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HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Love, Life and the Queering of Domesticity in Early Twentieth-Century New England

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ABSTRACT "The Scarab" (1907), a sprawling Shingle-style house in Wellesley, Massachusetts, was built by poet and professor Katharine Lee Bates as a home for herself and her partner Katharine Coman, a social economist and labor activist. Both women had lived and taught at Wellesley College, founded as a single-sex institution for higher education in 1870, for over a quarter of a century. In their new home they adapted many of its hybrid spaces for living and working, surrounding themselves with friends, family, colleagues, and students to form a lively and engaged community of women. While it decisively broke with familiar

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conventions in both plan and program, "The Scarab" nonetheless fits comfortably in its leafy, suburban neighborhood, demonstrating that this committed couple could "hide in plain sight" while radically queering the terms of early-twentieth-century domesticity.

KEYWORDS: queer, women, Wellesley, domesticity, architecture

> We know that the "man in the street," in the sixties and seventies, watching with perplexity and scornful amusement the endeavor of his sisters and daughters—or more probably other men's daughters—to prove that the intellectual heritage must be a common heritage if Democracy was to be a working theory, missed the beauty of the picture. He saw the slim beginning of a procession of young women, whose obstinate, dreaming eyes beheld the visions hitherto relegated by scriptural prerogative and masculine commentary to their brothers; inevitably his conservatism missed the beauty; and the strangeness he called queer. (Converse 1915: 1–2)

Queer indeed. For many women in the first wave of college-educated Americans—whether or not they attended single-sex colleges like Mount Holyoke, Smith, or Wellesley—the very "strangeness" of their newly acquired learning and college degrees not only conferred on them the status and perspectives of outsiders, but also, though less frequently, the desire to pursue their most deeply felt intellectual and emotional attachments in social and professional worlds without men.[1] Of course, all of these women continued to live out their daily lives in public and private environments in which men—from husbands, brothers, and preachers, to suburban neighbors, shopkeepers, delivery men, and the "man on the street"—were not only present but privileged in ways they were not: most of these women married men, went to church, and participated in the civic and cultural institutions of their time; all had to keep house, walk along city streets and country lanes, or travel by carriage, train, or boat, whether "at home" or abroad. For some, however, the choice to remain unmarried and to work in professions dominated by other women—as professors in women's colleges or as settlement house workers in urban neighborhoods, for example—offered access to physical and psychological environments of a very different kind: spaces in which women's words, emotions, entertainments, and romantic attachments had room to flourish.

Both programmatically and spatially, the buildings and landscapes of the women's colleges and urban settlement houses were fascinating hybrids: unlike conventional homes and workplaces of the

mid- to late nineteenth century, in which zones of public and private space—together with class and gender hierarchies and conventions for use—had been clearly defined, in these new environments boundaries and functions were more fluid. Some areas might be residential and domestic, still others educational, recreational, spiritual, or bureaucratic—and often within the same building. Moreover, the boundaries between home and workplace were blurred: students and faculty members could study or live "off campus" in rented rooms or in houses in town, and sometimes student or faculty families moved into nearby accommodations or even onto the campus itself to be near their daughters; moreover, volunteers from the women's colleges might spend months residing in urban settlement houses, returning to their families' middle-class homes or to college campuses over the summer or during the term (Palmieri 1995: 66–74).

At Wellesley College, our focus here, founded in 1870 by Henry and Pauline Durant, women faculty taught and worked not only in College Hall, a looming Collegiate Gothic structure completed in 1875, and in other buildings dotted around the campus, but also in their own homes, where they had offices and libraries that were frequently shared with colleagues or friends.[2] Long-serving professors such as Katharine Lee Bates, Katharine Coman, Vida Dutton Scudder, Florence Converse, Emily Balch, Elizabeth Kendall and others, including Wellesley College President Caroline Hazard (1899–1910), formed a tight-knit friendship network that lasted for decades. They taught side-by-side, shared meals, gossip, and innumerable meetings both on-campus and at the social service institutions they supported. They traveled together during their sabbatical leaves (sometimes accompanied, for periods of varying length, by their mothers and sisters), and shared in each other's successes, frustrations, struggles, and triumphs as if they were their own (Palmieri 1995: 137–142, 312–13, note 21).[3]

The diverse environments these women inhabited—group homes, dormitories, dining halls, campus landscapes, "college towns," and, of course, their own inner space and sense of themselves as individuals—were newly formed hybrids of conventional types that can be categorized as "heterotopias," a term coined by Michel Foucault to identify spaces of social or cultural non-conformity or resistance (Foucault 1986). This label was recently applied by architectural historian Kevin Murphy to a handful of new and newly restored mixed-use buildings in nineteenth-century New England resort towns where summer visitors who did not quite fit into the social scene, such as "spinsters" and "bachelors," could establish spaces of their own (Murphy 2009; see also Crane 2007; Darling 2011; Fellows 2005). As Murphy notes, the Colonial Revival buildings and interiors that these men and women created for themselves "were to varying degrees heterotopic because they made palpable various historical periods and represented many cultures in their architecture and collections, and provided settings for the theatrical staging of various identities" (Murphy 2009: 190).

The description is an apt one for Wellesley College's campus and for the spaces that its faculty and students occupied in the surrounding community.

Thus, while hardly the "Adamless Edens" that detractors found so alarming and enthusiasts imagined as feminist utopias, women's colleges were decidedly "queer" in relation to the social norms of the period and the customs of the towns in which they were located.[4] Physically demarcated—either by gates or by walls which both protected and empowered their inhabitants—unconventional in their architecture and customs, and atypical in terms of gender values and hierarchies, these spaces were filled with formidable women who were intellectually rigorous and forward-looking in the classroom, and yet—as their letters, love poems, and other private communications reveal—often given to the sort of effusive and flowery language, emotional drama, and intense romantic attachments that we associate with dreamy adolescence.[5] Special friendships, crushes, and cliques abounded in this world, but so too did the building of close bonds among colleagues, and decades-long partnerships between women couples. Mountains of archival evidence show that college and settlement-house women created and occupied an oppositional, independent, women-centered culture of love and work; while they remained steadfastly silent about their sex lives in the letters and diaries that survive, this reticence is entirely consistent with the norms of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century respectability, and with notions of personal privacy that persisted largely unchanged until the 1960s.[6]

For these women, love was the highest ideal and, as such, not only highly articulated but passionately enacted; the rest, as they say, is silence—and these women clearly wanted it to stay that way. In 1921, for example, Katharine Lee Bates told her old friend and colleague Elizabeth Kendall that she had destroyed all of her partner Katharine Coman's letters as she prepared to publish *Yellow Clover*, the memorial volume of love poetry dedicated to Coman that appeared in 1922: "I have read through, during these past three years, all her letters to me, and mine to her in one quarter century of friendship—destroying as I read—for I could not leave them for careless hands to destroy."[7]

Though few in number, the lifelong inhabitants of these same-sex realms forged new paths, moving back and forth between their own special world of female love and feminist culture, and the world that they shared with their mainstream contemporaries. It was their stated goal as educational pioneers and as social reformers to challenge contemporary gender stereotypes as well as the social, economic, and political cultures of their time, and they were committed activists in these arenas (Palmieri 1995: 154ff). Far less publicly, though with equal energy, they dedicated themselves to the radical "queering" of domestic and institutional spaces, inhabiting newly designed college buildings and campuses, commissioning houses for themselves and their households, altering and "restoring" existing buildings, and—like

the Colonial Revival enthusiasts cited above—recombining architectural spaces and styles to create hybrid environments. While their public activities as progressive activists have become well-known over the past decades, their unheralded contributions as builders also have particular significance, not only for the history of the built environment but also for Queer Studies.

It goes without saying that very few women or men of any historical period have had either the opportunity, the commitment, or the economic resources to custom design and construct the physical environments in which they lived or worked. Yet, as I suggested in *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (Friedman 1998, 2010), the rare twentieth-century women who could commission new houses to accommodate their own female-headed households (formed as a result of their being divorced, gay, widowed, or choosing to remain single—among other reasons) frequently produced architecturally innovative houses. Examples include Frank Lloyd Wright's Susan Lawrence Dana House (1904), his Aline Barnsdall "Hollyhock House" (1921), and Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House (1951), as well as handful of other well-known works (Friedman 1998, 2010).[8]

Houses built for identifiable same-sex female couples, on the other hand, while frequently unconventional in both program and plan, suggest a more complex picture. While modern-looking houses built for same-sex women couples certainly exist—prominent among them being architect (and Wellesley College 1909 graduate) Eleanor Raymond's Bauhaus-inspired Raymond-Kingsbury House in Belmont, Massachusetts (1931)—many queer women clients seem to have preferred more subdued stylistic choices, perhaps because they offered a sort of protective coloration to their inhabitants.[9] Among the best-known examples in this mode is the nineteenth-century townhouse at 112 Charles Street in Boston that Eleanor Raymond remodeled in 1923 as a residence for herself and her partner Ethel Power (editor of *House Beautiful*) and an extended household of family and friends; another is Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Alma Goetsch-Katharine Winckler House (1940) in Okemos, Michigan, designed for two female art professors at Michigan State University as part of a small, suburban development commissioned by a group of university faculty (Friedman 1998, 2010: 18–24).[10] Their Goetsch-Winckler house would have been virtually indistinguishable from its neighbors, also designed by Wright but ultimately unbuilt, which were intended for more conventional families.

To this list can now be added the unassuming Shingle-style house on Curve Street in Wellesley, Massachusetts (Figure 1)—an easy ten minutes' walk from College Hall, which stood at the heart of the campus—built in 1907 by Wellesley professors Katharine Lee Bates (1859–1926) (Figure 2) and Katherine Coman (1857–1915) (Figure 3), committed life-partners for a quarter century, as a residence

Figure 1
William Brainerd, "The Scarab," Curve Street, Wellesley, MA, 1907. Photo: Harry Connolly.

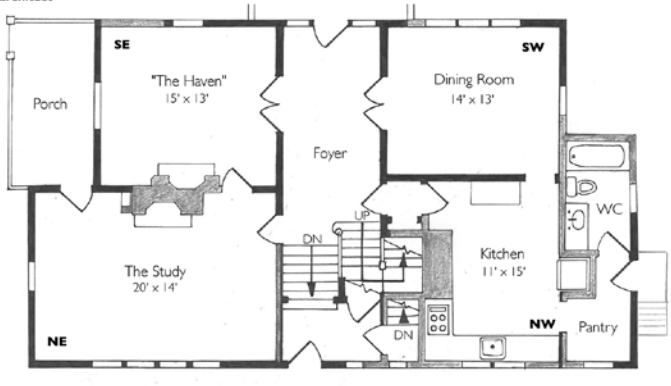
Figure 2
Katharine Lee Bates (1859–1926). Wellesley College Archives.

Figure 3
Katharine Coman (1857–1915). Wellesley College Archives.

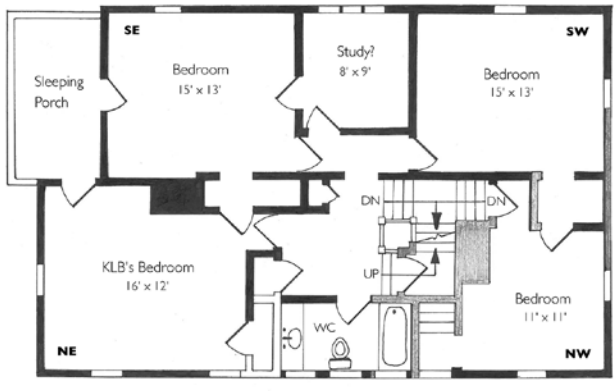
for themselves and their woman-only household. Christened "The Scarab" by Bates upon her return from an extended tour of Egypt with her friend Caroline Hazard in 1906–7, the brown-shingled, many-gabled house included not only expansive living and working quarters for herself and Coman, but also bedrooms for Bates's mother Cornelia and older sister Jeannie, smaller spaces for visitors, and accommodations for household staff (Burgess 1952: 153, 161–4).[11] Designed by Boston-based architect William H. Brainerd, "The Scarab" seems to have been modeled on Nathaniel Hawthorne's fictional "House of the Seven Gables" in Salem, Massachusetts, which the architect had "reconstructed," based on extensive research on eighteenth-century New England houses, for a new school edition of Hawthorne's novel. That project—more literary and antiquarian rather than architectural—was undertaken at the behest of Bates's colleague Hannah Davidson, who edited the volume and published Brainerd's drawing, together with an essay on "The Imaginary House of Seven Gables," in 1904 (Davidson 1904).[12] The book and its contents would have been well known to Bates, who was an expert on Hawthorne's work.

From the exterior, "The Scarab" appears to be a fairly typical example of a suburban, single-family home, yet here, as in the heterotopic buildings referred to earlier, there was a great deal more than met the eye (Figure 4).[13] Typically approached by Bates, Coman, their

Katharine Lee Bates House
"The Scarab"
Wellesley, MA., 1907
William H. Brainerd, architect



Katharine Lee Bates House
Wellesley, MA.



Katharine Lee Bates House
Wellesley, MA.

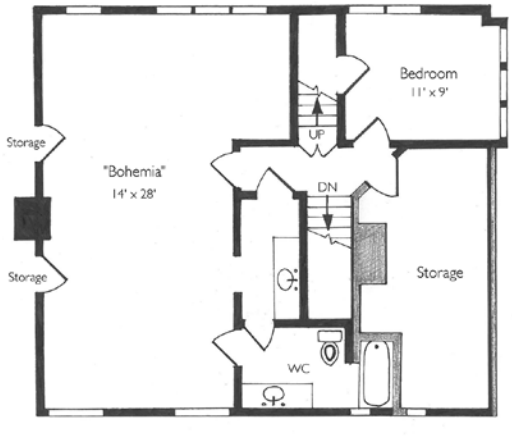


Figure 4
"The Scarab," reconstructed plans of the ground, second, and third floors.

Figure 5
"The Scarab," Garden Front, Photo: Harry Connolly.

students, and colleagues via the garden front (Figure 5), where a path led up the hill from Weston Road and the campus beyond, the house had wide verandas on both the garden and south sides, where a large, gable-roofed dog house with an olive green door was built for Sigurd, their beloved golden collie (Bates 1919: 183). A wide hallway led from the garden front to the Curve Street entrance, where there was a steep flight of stairs—required to accommodate the high-ceiling of the basement and the level changes of the hill-top site—that opened onto the "front door": neighbors, delivery men, and other visitors entered here. This was also the closest entrance to the house for those arriving from the town and the train station, and it was thus frequently used by members of the household when they made their many trips into Boston for meetings, shopping, or errands.

Inside the Curve Street entrance was a spacious parlor, referred to by Bates as "The Study," furnished with comfortable chairs, bookcases, a fireplace, and wooden mantel, below which a large ceramic scarab, a souvenir from Bates's trip to Egypt, had been embedded in the brick surround. Here Bates worked at a large mahogany desk, taught her weekly graduate seminar, and entertained family and guests (Bates 2006; Burgess 1952: 163; see also Leopold 2006). Facing the garden front was another large room, named "The Haven," with a chimneypiece decorated with blue and white "Delft" tiles showing ships in full sail (Figure 6); this space, used as a library and meeting room, was modeled on the parlor of the old Pynchon House described in *The House of the Seven Gables*, with its chimneypiece of "old-fashioned Dutch tiles."[14] Across the hall were an ample dining room, furnished with a table large enough to accommodate the many members of the household and their guests, and a kitchen, with access to a large basement, with service rooms and sleeping quarters for the cook and maid.

Figure 6
Fireplace with "Dutch Tiles" in "The Haven." Photo: Author.

On the next level, reached via a narrow staircase that pin-wheeled off in two different directions, were four large bedrooms. On this floor were also small guest rooms and alcoves for visiting friends and live-in students. A sleeping porch on the south side formed part of Bates's private suite; Bates's mother's room probably had access to this outdoor space as well.[15]

Katherine Coman's large workspace, always referred to as "Bohemia," was on the top floor, under the eaves: here she wrote, taught classes, and met with colleagues and friends. A substantial interior room with a sink was located next to the full bathroom on this floor, and this may have served as a darkroom for Coman and perhaps for others in the Bates–Coman circle. Coman had been using her own photographs in her work since the late 1890s, and the pictures she took on a trip with Bates and Annie Beecher Scoville in England in 1905 appeared in a volume of Bates's travel essays, *From Gretna Green to Land's End* (Bates and Coman 1907). Colleagues Emily Balch and Elizabeth Kendall published their own photographs in their books as well.[16] A small bedroom and ample storage space were also on this floor: Coman used this bedroom during her later years.[17]

A number of details about this hybrid house and its extended household stand out. First, "The Scarab" and its surrounding landscape were clearly configured to reflect and accommodate the household's overlapping affiliations to the college, the neighborhood, the town, and the city of Boston beyond: it was not "built backwards," as some neighbors claimed, but offered a number of different points of access. Second, the house provided ample spaces for living, working, entertaining, and relaxing—both indoors and out—by a large, diverse, and extremely fluid household of women. At the center of the home, the large hallway on the ground floor functioned as a waiting room,

lobby, and auxiliary living room, handy for those who wished to remain a bit apart from the animated conversation of the ladies who flocked to the "The Study" and dining room—people like Bates's sister Jeannie, who kept house and served as a typist for Bates and her colleagues, but whose deafness prevented her from taking part in the relentless flow of words that emanated from this talkative group. Third, Coman's top-floor "Bohemia" could be used not only as a scholar's workspace (like that of Nathaniel Hawthorne), a photographer's workshop (like that of Mr Holgrave, the social reformer and "daguerrotypist" who is the hero of Hawthorne's novel) and as a belvedere from which the college could be glimpsed over the tree tops. Fourth, and most surprisingly of all, the bedrooms on the second floor could all be accessed not only via doorways from the central landing, but also through the large interior closets that connected each pair. These private passageways provided the occupants—Bates, her mother, her sister, Katharine Coman, or others unknown to us—with a secondary means of circulation between bedrooms, literally allowing them to gain access to the most intimate spaces of their family and "housemates" via the closets. While it is possible that these hidden passageways were inspired by the nooks and crannies of the old Pynchon house described in Hawthorne's novel, their presence here is curious, to say the least.

Colleagues on the Wellesley College faculty since the early 1880s, Katherine Lee Bates and Katherine Coman were both from highly educated, middle-class, Protestant families with deep New England roots.[18] Bates's father, a Congregational minister who died soon after she was born, was a graduate of Middlebury College, where his father Joshua was President. Her mother, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College, raised three children on her own, first in Falmouth and then in Natick, Massachusetts. Coman's mother had been educated at the Putnam Female Seminary, not far from her home in rural Newark, Ohio, a school founded by graduates of Mount Holyoke; her father Levi Coman, a teacher and gentleman farmer, graduated from Hamilton College in upstate New York. Confident, self-sufficient, and highly principled, they were proud of their role as leaders and viewed their economic and intellectual independence as a right that they had earned as well as a responsibility that they bore to the society in which they lived.

Bates and Coman worked, traveled, and lived together, yet they typically described themselves, when asked, as "friends."[19] Bates began her teaching career at Natick High School in 1880, at the age of twenty-one, later moving on to Dana Hall, a girls' preparatory school founded by the Eastman sisters, who would later become her neighbors and close friends (Burgess 1952: 45). She joined the faculty of Wellesley College in 1885, becoming Professor and Head of the Department of English Literature in 1891. Coman had received her PhB from the University of Michigan in 1880; she arrived at

Wellesley that same year, moving east with her friend Alice Freeman Palmer, who was shortly thereafter appointed President of the College (1881–7) (Davis 1971: 365). While Bates was a poet, essayist, writer, and scholar of English Literature, Coman devoted her life to the study of economics and industrial relations, frequently putting her academic scholarship to the test as a labor organizer and advocate for women's rights (Davis 1971: 366).[20]

In 1893, Bates and Coman spent the summer term teaching at Colorado College, in Colorado Springs, where a day trip to the top of Pike's Peak (by wagon, together with Coman's mother, who recorded the journey in her memoirs) inspired "America the Beautiful," the poem, later set to music, for which Bates is most widely known (Coman 1913: 74–5; Sherr 2001). The success of that work, and of other verses and articles that Bates sold to magazines and newspapers, gave her the freedom to build a house, to live as she liked, to travel, and to support her household (Schwartz 1979: 64).[21] Bates, who appears in early photographs as a pudgy young woman in a pince-nez, seems to our modern eyes to be rather plain and serious; in her ample-figured later life she looks more like a white-haired, crinkle-eyed grandmother than a gifted poet or an ardent lover. But looks can be deceiving, and Bates had not only a passionate heart but also a way with words.

Her first love letter to Coman, dated February 24, 1891, was written while she was traveling in England with former Dana Hall pupil Annie Scoville (with whom she had been, but was no longer, romantically involved).[22] After falling in love with Coman the previous year, she was passionate and steadfast, not only for the following quarter century, but also after Coman's death in 1915. "I wonder if an English Spring can be as beautiful as Princeton was a year ago?," she wrote in a letter addressed to "Dearest my Katharine," continuing:

> Do you remember the sunset sky that Sunday evening when we strayed home from the Rock and there were two hands in one pocket? We'll go to Princeton again some time.
>
> For I am coming back to you, my Dearest, whether I come back to Wellesley or not. You are always in my heart and in my longings … I am tired of taking care of your Katharine [superscript: "myself"]. If I bring her back to you, will you take care of her yourself? Sweetheart, I always love you, more dearly than you know … Of course I want to come to you (very much as I want to come to Heaven) … it was never very possible to leave Wellesley, because so many love anchors held me there and it seemed least of all possible when I had just found the long-desired way to your dearest heart.[23]

The couple's devotion remained unflagging throughout their lives. Bates called Coman "Joy of Life," a nickname that she made public when she published a picture of Coman and their dog Sigurd with

Figure 7
Katharine Coman as 'Joy of Life,'' from Bates (1919: frontispiece).

an identifying caption ("Joy of Life with Sigurd" (Figure 7). For her part, Coman sent flowers and tender love notes to Bates, referring to herself as "your broken dolly," during her long years of illness and convalescence (Bates 2006: 78–9). Devoted to her partner and to their home, Coman wrote to Bates from Egypt in January 1912, "I shall be glad to be at home and at work once more. My desk in Bohemia seems a pleasant prospect" (Bates 2006: 78–9).

The two women were not only life partners but also professional collaborators, producing books for use in schools, such as *English History Told by English Poets* (Bates and Coman 1902) and a popular collection of essays, *From Gretna Green to Land's End* (Bates and

Coman 1907), noted above. Undoubtedly, their notions of intimacy and romance were very different from our own, and their powers of obfuscation were remarkable; aided, perhaps, by the secret passages inside the closets at "The Scarab," they maintained a steadfastly respectable—and resolutely "closeted"—personal and professional partnership.

Little evidence survives to shed light on the ways in which these women understood their gender roles or "performed" their sexuality in public: the spotlight gaze of Wellesley College, and the eyes of their friends and relations, were always upon them. Understandably, they always represented their intimate relationship with the utmost care. For example, letters from Bates to her mother describe how she and Coman—never apart for long—hired bicycles during a summer in Oxford in June of 1894 and ventured out into the English countryside: the more physically timid Bates apparently preferred to stick with her tricycle, while Coman pedaled off fearlessly on a two-wheeler. Coman had found a pattern for "bicycling trousers" in London, Bates wrote, and was determined to "try them"; this is offered as an amusing example of her friend's daring nature and feminist politics, but nothing more (Burgess 1952: 114–16). Bates wrote that she and Coman laughed at the letters to the editor of *The Morning Chronicle* from indignant readers who deplored such extremes of female fashion: Bates described this "war of the sexes" at length, adopting an amused and irreverent tone.

Despite their reticence, however, incidental details do rise to the surface in this archive of manuscripts and texts. In writing about their much beloved collie, Sigurd, for example, Bates casually reveals the physical affection the couple shared: "If we walked … close together, absorbed in talk," she wrote,

> he would jealously push in between us, as he often did when we were having a fireside tête-à-tête or bidding each other good night. He wished us to understand that Sigurd was the one to be loved and that all affections not directed to Sigurd were superfluous. (Bates 1919: 147)

Such clues are few and far between, but they help to shed light on a relationship that was both intensely emotional and physically—as well as spatially—expressed.

For the first ten or more years of their partnership, the couple had been peripatetic, moving with their extended household (including, at various times, both of their mothers) between rented houses in the town of Wellesley, rooms and offices on campus, and summer term or sabbatical lodgings abroad. Once Coman became Dean of the College in 1900, however, they purchased the house that they had been renting in town (Burgess 1952: 123, 137, 139, 144; see also Coman 1913: 99–101). They clearly thought of themselves as

a couple throughout this long period of contingent domesticity, using words like "we" and "our" with confidence and ease, and operating under the assumption that their finances and their life choices were shared. When speaking of their move to "The Scarab" in 1907, for example, Bates noted that "We sold the first home and moved into a more spacious one that we had built on a strip of untamed land hardby"; she and Coman were a pair, not separate (Bates 1919: 181). The remainder of that passage is worth quoting here, both for what it says about Bates's and Coman's sense of themselves, and for what it reveals of Bates's amused and ironic response to the "help" that was often unquestioningly imposed by the men who entered the ladies' unconventional—and slowly modernizing—world:

> Then a street came, and more houses, and quietly the wildwood drew away from us. Within our grounds at least we strove to keep the forest growth in its own careless beauty, but never a man stepped on the place, brother or guest or gardener or state warden or whosoever, but, driven by the deep instinct of the pioneer, must needs go stealthily forth with an ax (sic) or saw or shears and lay about him in our happy tangle. The worst of it was that we had to appear grateful. (Bates 1919: 181)

The couple's lives revolved around their teaching, their scholarship, and their activism. With their friends they founded the College Settlements Association in 1887, and in 1892, Katharine Coman—always the more publicly active of the two—helped establish Denison House, a settlement house in Boston's South End (Davis 1971: 366). Coman played an active role in the Seamstresses Strike in 1910 and she was among the founders of the Consumers' League; toward the end of her life, she used her academic research on social welfare programs in Britain and Scandinavia as a platform from which to advocate for reform (Halsey 1915: 451). Coman even helped to establish a kindergarten on the Wellesley campus in 1912 because, as Bates later noted, she had observed "the unshepherded ways of the little children who abound upon our hill" (Bates 2006: 75–6).

Bates described the rhythms of their household with candor and humor, explaining why the couple had preferred to "baby" a dog rather than adopt a child:

> Be it understood that we were teachers, writers, servants of causes, boards, committees, mere professional women with too little leisure for the home we loved. Had our hurried days given opportunity for the fine art of mothering, we would have cherished a child instead of a collie, but Sigurd throve on neglect and saved us from turning into plaster images by making light of all our serious concerns. No academic dignities impressed his happy irreverence. (Bates 1919: 30)

Ever cheerful and well-mannered, Bates nonetheless recognized the unconventionality of their lives and, as time wore on, spoke and wrote about it with increasing candor and humor. In 1910, for example, Bates gently chided a friend: "I am mightily amused," she wrote,

> over your metaphor for us free-flying spinsters, of "a fringe on the garment of life." I always thought the fringe had the best of it. I don't think I mind not being woven in. As for children, whenever we have time and money we can adopt a dozen, and without time for them—and money—think what a life they would have had! … So let's be fluttering fringes.[24]

Secure in her world, and increasingly recognized and supported for her work, Bates may have been an outsider in society at large, but she was a respected and beloved member of the community that she helped create.

It follows, then, that when they came to imagine the sort of house they might like to live in, Bates and Coman based their decisions on the three things they loved most and knew best: each other, their work, and Wellesley College. Their choice of their neighbor William H. Brainerd as architect, and of the architecture of Colonial America—which had come alive for them, thanks to Bates lifelong study of Hawthorne's rich descriptions of old New England houses, towns, and gardens—made perfect sense. For decades, Bates's work had focused on Hawthorne's novels, and she had written introductions for a complete edition of the romances, published by Thomas Y. Crowell, in 1902. No doubt she had also visited his houses in Concord and Salem, and perhaps she also knew his children through their shared literary circle.[25]

Bates's readings of Hawthorne's works—sometimes aloud to Coman and others—as well as her knowledge of the author's New England life, clearly shaped her choices as a home builder (Bates 1919: 121–34). She was well aware of the significance of the large top-floor studies that Hawthorne occupied in almost every home he and his family lived in, for example, and referred to these in a number of her essays. In her introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, she described the Hawthorne's house on Mall Street in Salem, "where an upper room was reserved for literature," and then cited a letter written by Sophia Hawthorne to her mother at length:

> My husband's study will be high from all noise, and it will be to me a Paradise of Peace to think of him alone and still, yet within my reach. He has now lived in the nursery a year without of chance of one hour's uninterrupted musing … He—the heaven-gifted Seer—to spend his life time between the Custom's House and the Nursery! (Bates 1902c: xii)

Perhaps Bates saw herself, like Sophia, as a loving wife who deferred to Coman's brilliance in the more "masculine" fields of history and economics. Whatever the reason, a top-floor study—similar in size and purpose to the one on Mall Street and to the writing room Hawthorne so lovingly describes in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (Bates 1902a)—was built for Coman at "The Scarab."[26]

Moreover, Bates's scholarly interests, and those of her colleagues, clearly inspired architect William H. Brainerd's research into Hawthorne's architectural models for *The House of the Seven Gables*. His reconstruction of the house (Figure 8), which bears a striking resemblance to "The Scarab," first appeared, as noted above, in a new edition published by Hannah A. Davidson in 1904.[27] Davidson taught summer school courses in the English Department at Wellesley, and she edited a series of classic texts, including *The House of the Seven Gables*, for the Riverside Literature Series. No

Figure 8
William Brainerd, "The House of the Seven Gables as Described by Hawthorne," from Davidson (1904).

doubt she was acquainted with both Bates and Brainerd's wife, Mary Bowen, who had taught in the English Department before her marriage.[28] Although it is not clear who among them had originated the idea of devoting serious study to Salem's colonial architecture, it is likely that Bates provided the impetus. In her Introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables* of 1902, she stated confidently that "the House of Seven Gables is apparently a composite of several old Salem mansions" (Bates 1902b).[29] This suggests that she had turned her attention to the architectural sources before the others; more important is the timely confluence of Bates's passion for Hawthorne, Davidson's research on "The Imaginary House," Brainerd's architecturally accurate reconstruction, and Bates commitment to building a new house for herself and Coman.

Brainerd worked as a principal in the Boston firm of Brainerd, Leeds & Russell. While not a well-known architect, his works include the Conservatory of Music at the University of Nebraska, which dates from the 1890s; Herrick Chapel and Steiner Hall (1907), both in the Gothic Revival style, at Grinnell College (from which Brainerd had received a BA in 1883); and the classical revival Carnegie Library at the University of Maine (1907).[30] In addition, he contributed an article on fireproofing to a volume on *Modern School Houses* (Hamelin *et al*. 1910: 12–16) and worked as architect of public schools in the Boston area.[31] As a competent practitioner of historical revival architecture, and as student of New England houses, Brainerd was a solid choice for Bates and Coman; moreover, as a resident of the town of Wellesley and a member of their extended circle, he was an excellent partner in their project to create a house that was outwardly respectable, idiosyncratic in plan and program, and academically somewhat arcane.

The house on Curve Street quickly became a fixture in the neighborhood and a beloved destination for an extended community of friends, family, and supporters. Bates's biographer chronicles the stream of visitors who were received in her home, particularly in her later years as a respected national figure (Burgess 1952: 192–3). Writing of Sigurd and their other pets, Bates reveals many details of her happy life with Coman in a house enlivened by friends, children, animals, and live-in students—all of whom Bates christened with loving nicknames—who spurred new interests and enthusiasms. One long-term guest recalled that:

> Miss Jewett lived with us and Miss Balch who lived down the street had dinner with us every night. And if you ever sat at a table night after night after night with Miss Jewett, a poet, Miss Bates, who was a poet and a joker … and Miss Balch … well … that was a wonderful year. (Quoted by Palmieri (1995: 134), from an interview with Geraldine Gordon, formerly a young instructor at Wellesley)

While these anecdotes sometimes give the impression of a jolly boarding school for grown-up girls, the realization (despite the ladies' own reticence) that the household was created and anchored by a committed same-sex couple casts the picture in a very different light.

Furnished with antiques and traditional New England furniture, both old and new, "The Scarab" was decorated with framed reproductions of Renaissance paintings—including Carpaccio's *St. Augustine in his Study* over Bates's desk—original paintings, and photographs of churches and sculpture, many of which were souvenirs of their travels or gifts from friends.[32] In an undated letter to her brother, probably written in September 1907 as she and her family prepared to move into the new house, Bates excitedly tells him that she had been shopping for bedding and a soap dish, noting that the painters were working away upstairs, and that she had written to Mr Brainerd that "we must have the grate." She also notes that "your Nubian decorations look very well in the dining room."[33] In addition to the Egyptian scarab embedded in the fireplace surround in "The Study" and a number of other amulets and small sculptures on the mantel, there was a large photo of the market in Luxor by Coman's brother Seymour, "an enlargement of his own Kodak picture," taken in 1910. Other prominently displayed treasures included a "Cairo tapestry" and a "model of an Alhambra door" that were hanging in "The Haven," and an "Egyptian tent cloth," that Coman brought back for Bates from her journey to Egypt.[34]

Having created a haven for themselves and their friends, the greatest tragedy in Bates's and Coman's shared life was its all-too-brief existence: Coman was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1911, and died of complications from that illness in January 1915. Buoyed by her religious beliefs and Bates's tender care (in which she was aided by Emily Balch and Cornelia Warren, among others), Coman confronted her mortality with calm resolve. As Bates wrote to Coman's family and friends: "It would have been intolerable to watch the slow destruction of that beautiful body had in not been for the victory of the soul," remarking on "the friendship which remains my joy and blessing" (Bates 2006: 74).[35] She also quoted from a note that Coman had penned as she waited to be taken into the operating room: "I have no fear, Dear Heart," Coman wrote,

> for Life and Death are one and God is all in all. My only real concern to remain in this body is to spare you pain and grief and loneliness. But I should come to you as my mother comes to me, in my best moments, when my heart is open to her. (Palmieri 1995: 139)

Immediately following Coman's death, Bates moved upstairs to "Bohemia," working at Coman's desk, on which she placed a large photographic portrait of her beloved (Figure 9). In 1922, still

Figure 9
Katharine Lee Bates at her desk in "Bohemia." Wellesley College Archives.

overwhelmed with grief and longing, Bates published *Yellow Clover*, the collection of poems that served both as a memorial and an extended love letter. Calling Coman a "western woman, born in Newark, Ohio, November 23, 1857," Bates romanticized her dashing lover to the end, praising her bravery and courage (Bates 1922: ix). The book, filled with love and longing, opens with a dedication to Coman from the *Odes* of Horace that speaks volumes: "Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus tam cari capitis?"—"What shame can there be in grieving for one so beloved?" Couched in literary language that had always cast a protective miasma around them, she grieved for the loss of her friend.

In "Yellow Clover," the title poem, she described love tokens that she and Coman first exchanged as young women: these flowers were "our tenderest language," she explained. Her most vivid writing,

particularly the final "corona of sonnets" entitled "In Bohemia," is more wrenching and raw, revealing the unfathomable loss that she felt at Coman's passing. In "If You Could Come," Bates suggests something of the physical yearning that she felt:

> My love, my love, if you could come once more
> From your high place,
> I would not question you for heavenly lore,
> But, silent, take the comfort of your face.
>
> I would not ask you if those golden spheres
> In love rejoice,
> If only our stained star hath sin and tears,
> But fill my famished hearing with your voice.
>
> One touch of you were worth a thousand
> creeds.
> My wound is numb
> Through toil-pressed day, but all night long it bleeds
> In aching dreams, and still you cannot come. (Bates 1922: 5, 39)

Nothing could take the place of the partner with whom she had shared a quarter century of work and love. As Bates commented in a letter to a friend in 1926, "So much of me died with Katharine Coman that I'm sometimes not sure whether I'm alive or not."[36] Yet the publication of *Yellow Clover*, in a limited edition of 750 copies, reveals how far Bates, approaching her later years, was willing to go in claiming that partnership, expressing her emotional and physical passion to the world beyond their protective circle. And the radical meaning of that message was received loud and clear: writing to thank Bates for sending a copy of the volume, Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House and Coman's lifelong friend, praised her for "formulating, perhaps for the first time, the new type of friendship between women"—a friendship that flourished in a world that Bates, Coman, and their Wellesley colleagues had created, bought, and paid for through their own hard work and loving commitment.[37]

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NOTES

1. For the history of the women's colleges and campuses see Horowitz (1984).
2. For Wellesley's history see Palmieri (1995, *passim*); see also Scudder (1937), and Glasscock (1975). For the history of the campus and its buildings see Fergusson *et al*. (2000).
3. For Bates, see Burgess (1952) (Burgess was Bates's niece) and Balderson (1971); for Coman, see Halsey (1915), Allen F. Davis (1971), and Scanlon and Costner (1994). A new biography of Balch, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946, was published by Kristin Gwinn (2010). The papers of Caroline Hazard (1871–1939) are in Special Collections at the University of Rhode Island. Further information on Scudder, Converse, and other members of the faculty is available from the Wellesley College Archives (hereafter as WCA).
4. The phrase, which gained currency in the 1890s, was used as early as 1884: see also Palmieri (1995); sheet music, Boston: White, Slaughter & Co. [Library of Congress]; Reese (1906).
5. For an analysis of women's friendships and romantic attachments in the nineteenth century, see Smith-Rosenberg (1975). By focusing on the discursive norms, notions of gender identity, and conventions of social etiquette among middle-class men and women, Smith-Rosenberg moved the discussion of women's same-sex relationships away from the (often fruitless) search for "proof" of sexual contact and concentrated instead on the depth of emotional, physical, and psychological attachments. See also Deegan (1996). For a discussion of these issues in gay male culture, see Fellows (2005: 13–14, 22) and Halperin (2012).
6. The literature on this question is vast and inconclusive: see, among many other titles, Faderman (1990) and Kennedy and Davis (1993). For the backlash against "Boston marriages," see Duggan (1993).
7. Katharine Lee Bates (hereafter as KLB) to Ellen Kendall, July 16, 1921, EKK papers, WCA, quoted by Palmieri (1995: 314, note 29).
8. For lesbian patrons of architecture, see Bonnevier (2005, 2007).
9. The house, which was demolished in 2006, was built for Raymond's sister and her partner.
10. For Goetsch and Winckler, see Bandes (1991).
11. The construction of the house was overseen by Bates's brother Arthur Lee Bates, a prominent businessman in Portland, Maine.
12. For Davidson, see Leonard (1907); for Brainerd, see Brainerd (1908: parts 4–7, 177).

13. For the Shingle style and the Colonial Revival in New England, see Truettner and Stein (1999), and Conforti (2001).
14. This detail, and the historical documents supporting its authenticity, were particularly noted by Davidson and Brainerd (Davidson 1904: 387, 389) in "The Imaginary House," *The House of the Seven Gables*.
15. In an undated letter to her brother (probably September 10 and 12, 1907), Bates refers to "The Bower" and to her mother's balcony: Bates's own room and the one next to it are the only ones with access to this outdoor space. Characteristically, in the earlier letter, Bates writes that a friend had suggested that "Jeannie's Room, The Blue Grotto" be named "Vanity Fair because of your long mirror." Bates also notes that she was "to have a cedar chest for my room and call it Lebanon." KLB to Arthur Bates, n.d. (probably September 10, 1907, WCA). I am grateful to Professor Melinda Ponder, who is preparing a biography of Bates, for calling my attention to these important letters from Bates to her brother. Bates made up nicknames for both people and things: she called her bicycle "Lucifer," perhaps because Sigurd, the dog, was terrified of it (Burgess 1952: 123); and in the 1920s, she christened her Lincoln automobile "Abraham." The car had been given to her by her friend Caroline Hazard, together with a paid chauffeur, when she became unable to walk long distances. In a note to her will, she suggests that this car be given to the chauffeur after her death: "Dear Mine Executors," "In Bohemia, October 11, 1928," WCA.
16. For Coman's early practice of photography, see Bates (1899); the reference to Miss Coman's trunk, stored with supplies for the camera," which was stolen and recovered during a trip to Spain, is on p. 55. Throughout her memoir, Coman's mother mentions the taking of photographs by both Seymour and Katharine Coman: see Coman (1913: 99). In her memoir of their trip to Europe in 1895, she noted that Katherine "wished for a camera; it is a great disappointment to have missed bringing one" (Coman 1913: 128). This oversight was not repeated on later travels. Professor and social reformer Emily Balch published her photographs (together with others by Lewis Hine), see Balch (1910). The book included photographs taken on a research trip in 1905–6. Professor Elizabeth Kimball Kendall, who had earlier (1894 and 1899) co-authored two books for high school students on English history with Coman, included her own photographs of China (taken in 1911) (see Kendall 1913).
17. In Bates's memoir, she notes that Coman "nestled down with a thankful sigh into her own bed in her own Bohemia" (Bates 2006: 78).
18. Bates's early life is well documented: in addition to the material found by Dorothy Burgess (1952: as in note 5); see also Anon.

(1896: 441–3); Guild (1908: 261). For Katharine Coman, see Coman (1913: ix–xvii, 1–56).

19. The earliest reading of this archive was by Judith Schwartz (1979).
20. Her publications include *The Industrial History of the United States* (Coman 1910), drawn from her Wellesley course, *Economic Beginnings of the Far West: How We Won the Land beyond the Mississippi* (Coman 1912), and a treatise on unemployment insurance (Coman 1915), based on field research in Denmark and Norway.
21. She was also helped financially by a loan from her brother Arthur; both shared in the care of their mother and sister, who were to live with KLB at "The Scarab." See KLB to Arthur Bates, n.d. (probably September 12, 1907), Bates Papers, WCA.
22. Bates and Scoville exchanged passionate love letters in the 1880s; these are marked by much soul-searching about the emotional (and perhaps also the physical) intensity of their relationship and by Bates's fears about their future, very much in the manner that Smith-Rosenberg (1975) described. In January 1888, for example, Bates wrote that she would gladly have exchanged vows with Scoville and embarked on what she calls a "Bohemian life," but she insisted that Scoville would be happier in a marriage to a man: KLB to Annie Beecher Scoville, January 13, 1888, Series I, Box 20, Folder 790. Papers of Annie Beecher Scoville (1866–1953), Beecher Family Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
23. KLB to Katharine Coman, February 24, 1891, Bates Papers, WCA. The letter was first cited in Schwartz (1979: 63).
24. KLB to Mary Russell Bartlett, January 3, 1910, Bates Papers, WCA.
25. For Bates's dedication to Hawthorne, see Ponder (1999).
26. See also Davidson (1904: xi–xii), Introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables*. In Hawthorne's text, George Edward Woodberry, whom Bates knew well, included a chapter on "The Chamber under the Eaves."
27. See above, note 13.
28. Brainerd was married to Mary Bowen, a scholar of English and Italian Renaissance literature, who received her PhD from the University of Chicago in 1897. Bowen resigned from her Wellesley post at the time of her wedding in 1906 (see Brainerd 2009).
29. Bates and her circle probably did not approve of preservationist Caroline Emmerton's efforts to "restore" the Turner-Ingersoll House in Salem as a tourist-oriented "House of Seven Gables," in 1907, but her scheme to use the proceeds from that venture to support a settlement house on the premises was ingenious (Conforti 2001: 248–62).
30. No biography of Brainerd exists: see note 13 above.

31. The volume includes examples of his work, i.e. the Bishop Cheverus School in East Boston, and the Daniels Grammar School in Malden, MA.
32. KLB to Arthur Bates, n.d. (probably September 11, 1907), Bates Papers, WCA.
33. KLB to Arthur Bates, n.d. (probably September 10, 1907), Bates Papers, WCA.
34. All of these objects were noted by Bates in a letter attached to her will: "Dear Mine Executors," "In Bohemia, October 11, 1928," Bates Papers, WCA.
35. Even Coman's doctors were part of their extended feminist circle: they included Dr Eliza Mosher, an 1875 alumna of the University of Michigan and a reformer in the field of women's health, and Dr Katharine Raymond, a 1905 graduate of the University of Michigan, Instructor of Hygiene and Wellesley's resident physician.
36. KLB to Abbie Farwell Brown, 1926, Brown Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.
37. Jane Addams to KLB, May 9, 1922, Bates Papers, WCA.

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