music. And dancing. Above all, these two... I want a Montessori school... I want to teach the children elements of language. Why? Because if you can get a child to love the language, he will later on love the people that speak it... They [the teachers] are to be lovers of childhood, and more than that, they are to be living souls, who have joy to give, and will not starve the children of that which is their right... The test I feel inclined to set for the applicants is that they should be able to tell a fairy-tale... and believe it!<sup>93</sup>

Dorothy Cornish’s Montessori education would teach children music, dance, language, and love. Cornish believed that teaching these subjects would soon teach children to love those who possessed those abilities: to love people who spoke different languages, who loved in different ways, played different music or danced to their own tune. It was of intense importance that the teachers of these subjects would be those still childlike at heart, who

<sup>92</sup> *Urania*, Nos. 37-38, (January - April 1923), p. 3

<sup>93</sup> *Urania*, Nos. 37-38, (January - April 1923), p. 3

*Urania*, Nos. 39-40, (May - August 1923), p.3

*Urania*, Nos. 39-40, (May - August 1923), p.6

could tell a fairytale and still believe it, who would nurture the child's imagination instead of destroying it the way all in *Urania* had seen in traditional schooling. This was a radically different form of schooling but it was one that *Urania* seemed only too happy to embrace, as evidenced from previous discussions and the previous letters between Clyde and *Urania's* friend from Natal.

It is then extremely interesting that there was no response at all to Dorothy Cornish's letters. Where Irene Clyde was usually happy to respond to any letters sent in, whether agreeing or arguing or denigrating the contents of the letters, Dorothy Cornish's idealistic but seemingly very *Uranian* ideas get no response. What is it in Cornish's plans that Clyde objected to? Clyde was a supporter of Montessori education, so she could not have objected to the importance of dance, language, and music in education? She pushed strongly the concept of the soul, and the importance of nourishing it, so why did she say nothing about Cornish's interpretation? It is an unfortunate fact that whilst *Urania* had seemed a united front, underneath there was a growing rift. A rift between the values of *Urania* and the values of Irene Clyde, that meant that the utopia dreamed of would never coalesce into reality.

### Irene Clyde:

Irene Clyde was a woman of dramatic and sometimes venomous personal beliefs, as seen in her attack on the theory of complementary sexes. Whilst the rest of *Urania's* editors and contributors were situated in Europe, interacting often with varied types and classes of people, Irene Clyde was in Japan, situated happily in Tokyo's upper class expat community. She had relocated into a new contact zone, far away from the days of the Aëthnic Union when she was surrounded by vegetarians, socialists, suffragists, and theosophists. By the late 1910s her view of the world had taken on a rather different shape than that of her compatriots and she had developed her own unique set of personal values. Irene Clyde was the driving force behind the *Uranian* worship of the female form, the one who chose issue after issue to exemplify it over the male form. Her core opinion on the subject was that love between women was a higher, more ideal form of love than any other. However, Clyde placed an interesting condition on this love: it was love, not sex that was to be admired. Sex was a destructive force all of its own.

Issue 15 opens with a column by Irene Clyde titled "A Girl's Question" that discussed the ways in which the society of 1919 crushed a child's soul through an introduction into adult ideas of sex and romance. Specifically, Clyde takes umbrage with how children are taught about sexual and romantic feeling.

At seventeen... the youthful heart is told to adore what it has burnt, and to burn what it has adored. It has been told that amativeness [propensity to sexual feelings] is despicable and contemptible; it is now told, more by example than precept, that it is admirable and fashionable... The consequence is that, as child and adult alike, the individual feels that amativeness is at once contemptible and tolerable.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Urania*, No 15, (May - June 1919), pps. 2-3

Crucially, Clyde's distaste is not with the confusing nature of refusing to teach children about sex until they have grown up, it is with the problem of teaching children that sex is something to be enjoyed and sought out. She finds her views expressed far more easily, and in a spiritual format that would appeal to many of the readers of *Urania*, in the words of the goddess of Mount Fuji, Konohana-no-sakuyahime.

When people practise sexual intercourse, the fountain of their inner virtue and wisdom is completely dried up: no longer does the shining moon of the Divine Grace cast a spiritual radiance on the face of the water.<sup>95</sup>

For Clyde sex and soul death are irrevocably linked. One could not indulge in base pleasures and expect their souls to remain untarnished. It may perhaps be confusing as to why Clyde encouraged relationships between women, but this soon reveals the next layer of Clyde's beliefs surrounding femininity and masculinity. In *Urania* issue 17 September - October 1919 Irene Clyde shares the discovery of a book that she believes the readers of *Urania* would appreciate: *Imprisoned Souls*. The author, Violet Ashmole expresses fervently with this book "the desire of the soul for complete expression, untrammelled by the bonds of sex," a topic which puts her hand in hand with those associated with *Urania*. The snippets of her work that *Urania* chose to publish all point to a remarkably similar ideology vis a vis the soul and gender. It starts as a study of how "environment alone is the former of the sexes; the vital principle cannot be moulded in the crucible of the flesh and turned out into a set mould." She soon takes up the *Uranian* discussion of souls with her statement that:

All other considerations must be subordinated to the education of the soul. This high ideal alone can uplift us; this is the key to independence and individuality - and whilst either man or woman is taught that the complement of sex is their highest and most final aim, they must remain submerged... Let her understand that the self sacrifice which murders individuality is not a virtue but a crime.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Urania*, No 14, (March - April 1919), p.7

"The Main Deity", Fujisan Hongu Sengentaisha, accessed 08/08/2022, URL:

<http://www.fuji-hongu.or.jp/sengen/english/index.html#01>

<sup>96</sup> *Urania*, No 17, (September - October 1919), pps. 3-4

No one in *Urania* would disagree with this statement, and yet Irene Clyde found even more reason to approve of this message. Ashmole's expression that "the complement of sex is [their souls] highest and most final aim," is in direct support to Irene Clyde's perception of sex. Society taught that men and women would only find love in the arms of the opposite sex. To do this the soul must be suppressed, must be convinced to accept the imperfect partnership. Even more importantly Ashmole puts forward the reason that a relationship between women can escape the stigma of sexual desire; "What divine purity in this connection! Pulsing with passion, yet chaste as apple-blossoms!" Both Ashmole and Clyde upheld the ideal of chaste romantic relationships between women, purer and more respectable than heterosexual relationships that include reproductive sex. To be a woman in a relationship with another was to be passive and chaste, completely un-sexual but also completely pleasant, kind, and refined.<sup>97</sup>

*Urania* issue 16, July-August 1919 hosts two important firsts in the accessible annals of *Urania*: the first significant contribution to *Urania* by "Theta" and immediately afterwards, the afterword that clarifies that "THETA is alone responsible for the views developed in this essay - URANIA." Theta did make a small contribution to a previous issue but it is in the next issue where they lay out their political theories. It is here that the other contributors are forced to step in and clarify that the views of Theta were their own. Was it Wade or Cornish or Clyde that put this afterword in? Whoever it was, it was important to them to emphasise that these ideas were a step too far apart from the other contributors to *Urania* to be published without clarification.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *Urania*, No. 17, (September - October 1919), p.4

<sup>98</sup> *Urania*, No 16, (July - August 1919), p. 2



Theta's article is titled "Feminism, Aristocracy, and Pacifism." It starts with an argument in defence of aristocracy, an inheritance system they see as ill-maligned and misunderstood. It supplies a small 'history' of aristocracy, with no source or backing, and eventually comes to the core argument of the article.

The delicacy and consideration for others which are the marks of the aristocracy, are the essential condition of peace. The same time they are the distinguishing marks of the feminine ideal. Peace depends on the ascendancy of aristocracy and feminism.<sup>99</sup>

Theta argues that despite attempts to unify or equalise the classes, the truth was undeniable: that the lower classes were rough, loud and inconsiderate of the feelings of those around them. Given that the contributors of *Urania* included Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper, who both worked to enhance the lives of working-class women and emphasise their need for support when upper-class women were willing to sacrifice them for the cause of the vote, and those in the thorny network of *Urania*'s contemporaries included the likes of Edward Carpenter, this is an inflammatory statement.

By the end of their article in issue 16 one may have believed that Theta had made their point. They had set out their ideology and had in turn received a clear message about where their ideas stood in the sphere of the *Urania* ideology. In issue 18 they returned to continue their argument, making clear the crux of their argument.

The root of that considerate temper which flowers and fruits in courtesy, tenderness, peace, kindness to animals, charm, refinement, is in the cultivated classes and especially in the feminine ideal. If we suppress the cultivated feminine ideal, we destroy the life of the world.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Urania*, No. 16, (July - August 1919), p. 3

<sup>100</sup> *Urania*, No. 18, (September - October 1919), p. 3

This argument is expected, especially with the delight that *Urania* took in upholding and adoring the feminine. They possibly would have gained some support from the other editors and readers of *Urania* if they had not accompanied it with a loaded question.

Let the reader ask herself which she would rather travel with in a crowded railway apartment: Nine Durham miners, Yorkshire stable-boys, or East-End pawnbrokers, or nine of the despised middle classes? I will even go to an extreme and say, nine lawyers?<sup>101</sup>

The implications of this question must have been shocking to Eva Gore-Booth and Esther Roper, two women who argued extensively for the rights of women based on the argument that those of the lower classes were worth the same dignity as the upper classes. Theta not only evokes images of discomfort and uncouthness but also of risks to female safety, and then they chose to lay down what must seem a staggering irony considering the content and beliefs of *Urania*.

The old enthusiasm of the nineteenth century for equality of protection has given place to an almost universal idea of equality of treatment: and this spells the extinction of special culture. Our precious drop of *elixir vitae* is to be spilled into the bucket of cold water and it might as well be thrown away altogether.<sup>102</sup>

Their fear is that to integrate the lower and upper classes one would risk destroying all traces of feminine respectability and care through “the universal idea of equality of treatment.”

*Urania* was a journal that founded itself on a simple truth: men and women were equal and there should be no distinctions between them that led to difference in treatment, education, or perception of ability. Theta agrees on this in terms of the subject of sex. In terms of class, however, they disagree. Why would these interludes by Theta be relevant to the views of Irene Clyde? Unfortunately, Theta’s writing style, and indeed much of the exact wording of the article is later used in a book called *Eve’s Sour Apples* published in 1934. The author of this book was Irene Clyde, and so it is clear to see that the person who held these drastic and

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<sup>101</sup> *Urania*, No 18, (September - October 1919), p. 3

<sup>102</sup> *Urania* No 18, (September - October 1919), p. 4

contrary views was both the creator and main editor of *Urania*. Irene Clyde held firmly these views that the aristocracy was the most worthy leader of society, and that the other classes were undeniably rough and masculine, unsuitable to lead. Like Edward Carpenter, a man who pushed for the simplistic, natural life and yet could not resist the allure of perfectly tailored clothes, Irene Clyde pushed for an equality on one axis, whilst believing in a segregation along another.<sup>103</sup>

This simple summary of Irene Clyde's views allows for a thorough understanding of all the rest. To be aristocratic was to be feminine and refined. To be feminine and refined was to discard violence in all ways: the eating of meat, the hunting of animals, violence against other humans. To be lower class was to be masculine and rough. To be in a relationship with a man was to be subject to rough sexual desires that destroyed the soul. To be in a relationship with a woman was a pairing of two sweet, chaste persons and was to maintain a perfect soul. The only way that the world could recover was by the ascension of the aristocracy who would bring femininity and refinement to the world. All other problems would be solved from this: children would be educated and nurtured, war would halt, and love of the feminine would reign supreme.

Perhaps the biggest thorn in *Urania's* utopia was that from the beginning, there would be no true equality in a society wherein one leader truly believed that one group was superior to the other, not by virtue of gender, but by virtue of class. In the end, Irene Clyde was determined to put a stop to the horrors of war. The method could be education, it could be nurturing peace and gentility, it could be the rise of the aristocracy. Ideally, it would be all three. The other members of *Urania* surely agreed on the aim but they could not agree with Clyde's

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<sup>103</sup> Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*; p. 7

proposed method. In the end, the biggest roadblock to the envisioned utopia was the woman who bore it into the world first: Irene Clyde.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *Urania*, No. 16, (July - August 1919), p. 3  
Irene Clyde, *Eve's Sour Apples*, (London: Eric Partridge Ltd: 1934)

### Conclusion:

Perhaps if given more time, things could have been worked out. *Urania* and Irene Clyde could have come to an agreement, and found a halfway point where their utopia could exist.

Eva Gore-Booth died on 30 July 1926. *Urania* ran an obituary for her that revealed more than in any other issue how much Eva Gore-Booth had truly contributed to the Aëthnic Union and to *Urania*.

In 1916 Eva Gore-Booth formulated a concise statement which we have adopted ever since as the neatest and clearest expression of our views. It declared that sex was an accident and formed no essential part of an individual's nature... She and Esther Roper, for many years her fellow companion, were associated with what we called in the early years of the century the "Aëthnic Union" and at its meetings in the Temple she frequently gave us her help and assistance with readings and addresses. We at once realised that here were friends that saw eye to eye with us as few others: and when in 1916 we ventured on issuing this little leaflet, Esther Roper and she generously and willingly allowed the use of their names in connection with it, and even edited the third issue, in the difficult circumstances of the war.<sup>105</sup>

It is fair to say that with the death of Eva Gore-Booth *Urania* lost something truly important.

After this, with the slow encroachment of fascism across Europe, the idea of the *Uranian* utopia slowly disappeared. The monastery on an island far away where children would be educated together in love and kindness, in music and wonder, taught equally to care and be courteous, to be valiant and brave, with a hearty vegetarian diet and an appreciation for the feminine, never coalesced. Eva Gore-Booth died too soon to even see women gain the vote. Irene Clyde was unable to return to Britain after 1945 and died alone in Japan dreaming of "the dawn of a new age, where 'flows serenely the eternal tide of Loveliness'." Esther Roper took up Eva Gore-Booth's unpublished works as her task, devoted to bringing her life partner's words to life even after death. Jessey Wade established the Cats Protection League in 1927 and was still editing *The Little Animal's Friend* until 1948. Dorothy Cornish stayed in Italy as the voice of Maria Montessori and published a few translations of essays and a novel

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<sup>105</sup> *Urania*, Nos. 29&30, (September - December 1921), p. 1  
*Urania*, Nos. 57&58, (May - August 1926), pps. 1-2

about the Bronte sisters. Nothing spoken of in *Urania* would come to fruition. All that remained of the *Uranian* Monastery were dreams enclosed in the pages of the journal and yet, between 1919 and 1926 a different kind of utopia flourished. In *Urania* all could freely preach and share their ideas. Irene Clyde wrote arguments and reviewed books and lived freely where she couldn't in Britain or Japan or even truly in front of those she called friends. Dorothy Cornish was able to spread the gospel of the Montessori method and an education system based on love, appreciation, and respect for the mind of a child. In *Urania* she spoke in her own voice. Jessey Wade pushed for vegetarian life and respect for animals. Eva Gore-Booth railed against war and injustice and inequality. Esther Roper spoke for women's education and freedom to pursue a career.

*Urania* at times seemed the brain-child of Eva Gore-Booth or the personal journal of Irene Clyde. The struggle between Clyde's classist politics and *Urania's* bid for equality created a conundrum that could not easily be solved in the pages. In the end, Irene Clyde took her politics to her book of essays, *Eve's Sour Apples*, and left her opinions out of *Urania*. Perhaps in the end all it was was sweeping the conundrum of Irene Clyde under the rug, an attempt to ignore the fact that whilst Clyde preached a new genderless equality she would not give the same progressive thought to class. Perhaps either Clyde herself or one of the other editors came to a conclusion: to support the overall good that *Urania* was doing Clyde had to take her politics elsewhere. Or perhaps with the loss of Gore-Booth was the loss of a voice that could stand up to Clyde, and the group became resigned to her rule over editing and *Urania* thrived as well as it could. Whatever happened, *Urania* carried on until a new world war broke out. Perhaps the war took Clyde's attention away from the journal. Perhaps it was simply too disheartening to continue a journal that preached pacifism during wartime.

For 24 years and 142 issues the *Uranian* group created one of the most unique feminist publications of the era. They spoke of their uniting love for women without shame, fought for the abolition of gender, imagined a new style of education based on love, and voiced their opposition to war without being arrested as conscientious objectors. In the end, they did manage to establish a kind of utopia. It was called *Urania* and it was made of pen and ink.

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