



Until Choice Do Us Part: Marriage Reform in the Progressive Era

Clare Virginia Eby

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For centuries, people have been thinking and writing—and fiercely debating—about the meaning of marriage. Just a hundred years ago, Progressive era reformers embraced marriage not as a time-honored repository for conservative values, but as a tool for social change.

In *Until Choice Do Us Part*, Clare Virginia Eby offers a new account of marriage as it appeared in fiction, journalism, legal decisions, scholarly work, and private correspondence at the turn into the twentieth century. She begins with reformers like sexologist Havelock Ellis, anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons, and feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who argued that spouses should be “class equals” joined by private affection, not public sanction. Then Eby guides us through the stories of three literary couples—Upton and Meta Fuller Sinclair, Theodore and Sara White Dreiser, and Neith Boyce and Hutchins Hapgood—who sought to reform marriage in their lives and in their writings, with mixed results. With this focus on the intimate side of married life, Eby views a historical moment that changed the nature of American marriage—and that continues to shape marital norms today.

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