

MARJORY STONEMAN DOUGLAS'S RIVER OF PROGRESS:
MODERNISM, FEMINISM, REGIONALISM, AND ENVIRONMENTALISM
IN HER EARLY WRITINGS

By

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by

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Marjory Stoneman Douglas is most often lauded for her seminal 1947 best-seller *The Everglades: River of Grass* and for dedicating decades of her 108-year life to protecting Florida's Everglades. However, Douglas's early writings for both *The Miami Herald* and various popular magazines, particularly *The Saturday Evening Post*, merit a closer examination in order to understand how Douglas exemplifies a distinctive role in the realm of early twentieth-century American literature: a stylistically conservative author with progressive themes. Douglas's engaging narratives are written in a lucid and straightforward manner both due to her journalistic background and because of her practical approach to life and literature. This pragmatic philosophy enabled her to work within the system to effect change in the world both as a writer and as an activist. Her life as suffragist, a WWI Red Cross nurse, an environmental conservationist, and as a regionalist are mirrored in the themes and characters of the short stories she wrote from

the 1920s to the 1940s. In order to engage her audience in a progressive discourse about such topics as the New Woman and the importance of environmentally conscientious urban planning, Douglas used the South Florida of her time to attract readers interested in this seemingly exotic area of the United States. Douglas's fiction presents a complex balance between portraits of both the positive and negative attributes of the New South and the conflicts between the rural environment and the burgeoning Miami urban landscape. An examination of her short stories and columns also elucidates the way in which her early writings anticipate her work as a history-making environmentalist. An added bonus to a study of Douglas's engaging narratives is the fact that her early writings offer a home for Floridian readers, especially those in South Florida, who are marginalized in the American canon. Finally, this study also places Douglas's regional concerns inside a larger national dialogue regarding modernism, feminism, progressivism, and environmentalism in the United States during the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Celebrated environmentalist Marjory Stoneman Douglas is most frequently recognized for dedicating decades of her 108-year life to protecting Florida's Everglades. Yet Douglas's overlooked work as both a columnist for the burgeoning *The Miami Herald* from 1920 to 1923 and as a short-story writer for popular magazines between the 1920s and 1940s, particularly for *The Saturday Evening Post*, merits a closer examination in order to understand Douglas's place in early twentieth-century American literature. Douglas expressed her progressive beliefs not only in her sharp Maureen Dowd-like newspaper columns and in her vigorous life as an activist, but also in her literary fiction. Her short stories depict the New Woman and the tensions between urban and rural America, and they imply a strong advocacy of a localized, environmentally conscientious literature that vividly showcases American regions. An examination of her short stories and columns also elucidates the way in which her early writings anticipate her work as a history-making environmentalist. An added bonus to a study of Douglas's engaging narratives is the fact that her early writings offer a home for Floridian readers, especially those in South Florida, who are marginalized in the American canon.

As a great fan of Charles Dickens's novels, Douglas was inspired to weave social criticism and issues of social justice into her creative narratives. Lisi Schoenbach's analysis of Gertrude Stein's reliance on "gradualism, accretion, continuity, and recontextualization" as motifs for "a version of modernism that grows out of American pragmatism rather than out of a continental avant-garde tradition" (240) allows one to

understand how Douglas's texts are part of a larger, more nuanced approach to modernity within the canon of modernist American literature. Whether as a suffragist, an environmentalist, or a proponent of regionalist art and literature, Douglas's practical approach to modernism is expressed not only through her work as an activist, but in the themes, characters, and settings of her short stories, and less literarily, in her newspaper columns. Douglas's provocative life story marks her as a multi-tasking amalgamation of such contemporaries as Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, and muckraking journalist Ida Tarbell. Like Hemingway's stories, the style of Douglas's story was lucidly descriptive and eloquent. Similar to Cather's observations about the Midwest, Douglas saw an indelible connection between the pioneers of the New South and their environmental surroundings. Like Tarbell, Douglas used her platform as a journalist to expose political corruption, public crimes, and poignant controversies – interestingly enough, they both wrote about the extremes of the 1920s Florida land boom. But, unlike Tarbell, Douglas was a proud suffragist. Likewise, unlike many other writers, Douglas often put her fictional ideas into action. Not only did she live the life she preached about, but she also helped enact laws and form organizations that engendered widespread support for her philosophies.

This thesis will continually refer to Douglas's life in order to emphasize how the concrete issues of everyday life in early twentieth-century America affected the plots, themes, and issues of her short stories for *The Saturday Evening Post* and other publications. By examining her interactions with society as a modern progressive in tandem with her fictional and journalistic writings, one can see how Douglas's lived experience influenced the production of her uniquely forward-looking writings.

Douglas's texts were progressive in the way they promoted and advanced social causes such as independent single women, sustainable land development, and the protection of environmental resources long before such issues became mainstream concerns. Douglas's ability to express her progressive beliefs in measured, well-paced, subtle, and well-crafted plot lines made her an improbable fit for the nationally read *The Saturday Evening Post* and its iconic and conservative editor George Horace Lorimer. Nonetheless, her stories' presence in such a mainstream, some may even say kitschy, publication should not prevent her and her prolific writings from being considered within the realm of notable American modernist literature. In fact, the works of Hemingway and William Faulkner were often published alongside Douglas in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Furthermore, along with these authors she was also awarded the O. Henry Memorial prize for short stories.¹

Like Hemingway and Faulkner, Douglas was an American contemporary of Virginia Woolf. Unlike these two other writers, Douglas hewed closely to Woolf's groundbreaking dictum about what could be considered appropriate literary subject matters. Woolf's feminist cry in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" for the traditional "old decorums" of writing and her envy for the literary indolence of her "ancestors who, instead of spinning madly through mid-air, dreamt quietly in the shade with a book" (qtd. in Scholes 255) inspired her to write about supposedly uninteresting prosaic, feminine domestic subject matters. Although Woolf accomplished her goals by blazing a new trail in the literary community with her idiosyncratic stream-of-consciousness narrative, Douglas chose a simple and straightforward journalistic prose when writing about subject matters that were far removed from the epic battles of men so favored by Hemingway.

When Douglas did engage in more “manly” themes, such as war, she looked at such battles from the viewpoint of a woman. Thus, just as Woolf broke new ground by “simply” writing about an afternoon party in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Douglas writes about a female-operated beauty salon, a stepmother relishing in her stepson’s supposed financial ruin, and a rare deep freeze in South Florida’s agricultural community in order to employ the characters and events of these seemingly straightforward stories for more provocative reasons.

For example, in “Goodness Gracious, Agnes” Douglas’s usage of the haughty attitude of a Roaring Twenties party girl and an unfeminine woman’s attempt to stop illegal wildcat fights offer fertile ground for exploring such poignant topics as constructions of gender and the tensions between urban sophisticates and rural outlaws. Other equally non-epic subject matters of Douglas’s work include a flock of ibis, acres of Caribbean pineland, and a swampy lot of real estate. Fortunately, Douglas’s decidedly low-key and localized subject matters emerge in well-constructed plots that engage readers in a more forceful way than in Sarah Orne Jewett’s languid collection of sketches *The Country of The Pointed Firs*. Another reason Douglas became a successful and widely read short story writer was that unlike many other writers of the modern era, Douglas did not frustrate readers with enigmatic plotlines or unreadable character motivations. Again, her themes may have been progressive, but her writing style was traditional, cohesive, and well-structured.

The comparison between a literary goddess like Woolf and a regional environmentalist like Douglas may be easily scoffed at by literary purists. Yet, as Robert Scholes argues, literary historians should read texts on both sides of the supposed Great

Divide between “high” and “low” culture because “those fictions of entertainment and suspense considered trivial by virtually all our critics may repay more serious reading and study with surprising rewards” (255). Moreover, since we are approaching this divide from a postmodernist perspective that criticizes the existence of such a divide, Douglas’s work deserves equal examination. The rewards of such an undertaking include a better understanding of Florida’s distinctive literary scene during the time period, given Douglas’s ubiquitous inclusion in collections of Florida literature, and a clearer insight into how authors such as Douglas exemplify writers who were stylistically traditionally, yet used their literary works to explore progressive themes and ideas through conventional and entertaining means for a mass audience.

Douglas’s inability to be recognized at the ballot box and to be taken seriously as a WWI volunteer shaped the way in which she would go about making her mark in the world. In comparison to modern activists like Emma Goldman and Max Eastman, Douglas never advocated a wholesale revolt against capitalism, patriarchy, or the status quo. Rather, she attempted to remedy social ills within the system – usually with the help of women’s clubs when it came to her role as an activist. Douglas’s role as both a widely read newspaper columnist and short-story writer gave her the ability to shape and mold public discourse. Henry Nash Smith criticized regionalist literature as never being political enough when he said that the “regional movement never had much substance” (qtd. in Steiner 437). One wonders if Smith’s criticism would be assuaged by Douglas’s ability to take action on the very issues she wrote about in her literature as an agitator for social and environmental justice in her personal and political life even if others were not inspired to do so. The similarities between her life as a writer and an activist can even be

seen in the way she used her “feminine” charms and society’s old-fashion respect for women and, later in her life, the elderly, to listen to and heed her calls for environmental and social reform, just as she employed heart-warming happy endings to make her fierce New Woman protagonists more palatable to a mainstream audience.

In this examination of Douglas’s feminist and regionalist themes comes a hint of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism’s roots as a discipline and a coherent social movement are often traced to French feminist philosophies of the 1970s. Nonetheless, social constructions that link nature and women have abounded for millennia. From the prehistoric votive Venus of Willendorf statue to the popular 1990s TV cartoon series “Captain Planet” and its Whoopi Goldberg-voiced depiction of Gaia, ideas about Mother Nature, Mother Earth, and woman’s similarity to nature have always been popular tropes. During much of the 1980s and 1990s self-described ecofeminists often battled over whether one should attempt to dismantle mainstream notions that feminize nature or endeavor to reconceptualize notions about nature as a woman to inspire people to treat nature with more respect (Merchant 5). Contemporary ecofeminist discourse attempts to bridge this divide and form a closer union between the feminist and environmental movements in order to address their mutually pressing concerns.

The link between these movements can be found in the roots of ecofeminist thought. These roots lie in feminism’s belief that women have been dominated, oppressed, and exploited by men. Following this framework, ecofeminists acknowledge that this oppression is mirrored in the way nature has been repressed and subjugated by men. This connection is mirrored in Douglas biographer Jack E. Davis’s assertion that the evolution of Douglas’s environmental consciousness was shaped by understanding that

“humans and nature were part of a larger whole, and that the good health of one depended on the other. She grew to care about the Everglades in part because she cared about people” (Davis, “Green” 44). Although Douglas did not often deal with issues of racial prejudices or class differences in her short stories as later ecofeminists did, this study does not claim that Douglas was a comprehensive, full-fledged ecofeminist. Rather, this examination asserts that the themes, leitmotifs, and symbolism found in Douglas’s stories are precursors to and valuable resources for ecofeminist theories and their applications.

The application of such theoretical frameworks on Douglas’s work can be a fruitful production if one has an open mind for labels. Douglas’s feminist and environmentalist credentials are clear, but her amalgamated ecofeminist qualifications have been largely ignored, particularly in regards to her early fiction, because the time period she wrote in had no ecofeminist labels to utilize. Nonetheless, since literary scholars now interpret Early Modern writers such as Christine de Pizan and Margaret Cavendish as proto-feminists, it would not be far-fetched to group Douglas alongside Jewett and Cather as proto-ecofeminists. Any label will never fit anyone perfectly. This inability to squarely describe someone’s ideology is especially true for Douglas. How does one place her as a feminist given the conflict between her role as a suffragist and her reluctance to act like or portray a sexually adventurous modern woman? Furthermore, can we classify Douglas as a modernist because of her work on behalf of progressive beliefs as an activist, given her distaste for the writing style of self-described modernists and for the technological creations of modernity such as the air-conditioner, the automobile, and film? These are provocative questions because they offer no firm answers. Neither does Douglas. Rather,

we must approach these labels, feminist, eco-feminist, regionalist, and modernist, as handy frameworks or lenses through which to consider Douglas's early writings.

The act of using labels may seem prohibitive and limiting, but if one believes that wearing different hats allows one to belong to different clubs, then the various labels, categories, or realms that one identifies with Douglas's life and writings permit one to see how multifaceted, inclusive, and contradictory Douglas was. Furthermore, the contradictions of these identities also allow one to study the gray areas that develop in the shadows of these crossroads. Douglas tactfully described her unique persona in a 1979 interview with *The Orlando Sentinel*: "I think that, primarily, I'm an individual. . . . I think I'm something of my own, but I couldn't characterize it. I'm not a conformist. . . . Frankly, I'm a pretty modern woman. My thinking is up to date. In fact, in some ways, I'm ahead of some people" (Hicks 10). Douglas's insistence on classifying herself as a knowledgeable "modern woman" who cannot be easily characterized personifies her as an almost stereotypical modernist despite her distaste for some of the movement's artificial accoutrements. Douglas also praised her modernist credentials in a 1977 interview with *The Palm Beach Post* when she claimed, "Philosophically, I'm a modernist. I don't believe in a dual world. I don't believe there are many of us monists left" (Harakas 4). Furthermore, one can delight in such laconic quotes and quips from Douglas when one considers how the former suffragist declared in the 1920s that she had abandoned party politics and quit voting. The paradoxes become even more intriguing when one calls up the Supervisor of Elections Office in Dade County and finds that Douglas, a registered Democrat, voted as late as the presidential election of 1996, according to county records (White).² Incongruities may abound in placing superficial

labels such as “feminist,” “environmentalist,” and “proto-ecofeminist” on Douglas, but they are imperative and useful trail markers in this analysis of Douglas’s life and works.

Notes

¹ I must note that there are few extensive studies of Douglas’s fictional work, especially any that might be structured within a thorough literary or scholarly framework. Hence, this examination has been aided primarily by three published anthologies of Douglas’s work, each of which includes only brief editorial material. I have also worked with the special archives department at the University of Miami’s Richter Library, which houses Marjory Stoneman Douglas’s papers. This rich collection is *the* place for any Douglas scholar. Donated by Douglas herself, it contains printed copies of nearly every one of her short stories, manuscripts, personal photographs, correspondence, and other helpful material.

² According to White, the county’s voting records go as far back as 1972, and their voter registration records go as far back as 1946. Thus, we cannot tell whether Douglas resumed voting prior to 1972, although she did vote in an election that year.

CHAPTER 2 DOUGLAS'S EARLY LIFE AND THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

Douglas's progressive political beliefs stemmed largely from her family background and her own personal upbringing. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on April 7, 1890, to Florence Lillian Trefethen and Frank Bryant Stoneman, Douglas was extremely proud of her French ancestry and liberal Quaker roots. Mr. Stoneman attended Carleton College with Thorstein Veblen, the intellectual who coined the term "conspicuous consumption." Stoneman often reminded Douglas about her aunt Katie and her husband Levi Coffin, who were leaders of the Underground Railroad. Douglas's pride in this portion of her background, as well as the fact that she later lived in a "very female society" when she moved to Taunton, Massachusetts, became the groundwork for some of her later progressive beliefs.

As part of Wellesley College's graduating class of 1912, Douglas felt constrained by the educated woman's prospects, which she felt were limited to becoming a teacher. Restless and desiring a drastic change from her family life in Taunton, Douglas married a man 30 years her senior, Kenneth Douglas. Douglas lived in Newark, New Jersey and Manhattan with her husband. She slowly realized how precarious his financial standing was as the couple moved from hotel to hotel like a pair of vagabonds. Upset over being "completely dominated" in her marriage and embarrassed by her husband's incarceration for bouncing a check, Douglas was rescued by her estranged father, who sent for her to live with him and his new wife in Miami, Florida, a burgeoning Southern town of nearly 15,000 people. Douglas remained single for the rest of her life, enjoying the

independence and freedom that her status as a woman free from a husband and children gave her. In a 1920 column for the *Herald* Douglas quipped, “We are beginning to think that the people who, in this late day, insist on saying that woman’s place is in the home, must be housing profiteers” (Davis, Wide 100).

When Douglas arrived in Miami in 1915, she began writing articles for her father’s newspaper, *The Miami Herald*. Unlike the plethora of firmly leftist writers and artists of modernist circles who were anti-war, Douglas was actually inspired by the United States’ entry into WWI. Douglas’s favorable view of the United States’ entrance into WWI is representative of the majority of Miamians’ feelings about the war. According to a May 16, 1918, article from *The Miami Herald* entitled “Miami Deeply Moved By Beast of Berlin,” hundreds of moviegoers left the Paramount movie house “boiling mad with rage at Wilhelm II” after viewing “the wonderful seven-reel feature film, ‘The Kaiser – The Beast of Berlin’” (Parks and Bush 65). War bonds were popular buys and large, building-sized war propaganda lined the city streets. When Douglas was sent on an assignment to report on the first Floridian woman to enlist with the Navy, she found herself raising her hand, taking an oath, and becoming the subject of her article. Douglas’s hopes for being able to serve her nation in a meaningful way were dashed, however, when she was assigned to grant boat licenses from a pier in Miami and to act as a secretary to officers by typing up the letters they would dictate to her. After rebelling against the commanding officers who complained that she re-wrote their words too artfully, Douglas showed up late several times to her secretarial duties without fear of being put in the brig because the Navy had no official penalties for women. She received an honorable discharge when she quit after a year in the service. At the age of 98, during a 1988 interview with University

of Florida professor Kevin McCarthy, Douglas looked back at her impulsive military enrollment and claimed that “those buzzards on the Key West enlisting boat brainwashed me” (McCarthy 2).

Nonetheless, Douglas still clamored for a more active role in America’s efforts in the war; thus she joined the American Red Cross and was assigned to the Civilian Relief department in Paris in 1918. In Voice of the River, Douglas describes how her encounters with war refugees profoundly affected her outlook on humanity. In 1923 she used this experience to illustrate the famished physiognomies of starving babies in order to set up a citywide baby milk fund for Miami through her column in *The Miami Herald*. In comparing her WWI experiences with those of Hemingway in her autobiography, Douglas contemplates the psychological effect that the retreat from Caporetto had on Hemingway. Douglas wryly lauds Hemingway for his ability to match his “terse, epigrammatic style” with his “terse, bare conclusion” about humanity following his involvement with the Italian forces (Voice, 118). On the one hand, Douglas’s comment may be interpreted as her grudging resentment for being unable to experience dangerous situations like her male counterparts in the war. On the other hand, attributing her opinion about Hemingway’s cynical attitude to her optimistic Quaker sensibilities would be more fitting. Indeed, although Douglas was stylistically conservative and her writings are not permeated by the incessant pessimism of other modernists such as T. S. Eliot, John Dos Passos, or Ezra Pound, Douglas’s lucid prose does possess a subtle resemblance to Hemingway’s – most obviously due to the pair’s background as newspaper journalists. Douglas remarks in her autobiography that when compared to Hemingway, she was “tied

into the mainstream” that he was “estranged” from: “I couldn’t write in that bare, stark way in which a story begins like a slap in the face” (Voice, 185).

Following her return from Europe, Douglas was appointed as a daily columnist for *The Miami Herald*. Douglas published her column, “The Galley,” between March 7, 1920, and July 31, 1923. Although the editors wanted her to adhere to the stringent “sexual division of labor in the newspaper trade” (Davis 153) by writing about issues such as city beautification that fell within a woman’s sphere, Douglas covered such current events as Miami’s failed attempt to become the “Hollywood of the East,” provided political commentary on President Harding’s verbal gaffes and his administration’s policy decisions, and promoted progressive literature and social movements. Douglas admits in her autobiography that one of the reasons she left the newspaper business was that a doctor’s diagnosis of “nerve fatigue” forced her to realize how many anxieties she felt about meeting daily newspaper deadlines. She desired a more leisurely, writerly pace. Furthermore, Douglas’s writing tastes had always leaned more toward a poetic than journalistic flavor. She later told a reporter for *The Palm Beach Post* in 1978, “I never was a good reporter. Father used to send me out on a story and I’d come back with three sunsets and an editorial” (Harakas 4). This quote implies that Douglas enjoyed more creative outlets for her musings. Also, she enjoyed expressing a message of social importance to a large audience through her writing.

Having already found success selling witty aphorisms to magazines, Douglas repeated her publishing feats when she decided to quit her job as a columnist and begin working as a short-story writer for a wide array of magazines. Douglas’s accomplishment positions her as a Florida regionalist alternative to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who was

“unable to break into the literary market” whenever she attempted to sell her short fiction to popular magazines during the same time period (Shaw 14). Although Rawlings was also a journalist, she derided the “purple prose” of young creative writers and did not successfully break into a more creative stride as a writer until the 1930s. At that point Douglas was already halfway into her career as a nationally recognized short story writer. Douglas remarked in a 1977 interview that “That was a great era for the short story. My agent could take a story turned down one place and sell it someplace else. Very rarely did I do a story that didn’t get published” (Harakas 4).

Around the same time that Douglas began making the shift to a professional short story writer, she decided to move out of her father and stepmother’s house and have an environmentally sound cottage that took advantage of Miami’s ocean breezes built for herself. Her success as a short story writer made this venture possible for a single woman like Douglas, as she dubbed the house the home that *The Saturday Evening Post* built. It should be noted that the location of Douglas’s house, in the village of Coconut Grove, allows one to more comfortably identify her as a modern artist. Although a far cry from New York’s Greenwich Village or Paris’s Montmartre neighborhood, the Grove was home to writers, painters, artists, and naturalists for a large part of the early twentieth century. Douglas wrote most of her stories in her small cottage in a neighborhood she described as “a kind of half garden, half community” populated by people who “came from everywhere and had experienced many things. They were writers and painters, but it wasn’t a colony, just a collection of sympathetic individuals” (Voice, 171). Douglas created a spartan and enjoyable life for herself in Miami’s version of Bohemia in the 1920s and lived there until her death.

Douglas's decades-long run with *The Saturday Evening Post* (June 1924 – February 1941) coincided with the reign of the magazine's most famous editor, George Horace Lorimer. Lorimer's stringent opposition to labor unions and other progressive ideas tainted his interpretation of a class-free American audience for his magazine. Fortunately, his belief in "pragmatic and self-reliant" (Cohn 10) Americans, however naïve, served as a suitable outlet for Douglas to add her spin on issues concerning the United States, and particularly South Florida, during the halcyon days of the magazine business. However, the other half of Lorimer's definition of an American, one who is "dedicated to his own social and economic betterment," did not always mesh well with Douglas's egalitarian progressive beliefs and her support of state-run attempts at helping the impoverished (Cohn 10). To be fair, Lorimer's beliefs were complex. He deemed "the idea of class" as "the enemy of progress" and abhorred the "wealthy and idle, often expatriated, who sneered at a nation dedicated to work and to money" (Cohn 10). The clash between the sensibilities of Lorimer's conservative stance on what constituted an American and those of modernists like Emma Goldman, Max Eastman, and other radicals also harmonized with Douglas's own practicality. So, following Schoenbach's contrast between the European avant-garde tradition and a modernism grown out of American pragmatism, Lorimer's distaste for the "radical thinking and experimental art" (Cohn 14) of the intelligentsia offered Douglas a reliable medium through which she could express her own sober version of modernism to a nationwide audience.

Douglas set some of her stories in foreign locales she had visited, such as the Balkans, Cuba, and France, but exotic Florida was the main draw for the readers of Lorimer's magazine. More importantly, Douglas cannot be criticized as a profit-driven

booster who wrote about Florida through rose-tinted glasses, for her stories dealt with murder, disastrous hurricanes, violent gangsters, and duplicitous real estate agents. Since Douglas had no contract with the *Post*, each story had to sell on its own merit. Douglas was happy with her role as an independent writer because she detested “being told what to do” and she preferred to be regarded as an “individual rather than an employee or a female” (Voice, 170). Furthermore, when it came to women’s rights, the politics of the *The Saturday Evening Post* showed slow, but promising progress that appealed to Douglas. For example, whereas a 1904 editorial claimed that the liberated woman was not one who was educated but one who was freed from daily work by her husband’s wealth, by 1913 the *Post* was arguing for higher wages for women laborers. Lorimer seems to have been influenced by Adeliade Neall, one of his appointed editors, with whom Douglas shared a close friendship (Cohn 76).

Although literary giants like F. Scott Fitzgerald were lambasted for ruining their potential by wasting time with magazines, the steady income such ventures promised allowed these writers to sustain themselves as creative individuals and make a name for themselves (Davis Life, 4). Under Lorimer’s leadership the *Post* became arguably the most popular periodical in the nation, with nearly three million subscribers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Douglas enjoyed writing for the *Post* and would sometimes work on more than two stories at one time. Although she admits in her autobiography that Lorimer preferred a certain formula to guide the *Post’s* stories, Douglas soon broke free from Lorimer’s prescription and was still rewarded with constant publication in his magazine. Her compensation for her stories started out at \$500 and reached a peak of \$1,200 (Davis, Life 11). In fact, one of the reasons Lorimer might have enjoyed

Douglas's stories so much was that she deftly painted the environmental landscapes of her stories. Environmental historian Robert Gottlieb explains that Lorimer was an essential wilderness and national park supporter during the early part of the twentieth century (32). However, Douglas did not only count on Lorimer for her success. As Douglas biographer Jack E. Davis notes, Douglas's short stories were "not lost in the crowd" of the twenty serialized novels and 437 short stories the *Post* published in 1927, since three of her stories were selected for publication in two O. Henry Memorial Award collections (Davis, Life 17).

CHAPTER 3 THE NEW WOMAN AND NATURE

The issues that Douglas engaged in as an activist were often mirrored in her literary themes. Perhaps no other aspect of Douglas's writings is more progressive than her portrayal of the New Woman. Douglas's role as a suffragist is well documented in Florida history. She appeared before a joint session of Florida's legislature in 1917 with veteran women's rights advocates in a failed attempt to convince the state to ratify the 19th Amendment. Douglas described these men as the "wool-hat boys in the red hills beyond the Suwannee" (Voice, 107). The legislators' disregard for Douglas and her suffragist friends inspired Douglas to continue her support of equal rights for women by continually depicting women who were independent and successful. In her columns for *The Miami Herald*, Douglas often wrote humorous one-liners regarding the new role of women in the United States, such as the poignant "Suffrage may have permitted women to become candidates for office but it is the high cost of millinery that is keeping their hats out of the ring" (Wide, 97). Her one-liners proved popular enough that she hired an agent to sell her aphorisms for \$100 apiece to various magazines such as the highly regarded *Smart Set*, which was edited by H. L. Mencken, a well-known cynical literary critic and master of acerbic one-liners.

Douglas's witty rejoinders to the statements of misogynistic politicians were as common in her columns as the presence of strong and independent women were in her fiction. Such characters include the bossy salon entrepreneur Augusta McCann in "At Home on the Marcel Waves," the pioneer woman Sarah McDevitt in "Pineland," and the

savvy and frugal businesswoman Joanna Moreton in “Stepmother.” In a clear autobiographical echo, all of these women were originally born and raised in the North and all three relocated to Florida. After having been separated from their husbands either through untimely deaths or by choice, they enjoyed themselves as single, self-sufficient women. In a demonstration of Douglas’s no-nonsense sensibilities, she was aware of avoiding the clichés of being a bitter feminist in either real life or in the relationships between the sexes depicted in her short stories. Although Douglas was disillusioned with the promises of marriage after her divorce, she did maintain several love interests over the years. Likewise, while the single women in her stories may mock the ego and greed of men, these missives are not delivered in a misanthropic style.

For example, in 1924’s “At Home on the Marcel Waves” (Douglas’s first short-story for *The Saturday Evening Post*), the salon owner Julia Trimble remarks, “I’m sure I can’t think of a thing we might need a man for, that a woman couldn’t do better” (34). With this character in particular, Douglas goes so far as to explore same-sex desire, albeit in a subtle manner. When Julia sleeps after having been bossed around by the overbearing Augusta regarding the manner in which she manages her salon, Julia is “conscious of seeing Augusta scrubbing herself in cold water, her great body like that of some warm marble goddess come to life in the shadows. Funny, Miss Julia thought vaguely, in the idiom of New England, how only that morning she would have been ashamed to look at a bare-naked woman. Now she had to confess that it was sort of beautiful” (27). The female camaraderie that develops at the salon in this story and in different settings in other stories reflects her belief in the positive aspects of female homosocial, and possibly homosexual, bonds.

In the 1925 short-story “A Bird Dog in the Hand,” Douglas artfully presents her classic independent heroine as a case study of the promises and pitfalls of New Womanhood. The protagonist, Pomona Brown, is “the latest thing in feminine types” (27). Pomona’s combination of New Woman spirit and capitalist impulses has been passed down to her by what Douglas cheekily describes as “bachelor girls, salamanders, baby vamps, flappers and gold diggers” (27). Yet Douglas notes that when compared to these more stereotypically feminine women, Pomona “remains herself, more modern, more efficient, the most hard-boiled . . . to sell real estate” (27). Douglas’s tone is twofold here; while she celebrates the independent woman, she also criticizes her capitalist excesses. Since Pomona is described as attempting to sell acres of natural landscapes, this story reveals a clever twist regarding woman’s connection with nature. Douglas offers a crafty reversal of gender expectations. Pomona is showcased as one of Miami’s ruthless real estate agents, the majority of which were men, rather than as a woman who acts as a guardian of nature because she feels an innate connection to it. The man, George Henry, serves as her intellectual, sensitive leftist foil.

George’s leftist tendencies emerge as he thinks “long cool thoughts on the single tax, the chaos of new cities, the pernicious result of speculation in land values, the effect of sudden fortune upon civic character” and “the debasing result of the greed for land upon national culture” (25). His progressive beliefs mirror Douglas’s own and represent some of the more candidly liberal sociopolitical rhetoric espoused by Douglas in her writings. The story deals with George’s interaction with Pomona (the “bird dog” real estate agent) over a piece of land known as Shields near the Everglades. Pomona tries to sell George some property despite his lengthy harangue about the evils of owning land.

George becomes enraged when he realizes that she did not listen to a word he said.

Pomona then lambastes him, condemning him as a hypocrite who has never earned a dollar in his life and who would never even be in Florida if it were not for people like her who “advertised it and sold land” (37). Later on, Pomona regrets attempting to exploit his naiveté, becomes enamored of him, and is saddened to learn that she influenced him to buy the Shields land in order to prove that he was not as spineless as she accused him of being.

When Pomona becomes infuriated at George’s rash decision to buy the land, she finally admits what most real estate agents and land speculators of the time would not. She tells George that he went and spent “good cash money on the worst swamp in Florida” (37). The story then satirizes the decorative and exotic names that real estate agents often bestowed on tracts of property during the Florida land boom in order to make them more palatable investments. Douglas creates “Tropical Townsites,” “Palmyra Plaza,” “Ocean Acres,” and “Vallambrosa Gardens, the Suburb Astounding” to mirror the exciting names concocted for Miami neighborhoods and suburbs such as “Opa Locka,” “Miami Springs,” “Pinecrest,” and “Coral Gables, the City Beautiful,” all of which bear no resemblance to a true description of the area and its natural surroundings.

Although Pomona may regard the Shields land as a wasteland, Douglas tills the land for its true natural charms. As George and Pomona drive for hours to see the Shields property that George has purchased, the pair experience the “pine smells and the smells of palmetto blossoms and the reedy, watery fragrance of the open swales” as they coast along a long road near Florida City. The road seems to have “been completed just that morning for their especial benefit” (40). Douglas cleverly emphasizes the recent birth of

the road to demonstrate how quickly the real estate boom began to devour once uninhabited land and encroach on the “marching armies” of Caribbean pine that once retreated from the city but “now advances straight to the road edge” (40). As the couple nears the property, Douglas eloquently describes the land and its effect on the pair: “All there was to look at was sky and flat earth, and yet they were so filled with the very essence of all light, with the very salt and vigor of the salt winds, that it had upon the two in the car the effect of a great heightening of experience” (41). The beauty of Douglas’s work here is that she confronts the usual complaints about South Florida’s seemingly flat and monotonous landscape and then justifies its existence by highlighting its charms and its liveliness. She describes soaring eagles, colorful clusters of live oak and mangrove hammocks, and swooping canal birds.

Interestingly enough, even though Pomona was set up as a character who simply wants to sell land despite any concerns about either the ethics behind private property or the stress new construction would put on the natural environment, George soon embodies the stereotypical land-hungry, avaricious man. Upon seeing the property George draws in a deep breath and murmurs, “That mine? . . . All that mine? . . . Why, I – I never dreamed –” (42). George is speechless as he walks around and surveys his land. Even the “quaking earth” of “thick mud” that is the Everglades and the “murderous edges of the saw grass” (43) that populate it do not hinder George’s new outlook on owning property. George is first described as a young thinking man who proclaims that owning land “when there are others who can’t own it would be going against my deepest principles” (36). His transformation is complete after he boasts of himself as a man who will use environmentally harmful drainage and dikes and “lots of money” to make his property

hospitable for modern development and human habitation (47). Douglas must have chosen to create a freethinking character like George early on in the story in order to demonstrate how even the most idealistic and noble of people could lose their principles in the face of Miami's property boom, and, in general, a mainstream society that desired fortune above all things during the economically prosperous 1920s.

Pomona briefly recoils at the possibility of living in such a swampy area when she intelligently mentions the land's link to an ecological ground further north: "You can't drain this land in a thousand years. It isn't enough above sea level. The water won't run off. And when Lake Okeechobee fills and overflows it's like opening a water faucet on it" (46). George, however, represents the government-backed initiatives to "reclaim" the Everglades during that time period when he assuages her concerns by advocating draining the area of its blood, water, as he tells Pomona "You've heard of Holland, of course. I've been studying this proposition too. It'll take a system of canals and dikes" (46). One may be perplexed as to why George is depicted as the mature hero of the story, given Douglas's conservation consciousness. At this time Douglas, and much of America, had yet to understand how the natural world functions as an ecological system of networks rather than as isolated locations. Douglas actually advocated the draining of certain areas and championed the construction of the Tamiami Trail, which cut off the Everglades' connection with Lake Okeechobee with a stretch of asphalt. Douglas later regretted her uninformed support for such projects (Davis "Conservation," 306).

Troublingly, the omniscient narrator does not chastise George for his desire to own land. George places himself in a long tradition of patriarchal control over nature after he informs Pomona that "The money my father and grandfather left me came from land.

Land is my heritage. It's in my blood" (48). Additionally, the narrator then adds that George's face seemed "sterner, more bleak, controlled, as if the toil and hazards of his undertaking were already working upon him, sweating off the softness, replacing it with the clean hard look of a man" (48). Thus, George's masculinization is framed in a positive manner – he has lost his feminine concern about the environment and the evils of capitalism and has become a manly man who now possesses the required virility to propose to Pomona. Furthermore, this story is a strong forerunner for some ecofeminist philosophies in that it does not immediately connect Pomona with nature. Pomona wants to treat the land as a commodity and only comes to its defense, albeit very weakly, when she has actually spent time with it. Thus, Douglas does not see women as innately or intrinsically tied to nature; rather, she wants women to be as aware of their natural surroundings as she wishes men to be. These authorial desires are in tune with an ecofeminist tenant that seeks "a biocentric rather than an anthropocentric viewpoint" of the value inherent in nature as well as an end to "dualisms like male/female" (Gates 21).

The last two paragraphs of this story are especially perplexing in light of Douglas's biography and her view about women and marriage. George demands that Pomona marry him: "You've got to marry me . . . You weren't living any more than I was. You're turning into a real woman" (48). As George becomes harder, Pomona becomes softer and loses her steely, business-like resolve. Although her loss of capitalistic impulses may be a good progression, Pomona's last lines showcase her as embarrassingly submissive and inadequate as Viola when she mutely acquiesces to Orsino's proposal in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: "I guess I don't know—anything. But if you think you can teach me, so that I'll be some good to you—oh, George, please, I'll love you that way myself—all the

rest of my life” (48). One is left wondering why Douglas chose such a resolution. Despite the story’s constant jibes against capitalism and Douglas’s creation of a clever businesswoman, the ending suggests that when a woman is not the sole protagonist of one of Douglas’s stories, the woman will end up as the submissive pair in a heterosexual relationship. Furthermore, the quick manner in which this pairing is showcased highlights the fact that Douglas was not interested in the romantic lives of her characters. She might have concocted such endings either to please her audience or her editor; nonetheless, the way in which they are thrown in at the end shows that Douglas preferred to concentrate on more weighty issues and simply appease the mainstream society she was attempting to reform with palatable romantic endings.

Douglas’s criticisms of Pomona’s cutthroat business style and her initial inability to “believe in anything she could not cash at the bank” (30), are complemented by Douglas’s hilarious jabs at the self-styled modernists in the 1925 short story “Goodness Gracious, Agnes.” Before joining *The Miami Herald* as a full-time columnist, Douglas spent a brief time in New York’s Greenwich Village following her return from WWI. It is here, following the trajectory of Christine Stansell’s American Moderns, that Douglas must have encountered the “marketable copies of bohemians” who “enacted their bohemia personae for the benefit of tourists” (334). With this understanding of counterfeit modernists, it is no surprise that Douglas uses Anita Loos-like language to satirize the self-appointed “moderns” of the early 1920s. Narrated by the young, ambitious, and flirtatious Vivian, the first pages of 1925’s “Goodness Gracious, Agnes” prove a hilarious critique of modernist sophists:

Of course, as Brother always insists, being ultramodern people, we are absolutely adaptable. We can keep a shop in Greenwich Village and express ourselves in painted lamp shades and tissue-paper dancing dolls with charm and distinction, if we have to, or we can be the most complete aristocrats. . . . Brother is absolutely never shocked at anything, and at the same time he is terribly fastidious. Women rave about his pale skin and his silky Van Dyke beard. . . . They rave about the way he has sacrificed himself for his art. I mean, he is really a sculptor, but he insists that he will not degrade his art by working in anything but marble, and, of course, we have never been able to afford marble yet. (70)

Douglas continues to ape the diction and style that Loos employs for the protagonist of Gentleman Prefer Blondes, Lorelei Lee, in Vivian's mentioning Charles Baudelaire's The Flowers of Evil - yet another modernist stereotype: "I had [Agnes] read to me Baudelaire's The Flowers of Evil, which is so wonderfully sophisticated, until I happened to think it might shock her, and after all, one has to cultivate one's background. She was very quiet about it and only said that Petronius had done it better, but, of course, I knew she was shocked" (74). The New England native Agnes is depicted as the authentic intellectual in comparison to Vivian's flighty "ultramodernist" pretensions. Vivian and her brother are shocked that Agnes rejects the latest fashions and opts to dress in dull white linen with khaki trousers and a "crumpled khaki coat" (76). With her square shoulders, pointed nose, and bright black eyes, masculine Agnes is a sharp contrast to the hyperfeminine Vivian. Apart from the physical characteristics, Agnes's involvement with the humane society and her role as a deputized vigilante who attempts to stop illegal dog-

and-wild cat fights mark her as someone concerned with and active in progressive causes, unlike the superficial Vivian. Perversely enough for Vivian, Agnes attracts the attention of more than one man despite her masculine and eccentric attributes. In the end, Douglas has the traditionally beautiful Vivian admit that she is jealous of Agnes's independence as she begins concocting a plan to have the man she is interested in, Edward, "admire me as much as he did [Agnes]" (92). This narrative, with its satiric features, showcases Douglas's relationship to modernity. While enamored of its liberating promises for women's rights, Douglas was not a fan of the arrogant stylistic artifice that defined so many of the acclaimed artists of the modern era. As a representative of Stansell's bohemian copies, Vivian's adoration of bohemian chic and modernist allure demonstrate Douglas's distaste for such pretensions.

In an intriguing comparison with the superficial Vivian, Douglas's Anna Brunner in 1937's "The Story of a Homely Woman" exhibits the best possibilities of New Womanhood. In what is obviously an autobiographically-inspired story, Anna is a WWI Red Cross volunteer in France. The narrator, a beautiful young woman, expresses astonishment at how homely Anna looks with her "bony shoulders," "twisted mouth," and a uniform that fits so badly the narrator wonders "Gracious, does mine look like that?" (10). Anna even admits, "When he saw what I looked like, my father never spoke to me again" (10). The autobiographical influence is clear in Douglas's confession that when she arrived in Miami at the age of 25, after not having seeing her father since she was six years old, Mr. Stoneman "expected a pretty girl, but now I wasn't . . . he took a good look at me and then started to back up – a slight and almost imperceptible jerk backward" (96). Nonetheless, just as Mr. Stoneman overlooked his daughter's plain

appearance, elated Frenchmen hug and kiss Anna while she stands by a statue of Joan of Arc after the announcement of the Armistice.

The narrator runs into Anna intermittently over the next few years as the two women are assigned to different locations by the Red Cross. Each time the narrator runs into Anna, she witnesses men taking more interest in Anna. Douglas's subject matter may be interpreted in two ways here. Firstly, she celebrates the abilities of a woman to transform herself when given agency to behave as she pleases in her professional and personal life. People not only view Anna differently, she begins to see the world differently: "She wasn't any better looking, but her eyes were wide, as if she were beginning to use them to look out of" (11). Anna flourishes as a strong and well-respected coordinator of Red Cross regiments. Her skills as an organizer and leader of large operations and staffs allow her to bloom as any man would in the business world. Secondly, Douglas allows her character to feel beautiful after being freed from the superficial aesthetics of gender construction in a depressed and war-torn region populated by emaciated refugees and a surplus of men. Anna enjoys the romantic interest of men, even Americans, who are removed from the stereotypes and sexist depictions of women in mainstream media and are returned to more primitive and rational standards of attraction focused on companionship and compatibility.

For example, at one point the narrator lauds Anna for her uninviting looks: "Prettiness would have been an insult there, where peace had worked its miracle. Only strength was good, and serenity and tenderness. It was there, like a great thought spoken, in her face" (12). Anna has been allowed to bloom away from the mainstream standards that mark her as "homely." In a place where only close connections matter, she becomes

a beauty in the eyes of others and herself. At the end of the story Anna has become a popular lounge performer who makes limited appearances at exclusive clubs where she sings and recites poems. Although Anna still possesses “the same homely face,” her new found creative spirit has animated her face so that “when she thought of beauty, she was beautiful” (58). This celebration of spirit over artifice is a motif of many of Douglas’s stories.

“The Story of a Homely Woman” is not exclusively plot-driven - rather, Douglas offers a careful study of the protagonist and her development. As the narrator realizes that “underneath lay the true change, in the mind, in the self” (58), readers can see that the narrator has understood that Anna’s development as an individual has graced her with enough self-confidence and inner strength to make her appear beautiful on the outside despite mainstream standards of beauty. Like Woolf’s small-scaled subject matter, Douglas achieves a significant goal in offering a discourse about the possibilities of New Womanhood, albeit a narrowly heteronormative version of New Womanhood, with a simple, quick-paced narrative revolving around the protagonist’s intermittent glimpses of a woman over the course of a few years.

Another story told from the perspective of women involved in WWI efforts is “The Third Woman,” which was published in the June 5, 1927, Sunday magazine edition of *The Boston Herald*. The protagonist Annie Basset mirrors Douglas’s real-life story in being “the newest recruit to the Balkan service from unadventurous baby clinics and American headquarters at Paris” (5). Furthermore, as in her newspaper column, Douglas takes advantage of her experience with the malnourished children of the region to craft an engaging read. However, this time her realistic flourishes enhance the dramatic

background of Annie's story. Annie's concern about a misogynistic comment a Marlow-like colonel made, "Two out of every three women are savages under the skin" (5), overshadows her interest in the "six babies who had been brought in looking like little wizened, starved old men" (5). The chauvinistic man impedes the women's life-saving work. As the story progresses, Annie and her friend Simone are both depicted as self-reliant yet selfless New Women who leave the comforts of Paris for the grueling work of Red Cross nurses in the Balkans while simultaneously maintaining their exciting love lives. Thus, Annie and Simone are paragons of Douglas's twentieth-century woman because of their ability to lead independent yet altruistic lives. Although this story does not rely on a natural setting for its impact, this combination of worldly, cosmopolitan and maternal women posits Douglas as a more traditional feminist, and ecofeminist, who values the potential of women as intelligent and nurturing leaders and caretakers for both society and the environment.

The third nurse, the middle-aged Julia, is scandalized because she does not believe that Simone is properly married. Julia imagines that Simone left Paris under shameful circumstances. As a result, Julia begins to imply that Simone has fallen in love with one of their Balkan patients, Yovanko. When Simone disappears for more than a day, Julia claims that Simone has run off with Yovanko even though she is already "married." When Simone returns, everyone learns that Julia did not relay Simone's message that she had gone off to help Yovanko's pregnant wife. Annie curtly tells Julia that she is a "cold, bitter, jealous, malicious woman" (7) and realizes that the colonel's comment was correct. In an interesting inversion of the remark, Annie envisions Julia as an antiquated, Victorian "savage," and satirically labels herself as the second "savage" after she informs

Julia that she would throw her off the cliff they are standing on if she was not already making plans to leave the Red Cross unit shortly. Thus, rather than accepting the colonel's remarks about women's innate incivility, Douglas has her protagonist define herself as a modern woman who is more sophisticated than her stuffy Victorian antecedents. This story's melodramatic plot and its three feisty female characters veer towards the shallow end of Douglas's short-story repertoire; nonetheless, it reveals her ability to traverse both "high" and "low" written culture, and her pride in women who act in a genuinely modern fashion.

Likewise, one of Douglas's later stories, 1935's "A Flight of Ibis," represents one of her most eloquent examples of nature writing and her forward-thinking proto-ecofeminist ideas about women and their connections with nature. The story omnisciently narrates the tale of a young man, Joe Harper, who is attempting to photograph illegal bird hunters in the Everglades. His love interest, Mary Sue Martin, accidentally reveals Joe's secret location of one of the area's few remaining ibis rookeries to local bad boy and bird hunter Leroy Pennock, who intimidates others with his "iron, crushing" inorganic arms (68). The lightning-like flash of Joe's camera in the opaque darkness of the Everglades night eventually captures the outlaws in the act and saves the ibis colony. Again, the plot may be simple, but the meaning and language suggest more complexity.

Concerned about the excessive hunting of birds for feathers plucked to ornament women's hats, Douglas skillfully develops a powerful pathos on behalf of ibises. At first the omniscient narrator rhythmically describes the "serene" ibises with a seemingly maternal care: they hide in their lush mangrove "stronghold" with "their long curved beaks clapping and croaking" amidst the "last shafts of sunset" that color the Everglades

landscape (61). In sharp contrast, Douglas graphically describes “two rookeries of egrets shot up by the plume hunters in the spring breeding season, the nests full of dead fledglings, the piles of stripped adult bodies left rotting for the buzzards and the ants” (61). This muckraker-like description echoes Douglas’s work as a columnist. Later on in the story Douglas describes men like the plume hunters as a brute “force,” “dark,” “careless,” who think “they own this country” (65). The protagonist, Joe, is more respectful and cognizant of the fragility of the habitat’s ecosystem. He humbly realizes his connection to nature’s enormity when the “tiny eye of his fire was lost in the enormous dark and silence of the Everglades” (62). As the protagonist of the tale, Joe does not equate being surrounded by nature as a reason for violence or breaking the law. Douglas biographer Davis asserts that not all nature writers simply write about nature because of nature. Rather, Douglas’s link between the exploitation of nature and humans emanates from “progressive-era social sensibilities that deplored wanton violence, thoughtlessness, and chicanery” (24).

Many of Douglas’s characters achieve a psychological understanding and realization about themselves and their place in the world during their immersion in a natural environment. Joe contemplates “what he had been” and “the woman he had loved” (62) while ensconced in the vastness of Florida’s great swamp. As the story moves towards one of Douglas’s trademark quick and optimistic romantic endings, Joe’s masculinity is put into relief only among “the merciless saw grass” (73). Mary joins him in his trek to the ibis colony, and she begins to think of Joe as an “amazing” man who is “good to follow” (74). Despite Mary’s submissive nature in her relationship with Joe and her desire to “lie down right in the mud and cry” (73) during their day-long journey

through the mosquito-infested swamp, nature allows her to develop as an individual who must rely on her own strength.

Furthermore, free from society's implied patriarchy and its construction of gender expectations, Mary matures as a person: "She saw suddenly that it was childish to expect that just saying you were sorry made everything all right. When you were grown-up you had to be responsible" (70). The demands of an environment untouched by humans free her to harness her own ideas and desires in a rational manner, unencumbered by the pressures of her father or her careless and violent boyfriend, who once made her feel "powerful and beautiful" (65) under society's heteronormative eye. Additionally, Mary develops an honest relationship with Joe, unlike her previous relationship with the antagonist Leroy Pennock, in the soundless stillness of the nighttime Everglades: "When they were silent, they were happy" (75). Far from the blaring music of the sleazy band halls she dances at with Leroy and the rattling of engines of the gasoline station she works at for her father, Mary experiences an epiphanic connection with Joe. This spiritual commune is fostered by the tranquility of the Everglades, which allows them to enjoy each other's company as they talk "softly, as if suddenly there was everything in the world to be talked about, and they did not notice how often and how intimately they laughed" (75).

According to Elizabeth Francis, "changing gender relations and the discourse of women's emancipation were central to modernist interrogations of modern culture" (xiv). Thus, Douglas is positioned as a literary modernist with her creation of both sovereign female protagonists who narrate their tales and supporting female characters whose agency in the plot is self-governing and powerful. These autonomous, non-sentimental

women stand in sharp contrast to the female characters in many narratives written by male authors at the same time. In fact, the publication of most of these stories in *The Saturday Evening Post* marks a departure from the magazine's focus on images of successful, self-made businessmen. Interestingly enough, in a 1923 column Douglas herself criticized the Post's obsession with "the cult of the romantic young man in business" (Wide, 121). Douglas's ability to challenge this genre of popular formulaic writing for the masses in favor of the strong females of her stories shows her as an activist and author who worked within the system to effect change, however subtly.

CHAPTER 4 LITERARY PROGRESSIVISM

Like other modernists, Douglas was very concerned with issues that dealt with social justice, and she often explored such topics in her “Galley” column in the early 1920s. What makes Douglas’s writings and her life story stand out among many of her modern contemporaries was the success she achieved in actually bringing about change. For example, in 1923 Douglas heard about the death of a young man from North Dakota, Martin Tabert, who had been sentenced to Florida’s notoriously harsh labor camps on the charge of being a vagabond. On April 20th of that year she published a haunting poem in memory of his death. The measured pace and the melodic repetition and tone of the poem make it seem as if it were a slow Southern folk song. In fact, when it was first published in *The Miami Herald* Douglas referred to the poem as a ballad to be sung in a minor key. The unpretentious rhyme pattern demonstrates Douglas’s stylistic simplicity as it works to great effect in this instance. The ghostly Tabert walks “soft and slow” through the “piney woods and cypress hollows” of Florida after the “black strap cracked and found him” (Davis, Wide 136). Douglas’s poetic call to Floridians from Pensacola to Key West urges a statewide union that bridges the cleavage between the Old South of northern Florida and the New South of southern Florida. The poem made a profound impact upon the readers of the newspaper, and it was reprinted at their request five days later along with Douglas’s opinion on abolishing Florida’s peonage system.

In a demonstration of Douglas’ ability to match her progressive concerns with a mainstream, and often old-fashioned, audience through practical methods, the poem

circulated amongst the members of Florida's conservative legislature. Goaded by sympathetic Floridians and the popularity of the Douglas' poem, the state outlawed the leasing and corporal punishment of convicts (Davis, Wide 118). In her autobiography, Douglas claimed that her poem's positive outcome was the "single most important thing" that was ever accomplished as the result of something she had written (Voice 134).

Apart from her success in being the leading proponent of changing a state law, Douglas also attended to more local issues through her newspaper column. Following the ever-popular campaign for baby milk funds in the 1920s, Douglas used her experience with the American Red Cross during WWI to convince Miamians about the need for such a fund: "I have seen tiny babies in the last stages of starvation, brought in perhaps to some American Red Cross station in the Balkans who were probably the most hideous things it is possible to look on. . . . When the fat is gone the face is all withered and the bony structure of the temples and the cheeks stand out sharply, unnaturally in what should be a smooth baby face" (Davis, Wide 141). Her descriptive evocation of babies ravaged by the famines of war resulted in the first successful charity in Miami not run by a church. Scores of Miamians donated a dollar to the fund. Four days later, on June 23, 1923, Douglas cleverly employed her skill for harnessing modern publicity and people's desire for celebrity in a promise to donors that she would publish their names in the newspaper if they would donate four more dollars to the baby milk fund. While some modernists may have derided mainstream newspapers such as *The Miami Herald* for their conservative stances on many issues, Douglas cunningly used her column as a bully pulpit to influence an audience that would not be easily persuaded by more revolutionary writings.

Likewise, Douglas dealt with the vexing issue of capital punishment in her one-act play “The Gallows Gate.” According to Douglas, the “little-theater movement” was popular in the 1930s (Voice 182). She wrote this “cheery little drama” (Voice 183) after being recruited to do so by her fellow members on the board of a small Miami theater company in 1930. The subject matter and events in the brief one-act play are far from Douglas’ tongue-in-cheek description of it as “cheery.” The play revolves around the hanging of a young man and his father’s attempt to forcibly rescue him minutes before the public execution. The mother’s boy, Sarah McDevitt, comes to pay her respects at her estranged son’s hanging. Despite the exciting action of the father’s planned rescue, the play focuses on Sarah and her remorse about her son’s crimes and punishment. Sarah stutters and is unable to comprehend the reasoning for a public execution: “The hanging – it’s to be – right in there – behind this fence – this very fence” (15). Sarah’s disgust with the public execution is not depicted solely as a mother’s sympathetic emotion, for the young male reporter, Jimmy Thompson, is also distressed and dazed the entire time by the prospect of witnessing the killing. The execution is quickly performed after the law-abiding Sarah informs the officer about her ex-husband’s plan to kidnap and rescue her son. Douglas wanted the haunting creaking of the rope to have the most profound effect on the audience, and so no lines are spoken as the ominous sound of the “dry creaking of the rope” permeates the scene and alters each of the character’s dispositions (31).

The play garnered a first-place prize in a statewide little-theater tournament in which it was chosen to represent the Civic Theater of Miami. This accolade allowed the play to go on and compete in the 1933 national playwriting contest in St. Louis where it took top honors once again (Davis, Life 18). The play was often performed in California

and Florida throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s. Douglas reported in her autobiography that she produced an enlarged, three-act version of the play that earned her \$500 after it won first place in a nationwide competition. No copies of this enlarged version are known to be in existence. The simple directions and the stark scenery of “The Gallows Gate” once again reflect Douglas and her work aesthetic. The most dramatic element of the play is the lingering sound of a creaking rope, which seeks to remind viewers not only about the injustice of capital punishment but the crassness of public executions.

The character of Marian Carleton in 1935’s “Wind Before Morning,” like many of Douglas’s female protagonists, is an austere New Englander experiencing social life in South Florida. Aghast at the way the wealthy spend their time in frivolous pursuits in Palm Beach, Marian spends hours at the typewriter tending to business in New Hampshire. The narrator informs readers that the bank in Carleton’s native South Highboro has never closed because of her sound investments and that the men of the town are “employed steadily, year in, year out, worked on their own vegetable gardens after hours” and “shared profits, hospitals, [and] schools for their red-cheeked children, because of her” (213). Marian’s activities in managing subsistence-farming and sensible part time small-factory work contrast with her Palm Beach cousin’s cold, moneyed interest in expansive, corporate projects such as railroads, mines, and oil. This distinction shows Douglas’s interest in practical, local solutions to modernity’s advancements. On a lighter note, descriptions of the clothing and buildings that color the lives of Palm Beach elite echo South Florida’s, and particularly Miami’s, fascination with the popular streamlined, “modern” architecture that came in the 1930s to be known as Art Deco.

Further on in the story Marian's brother becomes lost at sea when a rough storm wrecks his yacht. Neither her brother's flippant, shallow daughter Evelyn, who has left Florida hoping to divorce her husband and marry a wealthy Argentine, nor his carousing, spoiled son Hatcher, who is in bed with a hangover, act concerned. Marian charts a private airplane and sets out to find her brother since there is "literally no one but herself to do that for him" (226). Descriptions of the childless Marian's motherly instincts surface throughout the search for her brother and, most literally, as she cradles her brother after he has been rescued. Thus, this amalgamation of Marian's no-nonsense approach to business and her motherly affections shows Douglas's pragmatic approach to the New Woman concept, as seen in the previous discussion of "The Third Woman." This balancing act diverges from the early modernist approach to definitions of femininity described by Floyd Dell as having "none of this maternalism or its heritage of self-sacrifice" (Stansell 226). This depiction also continues to support the argument that Douglas was always able to view things from different perspectives, particularly women and their potential to embody multi-faceted roles.

On the same business-minded note as in "Wind Before Morning," when discussion came to capitalist market forces, Douglas's sympathies lay with labor unions and their struggles to organize. Not only did pragmatism still rule her outlook with her labor concerns, but Douglas continued her use of strong heroines to subtly dramatize the importance of progressive labor management. In her 1927 short story "Stepmother," the female protagonist is lauded for keeping the mills of her family business humming and roaring because of her sensible, Fordist approach to labor: "She paid time and a half for overtime and the lights went on all night. Moreton stock went soaring on the market"

(155). Not only does this example demonstrate Douglas's support for the good treatment of works, but it is also one of the many examples of intelligent and independent women who overshadow the male characters of her stories.

Similarly, despite Douglas's enlistment with the Navy at the onset of the U.S.'s involvement in WWI, in the years after the Armistice she began to express a strong aversion to the war and its consequences. While she did not join the more radical modernists in protesting the war when it counted, as her later admission to being "brainwashed" by the Naval officers in Key West suggests, Douglas soon became more vocal about the negative aspects of the Great War. For example, in her 1935 short story "September – Remember" the protagonist, Jimmy Gowan, is an anxious and unemployed WWI veteran. The boom of a passing train awakes Jimmy and reminds him of "the faraway roaring of guns searching him out where he lay buried in choking earth" (161). Even though this passage alludes to the horrors of trench warfare and the recent discovery of "shell shock" syndrome, Douglas's primary concern with Jimmy and those like him is in highlighting the way the government treated them like disposable cogs in a machine. Jimmy was accepted by the Army only "because he was sound enough to obey orders and use shovels. They hadn't wanted him to fight" (162). Illustrating the solitary existence of such veterans as Jimmy during the Depression, the narrator explains that Jimmy was just one of "the drifting ranks of casual labor that became increasingly not wanted" (162). Jimmy's inability to "get over eating as if it were a rare luxury, as if this might be the last he'd ever get. It made the absorption of coffee and grits into his spare frame a kind of ecstasy" (163) express further descriptions of the bleak life that such individuals led during the 1930s.

Despite the harrowing description of Jimmy and his dreary prospects, the plot of “September – Remember” is not an explicit portrait of Depression-era life. There are no Upton Sinclair-like calls for reform in this story either; rather, Jimmy’s discouraging expectations are subtly mirrored in the relentless winds and rains of a hurricane ravaging the Florida Keys. The story’s slow pace and constant references to racing waves and flying trees echo the continual worries of the weary Jimmy and others like him who were down on their luck during the Depression. Such a delicate handling of plots and characters that resonate with deeper and more poignant themes reflects Douglas’s ability to match her progressive values through representations that were palatable for the mainstream audience of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

CHAPTER 5 REGIONALIST AND ENVIRONMENTALIST

As a reader of Howard Odum and the University of North Carolina's *Journal of Social Forces*, Douglas was enamored with the idea of regionalist literature and art. In fact, a year prior to her first short-story for *The Saturday Evening Post*, Douglas advocated regionalism in her column after alluding to the regionalist themes in the works of Carl Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, and Robert Frost. "We need such region interpreters in the United States, we need them badly," Douglas wrote. "It is a period when America must turn to itself, to its own backgrounds, for beauty and significance" she continued (qtd. in Davis, Wide 173). This edict sets Douglas apart from her North Florida counterpart Rawlings once again. Rawlings wrote in 1940: "Regionalism written on purpose is perhaps as spurious a form of literary expression as ever reaches print. It is not even a decent bastard, for back of illegitimacy is usually a simple, if ill-timed, honesty" (384). Rawlings assumed that regionalist literature was produced because it was marketable, but Douglas held more altruistic beliefs about the literary genre. She believed in its artistic relevance and its real-life importance.

Douglas's role as a middle-class professional engaged in both Florida's literary and social circles shows her as a characteristic leader of a local progressive movement. Dewey W. Grantham identifies such progressives as "middle-class men and women, inhabitants of the urban South and representatives of the new commercial and professional elements" (xvi). Douglas's work with urban welfare, environmental conservation movements, and civil rights also fits within the paradigm of progressives

who “provided the leadership, created the new organizations, directed the reform campaigns,” and, most importantly, “articulated the progressive rationale and mission, and gave the reform movements their distinctive tone and style” (xvi).

Furthermore, Douglas’s role as a paragon of leadership for the New South in her battles with the previously mentioned “wool hat boys . . . beyond the Suwanee” reflects how Miami and its urban sister cities in South Florida differed from the more conservative regions of rural North Florida. This division between the politicians who ruled the state from the northern capital of Tallahassee and progressives like Douglas from South Florida highlights the pattern of state politics that Southern progressives often had to deal with throughout the early part of the twentieth century. Grantham described this tension as a “north-south cleavage, in which the older section, bordering on Georgia and Alabama, was opposed by the growing peninsular region” (61).

Representative of her status as a progressive of the new urban South in Dade County, Douglas often criticized growth that was not regulated or thought out with long-term consequences in mind. The policies put into action by President Theodore Roosevelt’s administration during Douglas’s formative years as a high school student in Massachusetts probably fostered Douglas’s practical ideology regarding the conservation of public lands. The essence of this ideology was “rational planning to promote efficient development and use of all natural resources” (Hays 2). Another influence on Douglas’s environmental consciousness was her father; Douglas credits Stoneman for her earliest notions about the Everglades. Stoneman risked the success of his nascent *Miami Morning News Record* newspaper with his vehement opposition to Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward’s plan to drain the Everglades in the early 1900s. Stoneman’s opposition was

not steeped in any of the scientific knowledge of the day. Nonetheless, his daughter was a firm believer in a pragmatic conservation ethos that exploited land only in a sustainable manner.

In fact, Douglas broached this subject matter in a 1921 column for *The Miami Herald*. In it, she bemoaned how the area has been “[f]athered by all the greed of men . . . [e]ager to make this also as his own” and how the development of “[u]npainted shacks, tin awnings” have been built upon” lands “scarred” and “cleared” into “ugly” and “cheap” tracts by rapacious developers (Davis, Wide 45). The use of the term “[f]athered” highlights Douglas’s proto-ecofeminist ideologies. Just as regionalist writing is usually seen as inferior to and dominated by more supposedly cosmopolitan works, Douglas’s championing of regionalism parallels her heralding of women’s rights and the need for a widespread awareness about the environment. Because ecofeminism sees the suppression of women at the hands of men as similar to the oppression of nature at the hands of men, the two camps of feminism and environmentalism are considered indelibly linked. Although such philosophies did not arise until the 1970s, Douglas’s work as a regionalist and feminist can be allied under this ideological umbrella to buttress an analytic framework that views her short stories as precursors to her own environmental activism and that of ecofeminists.

In addition to these ecofeminist concerns, one can also see Douglas foreshadow a popular catch phrase of the modern American environmental movement she would help to lead during the latter part of the twentieth century: “Think Globally, Act Locally!” If one disregards Miami’s state as a cosmopolitan, worldly city in the early twenty-first century, Douglas’s inclusion of Northern, sophisticated characters in the stories set in the

small town Miami of the 1920s, '30s, and '40s adds another dimension to her regionalist sensibilities. Miami had a population of only a little more than 29,000 as late as 1920. Thus, the coloring of the small-town Miami landscape of the 1920s and 1930s with these fictional Northern snowbirds meshes well with Tom Lutz's argument that "the hallmark of local color and later regionalist writing, then, is its attention to both local and global concerns, most often achieved through a careful balancing of different groups' perspectives" (30). Most of Douglas's stories feature this interplay between outsiders and locals encompassed in either such dichotomies as Northerner/Southerner, urban/rural, or man/woman. Douglas cleverly crafts her stories so that the supposedly dominant or sophisticated person does not always end up as the winner in some of these battles. Likewise, both insider and outsider often learn from each other in order to enjoy living in the same local environment.

The importance of regionalism throughout the 1920s and 1930s coexists with a collective progressive "complex cluster of related ideas" that focused on disparate themes, one of which included "a desire for a stable communal identity" (Steiner 432). This theme can be interpreted as a longing for a secure relationship to a chaotic and stressful modern world. Whereas other writers continued to problematize the chaotic world of modernity, regionalists focused on the world as they saw it - in local terms - or, as a proto-regionalist like Nathaniel Hawthorne once said, "New England is as large a lump of this earth as my heart can readily take in" (Steiner 432). Douglas's short-story studies of independently owned beauty salons, swampy Dade County real estate deals, and pioneering women in outposts near the Everglades place her firmly within the realm of regionalist writers. Douglas's role in this genre of literature becomes increasingly clear

when one interprets the typical structural formats of literary works of regionalism, short stories and sketches as a repudiation of the gratuitous largesse exhibited in epic, thousand-page novels about national and worldly subject matters such as international wars and adventures in colonized countries.

The fact that feminists began to recover local color literature in the 1970s because they asserted that “women local colorists were proto-feminist, exercising power from the margins” (Lutz 25), helps buttress these proto-ecofeminist readings of Douglas’s work because it highlights the indelible connection between women and localized natural environments. The political connotations attributed to such a recovery are vitiated when one considers that while local literature is not set in cosmopolitan locations like New York, London, or Chicago, the authors of these local works are based on “cosmopolitan ideals of cultural inclusiveness, ideals embedded in regionalism’s narrative conventions” (Lutz 27). Thus, regionalist writers like Douglas approach their local settings and characters through an inclusive cosmopolitan lens that figures the ideas, passions, and lives of rural and small-town citizens as universal as those of urban metropolitan areas. This practical method to literature offers a sharp contrast to supposedly high-brow literary scholars and pretentious elites who are caricatured in the brother character of “Goodness Gracious, Agnes.” The unnamed brother possess a “perfect horror of being thought provincial” in light of Agnes’s eccentric open-minded ways (74). Furthermore, the inclusivity of such a perspective allows Douglas’s work to be read as a conscientious recognition of the correlation between the treatment of women and the treatment of nature at the hands of a patriarchal, capitalist society.

Douglas's focus on women is linked to this emphasis on the regional. Women and their domestic sphere were by definition local and regional – they were not to be concerned with national or international issues. Therefore, even in Douglas's exposition of the regional ground can we see her feminist ideas sprout. While some Depression-era regionalists also found comfort in exploring the past, Douglas's work was always set in and concerned with contemporary times. Whereas a desire for the past coupled with a longing for a stable sense of place and tradition characterized many regionalists during these times, Douglas did not yearn for supposedly idyllic days gone by. She focused on women escaping tedious lives for adventurous ones. In her stories and columns, local rural charms and characteristics are highlighted as worthy as more celebrated cosmopolitan locales. Since Douglas did not always set all of her stories in South Florida, she cannot be considered a strict regionalist – whatever that may entail. However, when we consider her regionalist sensibilities, we do not see her employing the charms of the region to advance a political front as the Southern Agrarians did in repudiating a modern and consumerist mass culture that destroys regional differences. Rather, Douglas uses South Florida just as Woolf used England, as a place in which to set her stories and its universal themes simply because that was her home.

Another interesting twist on Douglas's regionalism can be examined in her role as a cosmopolitan author. Raised in New England and well-traveled, Douglas was not a local wordsmith simply writing about South Florida. She moved to Florida and thus approached it as an outsider who soon became an insider. Thus, while her tales commemorate the region's allure, they also shed light on some of the area's more nefarious characters and, especially in the early 1920s, the city's untruthful publicity

machine about real estate. Douglas's short stories about South Florida can be paradoxically viewed as celebratory odes and revelatory exposes just like Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio, which demystifies the supposedly picturesque quaintness of small towns.

Furthermore, Daniel Singal's paradigm of a Southern evolution from Victorian to Modernist thought where "no infallible litmus test exists for identifying Modernist culture" (8) validates Douglas's role as a pragmatic modernist. Similarly, like Odum, the South's first modern sociologist, Douglas "was able to look both ways, at 'the old and the new,' to see not only the strengths and moral virtues of southern society but the conflicts, tensions, and evils as well" (Singal 116). The South Florida settings of Douglas's short stories and the conflicts between the rural environment and the burgeoning Miami urban landscape depicted in Douglas's narratives display her ability to balance portraits of both the positive and negative attributes of the New South.

The 1933 two-part short-story "Adventuress" from "The Household" magazine briefly explores the friction between urban and rural Miami. Again, two of Douglas's main progressive themes appear in this story: the New Woman and regionalism. Amusingly, the story never names the "adventuress." Andrew Elton, the deceased husband of the adventuress, has left her and their 16-year old son, Hugh, acres of farmland in Florida. Neither the land nor the rural ways of life impress the twice-divorced protagonist. The facts that she funds her son's private school tuition through gambling and that she publicly seeks to marry a wealthy man scandalize the town. Douglas passes little, if any, judgment on the woman's actions through the use of tone or narration. Douglas's main concern focuses on demonstrating how "the rude ugly shacks" and "the

raw, scarified acres” that the mother “hates so” represent the key to the son’s eventual success and happiness, and not the “cultured” North and a private school education (1).

Douglas gently illustrates the rural reality of South Florida when the snobby mother drives her roadster past “the gaze of a woman hanging out baby clothes by a blistered shack,” “a man in a palmetto hat, working a sprayer by a grove edge,” and “the rural postman on a motor cycle” (1). While the mother is busy courting a wealthy bachelor, her son discovers his father’s old books. The books are replete with details about Andrew’s failed experiments with subtropical vegetations that were ruined by Florida’s frequent hurricanes and sporadic deep freezes. Captivated by the idea, Hugh informs his mother that “this bit of pineland, like nothing else in the world, between two zones, was the most precious thing in the world to him” (19). The boy expresses a palpable connection to the land. The various adventurous, environmentally friendly plans Hugh has for the property resemble the excitement that Jamie Craddock has for the flora on his family’s land in the Florida Keys in Douglas’s *The Saturday Evening Post* 1925 story, “Solid Mahogany.”

The 1925 story “Pineland” represents another facet of Douglas’s regionalist writing. The story revolves around Sarah McDevitt, the same mother featured in the one-act play “The Gallows Gate,” as she shares her story with a young reporter following the public execution of her son. Unlike the depictions of cracker culture in the fiction of Rawlings, Douglas’s portrayal of life in Florida centers on the tension between the growing urban sprawl of Miami and the rural outskirts, which consisted of the Everglades wilderness and the rural towns of Homestead, Goulds, and Perrine. Observing the pine trees while speaking with Sarah, the city-civilized young reporter feels them “growing upon him – the silence of their trunks, the loveliness of their tossed branches, the

virginity of their hushed places, in retreat before the surface roads and filling stations, the barbecue stands and the signboards of the new Florida” (5). This balance between the perspective of Sarah and the more cosmopolitan reporter can be seen as the “hallmark” of local color writing that Lutz references in his argument about the attention paid to both local and global concerns. In this case the universal concern is that of isolation in the wilderness and isolation from society and whether the remoteness of Sarah’s peripheral homestead offers peace, anxiety, or both. Furthermore, such descriptions of the natural settings of these stories not only attracted a national audience eager to learn more about exotic Florida, but also offered one of the most mature and realistic portrayals of South Florida’s rural and urban boundaries during the early twentieth century.

As Sarah recounts to the reporter about her first encounter with the land, readers learn how wide the divide between the “civilized” urban center and rural outskirts was: “[T]he nearest road was six miles away. You could take a horse and carriage from Miami to a place near Goulds where the road branched. Then you’d have to walk across country to where my land began . . . The palmetto was deeper than it is now, but I was young and nothing was too much for me” (5). Once again, Douglas carves out a portrait of a woman who comes into her own without the gender constructions rampant in urban areas. Like Alexandra in Willa Cather’s O Pioneers!, Sarah must assume masculine attributes in order to manage her homestead: “Her body was a bony shapelessness under the cotton dress, but her head, from the angle at which he gazed, seemed fine and distinguished. There was about it that sexless look which approaching age sometimes takes on . . . She looked like a worn old statesman, wise, weary, patient” (15). Acknowledging the pioneering strength of Sarah, the reporter celebrates the fact that instead of being inspired

by a “dream of empire,” Sarah is sustained simply by “the enduring force of her own will” (15). Thus, unlike George’s egotistical desire to “be the first” (48) to take the land seriously in “A Bird Dog in The Hand,” Sarah’s tilling of her pineland fulfills utilitarian and self-sustaining purposes. These purposes mirrored Douglas’s espousment of domestic, self-sustaining agricultural duties over market-oriented, large-scale agribusiness. The sexual divides between these two spheres are clear.

Douglas uses the story’s setting to add a psychological depth to Sarah by comparing her to the trees on the homestead property: “She had maintained herself, like an old pine through many burnings, by the enduring soundness of its own wood” (24). This elegant comparison showcases Sarah’s bravery, resilience, and the many battles she has to fight against her no-good husband and a troubled justice system that hanged her son in a public square. Such metaphoric descriptions and images of nature hew close to the aesthetic sensibilities of regionalist literature. A paragon of such literature, Mary Austin, best described these aesthetics in her 1932 article, “Regionalism in American Fiction.” According to Austin, the source of such aesthetics rises from “our ‘guts,’ the seat of life and breath and heartbeats, of loving and hating and fearing” as much as it does from the “regional environment . . . progressions of seed times and harvest, its rain and wind and burning suns” (97). Furthermore, because this tale is more concerned with Sarah’s personal narrative and the way in which her environment reflects it, the story gives little weight to Sarah’s agricultural success, or rather lack of, on her farming homestead. Therefore, “Pineland” resonates as a short story representation of “the spate of farm novels . . . with farm-owning female protagonists” published during the 1920s and 1930s. As Douglas Anderson asserts, these novels are more interested in “addressing

the concerns of their literary reader (the majority of them female) than in producing a sociologically accurate rendering of rural life” (Lutz 154).

Douglas’s crisp prose portrays a remarkably palpable South Florida landscape that is both luscious and symbolic. When the narrator describes Caribbean pine tree tops as “gray-green branches, twisted and distorted as if by great winds or something stern and implacable in their own natures” (4), the reader cannot help but imagine Sarah’s battles. If one follows this metonymic amalgamation of woman and nature, it becomes clear that Douglas attempts to show society’s faulty stereotypes about women: “They were endlessly alike, endlessly monotonous, and yet with an endless charm and variety. Every tree held its own twist and pattern; every tree, even to the distant intermingled brown of trunks too far away to distinguish, were infinitely itself” (5). One sees Douglas as a proto-ecofeminist realizing that the oppression of nature at the hands of a man is just like the repression of women at the hands of men because she exposes these seemingly repetitive trees as possessing idiosyncratic charms. Douglas’s startlingly skillful ability to symbolize the importance of the regional environment by mirroring humans with their natural surrounding exudes charm and pathos.

Like California’s John Muir, Douglas realized the holistic importance of Florida’s Everglades long before most people did. Douglas was concerned by the encroaching urban landscape of Miami, and so she championed the conservation of the Everglades both in her columns and in her fiction. This tension between the old and new way of life can be seen in stories such as “Goodness Gracious, Agnes” after the character Agnes leaves a swanky 1920s party in Miami in order to halt an illegal wildcat fight in the Everglades wilderness. The “ultramodernist” wannabee Vivian is flabbergasted at

Agnes's abrupt exit from the heavily attended party. Vivian leaves the party herself to help Agnes, but only because the wealthy man she is interested in, Edmund Hill, is leading the expedition. Vivian narrates that the group was soon looking out at "the whole arch of the sky spattered with stars set over the level black saucer of the earth. . . . miles and miles and miles away from everything and everybody, alone in the very middle of the Everglades" (85). This passage, and the story in general, represent both Douglas's emphasis on a language that reflects South Florida's unique regional landscape and her observations of a social life that was still heavily divided between the rural outlaws that sparsely populated the Everglades and Miami's well-heeled, affluent society.

Likewise, in 1926's "A River in Flood" the young protagonist, Hugh Nason, feels plagued by his loyalties to continue living in his father's house boat on the Miami River and inheriting the business of chartering the house boat for wealthy families on trips to the Florida Keys and Cuba. Hugh also knows he can take advantage of Prohibition-era Miami's proximity to Bimini with "one bold gesture, one load of liquor" that "would make them both independent" (95). Douglas straddles the line between championing and condemning Hugh's loyalties and his enterprising plans. She celebrates the youth of the modern era through physical descriptions of the handsome Hugh, who feels a "stir and urgency in his veins" that craves "the clash and drama of manhood rather than" the "safety and tranquility" of his home and his father's business (94). Douglas exploits Miami's allure as a hotbed of illegal activity in order to engage her audience. With the likes of Al Capone running around town, Hugh's witnessing of a secretive man trying to run away from someone in the middle of the same night that a man was murdered by "James Sloan, alias Richard Hutchins, alias White Eye Lewis" (99) allows the audience

to feel as if they are receiving an insider's feel for what Miami's crime scene was like at the time.

Historians assert that the combination of Prohibition and the real estate boom in the 1920s "brought all the old vices back" into Miami (Muir 152). The area's newspaper headlines were inundated with tales of illegal high-stakes gambling and jewel thieves. Interestingly enough, Georgia's *Macon Telegraph's* description of Miami as "a frontier town harboring criminals and rascals" was so well known that the Ku Klux Klan offered its protective services to Miami's nascent police force (Muir 153). Douglas apparently expressed a great deal of interest in Miami's mob scene during the '20s and '30s. According to Miami historian and Douglas's personal friend Helen Muir, Douglas and lawyer Bill Muir co-authored a play entitled "Storm Warning" for the city's Civic Theater "about a gangster who was mobbed by the citizens of a city in the last act" (185). The play was performed to packed houses during the height of Miami's publicly expressed dissatisfaction regarding Al Capone's residence in the city. Though no copy of this play has been found, the script was supposedly written sometime in the late 1920s or the early 1930s.

In "A River in Flood" Hugh comes across an attractive older woman named Gloria who wants him to use his father's boat for a bootlegging operation. Because of this request he feels "invincible, thrilling to the beginning of a new, free, marvelous world" (103). Unable to use his father's boat, Hugh is persuaded by Gloria to steal his father's life savings with the promise of making back more money. Minutes before arriving at Gloria's riverside home by canoe, Hugh realizes that he has been seduced by what his father previously described as a cheap hussy in cahoots with "White Eyes Lewis." As the

story resolves into one of Douglas's trademark happy ending with Hugh returning the money to his father's safe and feeling the "green-sickness of his youth" give way to a "grown up" man prepared to face the "dangerous, difficult, inscrutable" modern world (117), one sees Douglas allowing the main character to explore the scene of a once-small town Miami morphing into a large, modern city during the time of Prohibition, speakeasies, and rum-running mobsters. This combination would have excited readers of *The Saturday Evening Post* far removed from exotic Miami. It also reflects Douglas's knack for showcasing the tensions between old and new in a city-specific regionalist manner.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Despite Douglas's penchant for exposing South Florida's greedy side, it is also true that Douglas was one of Miami's greatest boosters while a columnist for *The Miami Herald*. Her goals were not profit-oriented; she truly believed that the burgeoning city offered a new opportunity for modern Americans. Douglas often described the area as enchanted and invigorating, and even lauded Miami as a revolutionary location during the modern era in 1922:

We see ourselves as pioneers, just as the first Americans were. We see ourselves as immigrants, who have come from everywhere else, for all the various reasons which affected our ancestors. . . . we stay because we believe tremendously in this place and in its future, not just in a material way, but somehow related to this freedom and health and happiness which men are constantly seeking. (qtd. in Davis, Wide 58)

Because Douglas's fiction never expresses a longing for the past, place and the regional environment in modern times become the focal point of her work. The sentimentality of Rockwell's portraits of picturesque American families that graced the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post* is never prominent in Douglas's fiction. Although Douglas humbly lambastes her short stories in her autobiography as "wordy, wandering, deliberate, somewhat diffuse, very complicated, and old fashioned" (Voice, 185), some literary scholars might disagree with such a terse assessment. The "old fashioned" style of the stories never comes across as terribly Victorian or antiquated, the issues explored

in the plots and characters of the story are strikingly modern and vivid, and the “deliberate” manner in which some points are made and some settings described represents some of her finest regionalist sensibilities as a writer of local color and environmental conscientiousness. Douglas’s explorations of New Womanhood via her dynamic female characters and her expressions of regionalist sensibilities through depictions of unique and varied South Florida settings embody the two most striking features of her work and anticipate both the theories of ecofeminists and her work as a history-making environmentalist. Douglas’s enjoyably crisp and straightforward prose and intriguing, progressive subject matters mark her as an exceptionally skilled author who could lure and captivate a receptive national audience. Likewise, her stories offer a sophisticated home to readers of South Florida who have often felt marginalized in the American canon. This home is made possible not only because the stories are set in Miami, the Everglades, and other South Florida environs, but because Douglas and her stories are representative of a larger national conversation that was being held between the 1920s and 1940s as the United States emerged as a world super power and thoroughly entered the modern era.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Horacio Sierra's love for literature and writing can be traced to his parent's encouragement of his writing abilities as well as the excellent teachers at Bent Tree Elementary School in the suburbs of Miami, Florida, particularly Ms. Pan Zelenak. His interest in English as a field of study was fostered by some of his excellent AP teachers at Miami Coral Park Senior High School: Ms. Maria Bouza, Ms. Peggy Falagan, and Dr. Carolina Amram. Horacio's passion for literature was stoked by Dr. Piotr Gwiazda and Dr. Mihoko Suzuki at the University of Miami where he received his degree of Bachelor of Science in Communication in 2004 with a major in print journalism and English literature and a minor in history. Horacio then joined the University of Florida in 2004 to pursue his Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English where he was awarded a Grinter Fellowship. Horacio plans to earn his PhD in the Department of English at the University of Florida.