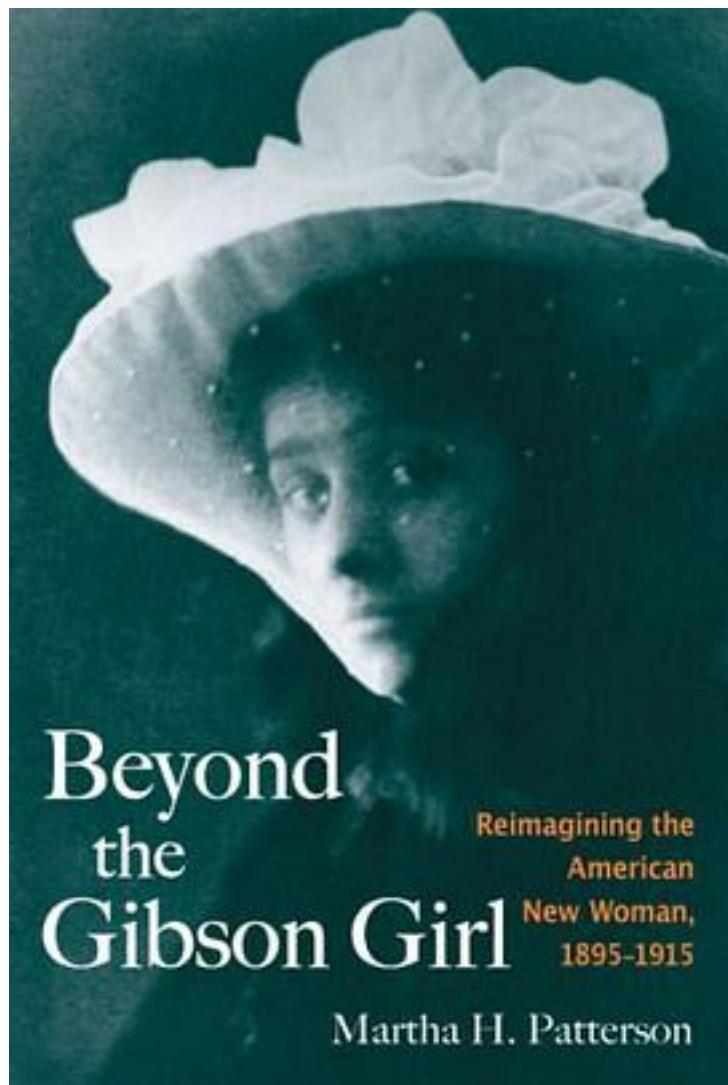


# Beyond the Gibson Girl



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出版者:Univ of Illinois Pr

出版时间:2005-10

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780252030178

Challenging monolithic images of the New Woman as white, well-educated, and politically progressive, this study focuses on important regional, ethnic, and sociopolitical differences in the use of the New Woman trope at the turn of the twentieth century. Using Charles Dana Gibson's "Gibson Girls" as a point of departure, Martha H. Patterson explores how writers such as Pauline Hopkins, Margaret Murray Washington, Sui Sin Far, Mary Johnston, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, and Willa Cather challenged and redeployed the New Woman image in light of other "new" conceptions: the "New Negro Woman", the "New Ethics", the "New South", and the "New China". As she appears in these writers' works, the New Woman both promises and threatens to effect sociopolitical change as a consumer, an instigator of evolutionary and economic development, and (for writers of colour) an icon of successful assimilation into dominant Anglo-American culture. Examining a diverse array of cultural products, Patterson shows how the seemingly celebratory term of the New Woman becomes a trope not only of progressive reform, consumer power, transgressive femininity, modern energy, and modern cure, but also of racial and ethnic taxonomies, social Darwinist struggle, imperialist ambition, assimilationist pressures, and modern decay.

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