CLASSIC GIRLS IN AMERICAN, BRITISH, AND CANADIAN TEXTS SINCE 1867

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Auburn University at Montgomery

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Liberal Arts

Montgomery, Alabama

23 May 1999

APPROVED

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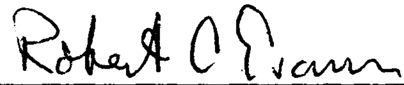

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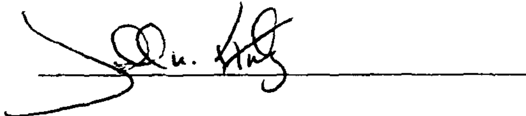

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study proposes to examine almost a dozen classics involving young heroines, discovering both similarities and differences in their fictional worlds. Much has been written about boy novels such as The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; in contrast, this paper will investigate well-known works featuring female figures, such as Anne of Green Gables and Little Women, as well as other less familiar books. According to Marcia Jacobson, although these tales "are centrally concerned with growing up," and "this group of books would merit serious scholarly discussion" (Jacobsen 163), they have been relatively neglected by commentators.

Works from the time period between 1867 and 1971 have been selected with primary regard to their content. Spanning this century-plus period, the project traces the rise of an increasingly complex heroine and provides insight into how girl books changed. By looking at three books published around the 1850's, four at the turn of the century, and three modern novels, this research establishes which elements originated within each historical period.

Specifically, this study considers such factors as parental control and family structure as well as the girls' range of allowed activities and individual observations. Jerome Griswold sketchily points out the often similar story lines in these works in his Audacious Kids: Coming of Age in America's Classic Children's Books. Many of these literary

juveniles are orphaned by the repeated motif of a dead or absent mother figure. They experience a journey into a new life, where they discover their identity, find acceptance by their protagonist, and mature into genuine "little women." They are usually treated harshly by their adopted guardians until they win them over and become the savior of the family and the town, restoring hope and vitality, essentially restoring the innocence of childhood in an emotionally decayed society and, ironically, become somewhat the mother figure in their families. This is obvious, for example, in Kate Douglas' Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1903). Rebecca may still have the eyes of a child at the end of the novel, but she is supporting four of her brothers and sisters and her own mother in the big house she inherited from Aunt Miranda.

Further probing discovers hidden worlds resulting from traumatic events experienced or witnessed by the heroines, best symbolized by Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden (1911). There is much imagination and game playing as the girls in this collection of adolescent heroines seeks to temporarily escape their situations. Sometimes this is accomplished just as well by burying themselves in the pages of timeless classics and then making fiction a reality, as with the relationship between Rebecca and Adam Ladd, affectionately known as Mr. Aladdin. Another similarity in the books is that these girls, despite suffering hard knocks, retain a resolutely happy anticipation and delight in life.

This thesis also strives to discover which books were intended for adult or child audiences, or both, judging from vocabulary and plot. Attention is given to explaining why certain of these books became classics, and are as favored by readers today almost as much as when they were originally published. Pollyanna, on the other hand, has a current

reputation for being saccharine and sentimental, whereas at the time of its publication in 1913 "it was only less influential than the World War" (Griswold 216), according to one account. Whatever accounted for these books' vast appeal appears to surpass mere nostalgia for the readers' personal childhood. Griswold's work suggests that Americans were "drawn to this story [Pollyanna] because of our political history" (vi). In other words, the struggle for independence from Old World parents made the theme of youthful independence endearing to United States readers. Another idea is that yearning for simplicity in a society displaced by the industrialization and urbanization of that time caused the idealistic juvenile to seem like a refreshing breath of delight in an uncertain world. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was simply that "the rise in middle class meant more leisure time to devote to children and childhood" (Griswold 22).

Conclusions can also be drawn concerning observations made about the adult world as seen through the eyes of young girls who appear, more often than not, unwilling to embrace their fate as women. In fact, they are often excluded from full maturity and exist forever suspended between the two worlds of childhood and adulthood. One example of this adolescent paralysis is evident when Kate Douglas was implored to provide a sequel so that fans could envision the inevitable marriage of Rebecca and Mr. Ladd, but she steadfastly refused.

A few of the books chosen were immensely popular at the turn of the century, even though they are hardly recognizable to the average reader today. These were included because of the impact they had as contemporary best sellers. Martha Finley's Elsie Dinsmore "outsold every other juvenile book with the one exception of Little Women

and, according to one source, the sad-eyed, humble but resolute Elsie 'attained more widespread interest and affection than any other character in juvenile fiction except Huckleberry Finn" (Estes 179). Finley wrote about a hundred books in all and published twenty-eight volumes of her famous Elsie series alone.

Likewise, Susan Coolidge of What Katy Did was an icon in her day, "widely held to be another Alcott" (Estes 397). She influenced Lucy Maud Montgomery and Kate Wiggins in producing wholesome domestic fiction with a coming-of-age plot. Indeed, Montgomery profited from Coolidge's example by selling millions of copies of her Anne of Green Gables, as well as having it taken to stage, screen, television, and ballet. Mark Twain wrote to Montgomery that she had created the "'dearest, and most loveable child in fiction since the immortal Alice'" (Magill 49). More recent critics Shirley Foster and Judy Simons in What Katy Read acknowledge that "the Katy books are far less widely known than Alcott's or Montgomery's novels. Yet, . . . her work has much in common with theirs in its adaptation of the popular sentimental and domestic tradition for young readers, and in its depiction of American girlhood it deserves equal recognition and critical attention" (Foster 110).

As the novels progress chronologically, modern heroines such as Addie Pray and Frankie Addams find themselves exposed to more mature subject matter. Confronted with overt sexuality and adult schemes, they nevertheless manage to retain their naiveté and optimism. They, as well as most of their predecessors, remain in the end tomboys, teetering on the edge of womanhood, but saved from the plunge by the final page.

Fictional works considered, then, include Martha Finley's Elsie Dinsmore (1867), Louisa May Alcott's Little Women (1868), and Susan Coolidge's What Katy Did (1872). Turn-of-the-century books include Kate Douglas' Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1903), Lucy Maud Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables (1908), Francis Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden (1911), and Eleanor H. Porter's Pollyanna (1927). A third group of novels consists of Carson McCullers' The Member of the Wedding (1946), Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird (1960), and Joe David Brown's Addie Pray (1971).

CHAPTER II

ELSIE DINSMORE: NOT YET PERFECT

Martha Finley's (1828-1909) Elsie Dinsmore (1867) is the story of a young girl, emotionally abused and neglected, who yearns for her father's love but finds solace in her relationship with her Heavenly Father. The book was a tremendous commercial success and is categorized in Frank Luther Mott's Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States as one of the better sellers of that time (Mott 321). In fact, it was so popular and influential that Finley developed from it one of the first American series for girls, resulting in twenty-eight volumes, with the last entitled Grandmother Elsie. One critic claims that "the stories mount up to a chronicle unrivalled by the work of any other 'juvenile' writer. They were all devoured here [England] as eagerly as in America" (Darton 238). Despite its immensely popular reception, however, the series is considered by many critics today as centering around a little prig who is more bathetic than sympathetic, "saccharinely sentimental, dishonest . . . fearful, cautious, preachy, and condescending" (Smith 11,43). Nonetheless, the novel "outsold every other juvenile book with the one exception of Little Women" and, according to one source, "the sad-eyed, humble but resolute Elsie 'attained more widespread interest and affection than any other character in juvenile fiction except Huckleberry Finn'" (Estes 179).

Elsie is a passionate eight-year-old girl who longs to find love in a large family where she is unwanted. Her mother died a week after she was born, and her father, Horace

Dinsmore, fled to Europe and never laid eyes on his only child. Consequently, she grows up under Horace's father and harsh stepmother as well as his six younger brothers and sisters, who are grossly over-indulged and thus selfish and sometimes cruel. She has been made to feel the outcast and is the subject of countless devilish pranks by Arthur, her ten-year-old uncle. Even her governess, Miss Day, treats her with unjust contempt. The only tenderness the girl receives is from her mammy, Aunt Chloe, who had waited upon Elsie's mother. Dreaming of the day when her dear father might return for her, she spends endless hours in tearful prayer for their reunion. Under these circumstances the novel opens and Horace returns. These circumstances also lead some critics to find "politically incorrect – good masters – loyal servants – weak women" and therefore credit the book's "enormous popularity to [the prejudice of] a particular people at a favorable time" (Estes 182-3). Whatever the case, the didactic novel "appealed strongly to nineteenth century audiences [obsessed] . . . with its heroines who are being educated for womanhood" (White 23).

Elsie has quite the tender, sensitive conscience and works hard to submit to the authority around her. "Finley's idea of submission is a bit exaggerated even for the nineteenth century, but in novel after novel young heroines must learn to conquer their pride and become humble, docile, and obedient. Any spirit or resistance against injustice is considered a 'sickness' that must be cured by strong doses of religion" (White 26). When the prodigal father finally returns, Elsie strives to do all in her power to please him: "She always yielded a ready and cheerful obedience to his commands, and strove to anticipate and fulfill all his wishes" (Finley 60). Unfortunately, he sees her efforts as

stemming from fear instead of love and continually greets her efforts with cold disdain: "He seldom noticed her, unless to give a command or administer a rebuke" (Finley 60). She therefore focuses her energy and grief into pouring over her Bible and praying fervently for her father's acceptance and love. She

> follows in the tradition of the stories of pietistic children born with an instinct for good and evil as delineated by the Puritan code, children who not only fight off temptations but also enlighten and urge to salvation their elders . . . Elsie's God was not wrathful but gentle – incarnated in her earthly father – she dreaded displeasing because she so reverenced him. (Estes 179)

Ironically, the more Horace begins to feel a real affection for his daughter, the more jealous he becomes of the relationship she has with her Savior. Upon hearing that Elsie desires to spend time with her "best Friend" on the Sabbath, her father declares, "'You surely can have no better friend than your own father, and can it be possible that you love anyone else better than you love me?'" (Finley 207). And later when Elsie shares her concern that "'I do want to be all that Jesus would have me! Just like him, so like him that everybody who knows me will see the likeness and know that I belong to him,'" her father quickly retorts, "'Nay, you belong to me . . . Hush! Not a syllable from your lips!'" (Finley 213). Though Finley has been criticized for being too pious and for placing "too much emphasis on submission," Elsie's efforts to "'kiss the chastening rod' of the heavenly Father actually gives the girl a means of rebelling against her earthly one. . . .

She must willingly obey the guardian's every decree, except when it comes into conflict with her religious principles . . . The fact that Elsie's first allegiance is to God becomes her revenge against her father" (White 29).

Elsie's innocent, angelic spirit, coupled with her strong moral sense of right and wrong leave other critics canonizing her:

> In strong contrast to the books for boys of some 60 years before, with their outdoors adventures and consequent emphasis on manliness, there came at the turn of the century a flood of books, chiefly from North America, with girls as the chief protagonists . . . . To pick out some titles that are still remembered, there were from the U.S. Elsie Dinsmore. . . . In these rhapsodic narratives, the angelic heroines solved not only their own problems but those of every adult with whom they came in contact. They were portrayed as goodness incarnate, or at the very least as full-fledged saviors. (Egoff, Thursday's Child 8)

Finley's narrator, however, repeatedly takes pains to remind the reader that her heroine is "not yet perfect." It is apparently not enough that Elsie conquers her feelings of bitterness and rebelliousness. The mere fact that she experienced these feelings at all leaves her cause to repent and strive for greater Christian perfection. For example, when Arthur purposefully bumps her elbow as she is carefully practicing her writing in her copybook, Miss Day punishes her by not allowing her to join the group on a trip into

town. The child "sat at her desk, striving to conquer the feelings of anger and indignation that were swelling in her breast, for Elsie, though she possessed much of the 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' was not yet perfect, and often had a fierce contest with her naturally quick temper" (Finley 12). In reality, however, "it was seldom, very seldom that word or tone or look betrayed the existence of such feelings, and it was a common remark in the family that Elsie had no spirit" (Finley 12-13). Another time, Elsie desires to attend a family picnic but her father firmly denies her, providing no explanation. After she is left alone with her disappointment, "for a few moments her heart rose up in rebellion against her father. It was a great pity she had not heard the reasons he gave her Aunt Adelaide, for then she would have been quite submissive and content. It is indeed true that she ought to have been as it was, but our little Elsie, though sincerely desirous to do right, was not yet perfect" (Finley 82).

A subtle sign of discontent and even revolt against her unjust and undeserved circumstances is manifested in a scene involving a hummingbird. As Elsie is walking in the garden alone, she discovers "a tiny and beautiful hummingbird confined under a glass vase. In its struggles to escape it was fluttering and beating against the walls of its prison" (Finley 121). Since she "could never see any living creature in distress without feeling a strong desire to relieve its sufferings," she raises the glass, and the prisoner escapes. Elsie herself is the hummingbird, the delicate creature captured and harnessed and made to suffer unjustly. The analogy becomes even truer when she learns that her father, not Arthur as she had suspected, had enslaved the bird. Moreover, she is constantly being lectured that "'a bird that can sing, and won't sing, must be made to

sing'" (Finley 134). The argument is absurd; a bird cannot be made to sing. It sings only when it feels free. The same truth applies to Elsie. Appropriately, just as the bird resides in the garden and she dwells at Roselands, an aptly named estate since she is a delicate rose among the thorns. She is fiercely commanded to be more open and talkative with her father, but his manner leaves her responding only with stinging tears and no words. Later, however, she responds with her only weapon, although she assuredly does so unconsciously: "'Ah, papa, I do so love to talk to Jesus, to tell him all my troubles . . . And then it is so sweet to know that he loves me, and will always love me, even if no one else does'" (Finley 154).

Ironically, "in spite of all her trials and vexations, little Elsie was the happiest person in the family, for she had in her heart that peace which the world can neither give nor take away" (Finley 29). Her Christian faith is not a series of outward observances but a sincere daily walk with her Lord. She readily forgives any injustice shown towards her and even rejoices that she may at these times be made more like Christ because of her sufferings. She lifts her father up in her prayers each day that he might come to love Jesus. After a near-death experience for the Dinsmore family when their carriage's horses run wild, only Elsie remains calm: "'It made me so happy to think that Jesus was there for me, and that if I were killed, I should only fall asleep, to wake up again in his arms. Then how could I be afraid?'" (Finley 118). This comment helps to convert her sister Lora, who fears that she may not have gone to heaven had they not been rescued. She asks Elsie how to win eternal life. Elsie responds with page after page of passages of Scripture that reveal how to accept Jesus as one's personal Savior. This proselytizing

seems directed less to Lora than to any reader who may not yet have made that decision. Her character is so appealing because in her exceeding beauty and innocence, she never becomes vain or self-righteous, but remains thoroughly modest. She never fails to see the speck in her own eye: "I know I am not at all good. I have a very wicked heart, and often my thoughts and feelings are all wrong, and Jesus knows all about it, but it does not keep him from loving me, for you know it was sinners he died to save" (Finley 173).

A turning point occurs between Elsie and her father after she gives him a gift that she has spent much time making with her hands. Taking her on his knee, an act that fulfills her greatest wish, he tenderly asks her why she seems so afraid of him. And, "with sudden impulse she threw her arms around his neck, and pressed her lips to his cheek . . . 'O papa! Dear papa, I do love you so very dearly! Will you not love me? O papa! Love me a little'" (Finley 138). He responds by holding her and kissing her tenderly, saying, "'I do love you, my darling, my own little daughter'" (Finley 138). Unfortunately, however, he then warns her, "You need never set up your opinion of right or wrong against mine . . . should they ever come into collision with my wishes and commands, they will be given up" (Finley 170-171). The days go by for Elsie like a dream until the inevitable battle of the wills occurs, for Horace is extremely proud and Elsie is profoundly committed to her convictions.

One Sabbath afternoon, Elsie is immersed in the Scriptures, since she takes quite literally the commandment to keep the day holy. A guest downstairs has heard of Elsie's musical talent and requests of Horace that she play a number on the piano. Mrs. Dinsmore, ever the temptress, whispers in his ear that Elsie will defy his authority and

claim to be wiser than her own father, thus showing his guests his inability to govern his child. Feeling rather agitated by that comment and extremely proud, he orders Elsie down to play a piece he has selected, a "secular" piece for their enjoyment. Elsie pleads to play the following day and be allowed to return to her room, but he insists that she sit on the piano bench until she is ready to obey. Hours and hours pass until the crowd hears a noise and discovers Elsie collapsed, unconscious, on the floor with blood on her temple, injured from where she landed. "To this day sensible people remember weeping over Elsie's Sabbath sit-down strike at the piano, when she refused to play the secular music for her erring father. . . . One of her best faints put an end to her martyrdom and her father repented" (Sutherland 48). Realizing how close he came to losing his precious child, he takes her to her room, where she insists she is able to kneel for prayers. She passionately declares her love for him, to which he responds, "'Better than anybody else?' 'No, papa, I love Jesus best. You next.' He was not entirely pleased, not quite willing that she should love even her Savior better than himself" (Finley 184). According to Barbara White, "The nineteenth century reader must have thrilled to Elsie's victory, her refusal to give in even when her father tortures her" (29). Despite criticism that the book primarily teaches that "woman is by nature fragile, subservient, and ornamental, and as such deserves to be elevated to a pedestal," in this case the battle of the wills has been heroically decided (Estes 183).

After this incident, Elsie rapidly becomes the picture of health and happiness, with rosy cheeks and bright eyes. She loses her once-paralyzing shyness and feels comfortable enough to coax her father into changing his mind when he becomes strict,

and she even becomes somewhat coy with his friend, Mr. Travilla. Travilla, after receiving a kiss from Elsie laments, "'Ah! I wish you were ten years older,'" to which she smilingly retorts, "'If I had been, you wouldn't have got the kiss'" (Finley 247). For modern readers the conclusion to the book is not very satisfying: a shallow young woman is introduced who has ambitions to become Horace's wife. Horace has no intention of marrying her, but little Elsie is quite shaken and becomes severely jealous at the prospect. He goes to her room to relieve her fears, but finding her asleep and her face tear-stained, he decides to wait until morning since he does not like to wake her. She is thus left fretful and apprehensive, though this sets up the sequel and enables an earthly father to be the one left in control. Regarding Martha Finley, one critic has written that "the author was a born story-teller, and never strained a word or an incident, and that is all that can or need be said" (Darton 238).

CHAPTER III

GROWING GIRLS: ALSO KNOWN AS LITTLE WOMEN

Louisa May Alcott's (1832-1888) Little Women (1868) is the cherished story of four March sisters who mature through shared hopes, struggles, tragedies, and joys. The tenderness of the home causes Jo, the heroine who represents Alcott herself, to burst out, "'I do think that families are the most beautiful things in all the world!'" (Alcott 453). This high value placed on the domestic scene presents a dilemma for the nineteenth-century female, caught between an emerging desire for independence and the traditional life of marriage and family. This "is one of the first fictional texts for children to convey the difficulties and the anxieties of girlhood, and which suggests that becoming a 'little woman' is a learned and often fraught process" (Foster and Simons 87). Significantly, "in the years since its original publication it has acquired mythic status, occupying a special place in American culture as 'the American female myth, its subject the primordial one of the passage from childhood, from girl to woman'" (Foster 86).

Alcott once commented of her novel, "its success was due to the use of real life and one's own experience. Many of the things in my story truly happened, and much of Little Women is a reflection of the life led by us sisters" (Griswold 156). Thus drawing on her own life, "she created the first tomboy in American fiction" (Strickland 72). Jo is fifteen years old at the opening and is described as "very tall, thin, and brown, and reminded one of a colt" (Alcott 6). She is the most independent and boyish of the sisters; she despises

fashion, hates dancing and girlish gossip, and has a fierce temper. When her older sister Meg admonishes her for her boyish games since she is a young lady, Jo immediately retorts,

> I'm not! And if turning up my hair makes me one, I'll wear it in two tails till I'm twenty. . . I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys' games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with Papa, and I can only stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman! (Alcott 5)

Yet she becomes the nurse to dying Beth and the mother figure when her parents are away. She is also fiercely protective of her family unit and never wants any of them to separate.

The four girls are each blessed with unique gifts. Meg, the oldest, has a beautiful voice, and is quite idealistic while Jo is the talented writer/poet and is boyish and practical. Beth is Jo's favorite and is the shy and selfless little pianist. Finally, Amy is the artist, well mannered, and pretty. The girls have a certain depth to them, with both strengths and weaknesses. Beth is the stereotype of the saintly child but dislikes housework as much as anyone, is afraid of people, and is inordinately fond of music. Meg is vain and too fond of luxury, and Amy is pretentious and spoiled. Charles Strickland

points out that Jo's sisters have "weaknesses of femininity, especially in its sentimental guises, but Jo rejects the sentimental femininity altogether" (Strickland 72). She is a departure from the sentimental heroines of the nineteenth century, constantly in tears and led only by the heart. "Jo detests sentimentality. Indeed one of the most frequently occurring words in the novel is 'sensible,' which is what Jo likes to think she is." She is the thinker and serious reader/writer, yet she must spend much of her time contributing to her family, in the same way her sisters do.

The Marches were once well to do, but they have lost their money assisting others. Because of this, the girls take responsibility for helping financially. Jo, for example, takes care of her elderly, wealthy aunt and later becomes a teacher. Meg gives the money she earns from being a governess to help with the rent. .Despite their good work habits, the girls have been taught to balance each day with work and play. They each have chores and jobs but also spend time playing games with each other and other children, especially imaginative make-believe games. A favorite is the regularly reenacted journey of Christian in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress with the search for the celestial city. The girls also delight in story telling, wherein one child begins a fantastic tale and leaves off at a climactic point for another child to finish. Another game, "authors," is like a trivial pursuit game with one category. These activities require creativity and thought while providing a blissful escape from all of their duties. The games also remind the reader that despite their workloads, they are still children.

Each chapter, however, marks the passing of time, and the girls are blessed to have worthy adult role models to emulate. Most adolescent books of this period have an

orphaned heroine. This is one of the few works which includes both the biological mother and father; however, the father is away much of the time, sacrificially acting as chaplain of the Civil War, and the mother leaves for a short period in order to be with her husband. Nevertheless, the mother is a strong presence of stability and virtue and a great influence on her daughters, and the home is quite cherished and grounded. Mr. March is heroic while Marmee is almost saintly. Too old to be drafted in the Civil War and not strong enough to be a soldier, the beloved father volunteers himself as a chaplain. His regular letters offer moral direction, while at home Mrs. March teaches by example, as she instructs Jo to the art of patience: "'I must try to practice all the virtues I would have my little girls possess, for I was their example. It was easier to try for your sakes than for my own'" (Alcott 76).

There are other significant adults in the girls' lives as well. Mr. Lawrence is the benevolent older neighbor who reveals a kind and generous heart, despite his intimidating exterior. This is evidenced by his giving Beth a piano of her own to enjoy. On the other hand, the girls have a snobbish and arrogant aunt and know of shallow, materialistic neighbors. They do not generalize or stereotype the adult world. They only try to emulate the behavior of their beloved parents.

The girls need this model to prepare them for all of the traumatic events that fall upon them. "Alcott may be accused of always contriving circumstances that pull the rug out from underneath her characters to leave them abject" (Griswold 162). When Jo's book of stories has been purposefully destroyed in a fire, she seeks revenge upon Amy. Later, they are ice skating, and Laurie, their best friend and neighbor, warns them of a thin spot.

Jo wonders if Amy has heard, but is still too angry to repeat the warning. Amy falls in and almost dies. Jo blames herself and begs Amy to forgive her. The family receives another scare when they receive a telegram reporting that their father is hospitalized and the mother is encouraged to come right away. But the most tender and sorrowful event is Beth's contraction of scarlet fever after taking care of a sick baby. She remains weak and mostly bedridden until she dies a slow, painful death. Her death is foreshadowed when the narrator comments, "There are many Beths in the world, shy and quiet, sitting in corners till needed, and living for others so cheerfully that no one sees the sacrifices till the little cricket on the hearth stops chirping, and the sweet, sunshiny presence vanishes, leaving silence and shadow behind" (Alcott 38). It's easy to understand why Alcott once considered titling her work "The Pathetic Family."

The Alcott family takes comfort "by the New Testament notion that the exalted shall be humbled and the humbled exalted" (Griswold 161). Sacrifice brought them a step closer to that celestial city and was something not to be dreaded but desired; thus sacrifice becomes a recurrent theme throughout the novel. In the first pages, the girls decide to use their Christmas money not on themselves, but on their mother. They then give their Christmas breakfast to a poor family while they themselves dine on bread and milk. Yet "there were not in all the city four merrier people than the hungry little girls" (Alcott 16). Not all sacrifices were to be so gratifying. In perhaps the most famous scene of the book, Jo sacrifices her long locks for $25 when Marmee must travel to her sick husband. Much speculation has been written regarding this. One notion is that it is an act of self-mutilation and that "hair is a classic symbol of one's sexuality; we can add that

Jo's neutering of herself for the war effort is almost an Amazonian act" (Griswold 160). I prefer to compare it to O. Henry's later story, "The Gift of the Magi." It is a heavy sacrifice given out of love. Jo's money is not needed and is returned to her after the trip. This irony, while further paralleling the comparison of the Magii, makes her gift more extravagant and meaningful for the very fact that it was ultimately not necessary. She sobs herself asleep that night, longing for her beautiful tresses, her one physical asset. Giving of herself makes her offering a true sacrifice.

Spirituality is another theme of the book, although it is much subtler than in other works, such as Elsie Dinsmore. It has been referred to as a "secularized book," but in actuality it is not (Griswold 165). When Amy complains that she is too old to play "Pilgrim's Progress" anymore, Marmee explains, "We never are too old for this, my dear, because it is a play we are playing all the time in one way or another." She then tells each daughter to look underneath their pillows the next morning to find their "guidebook," "that beautiful old story of the best life ever lived and Jo felt that it was a true guidebook for any pilgrim going the long journey" (Alcott 11, 13). Later, Marmee shares with Jo the assurance that "'the troubles and temptations of your life are beginning and may be many, but you can overcome and outlive them all if you learn to feel the strength and tenderness of your Heavenly Father'" (Alcott 77). Such faith provides the peace Jo seeks during turbulent times.

Adolescence in itself, can be confusing, and Jo is no exception. She is full of contradicting desires and frustrations. She claims she wants to be a boy, but mourns the loss of her hair, a symbol of beauty for women. She wants to be a successful writer but

has to learn what that means. She makes money selling sensational romances but feels she does not put any of herself into that writing. Perhaps one of the most frustrating experiences for her involves love. She enjoys a platonic friendship with her neighbor Laurie. They are perfectly compatible and over the years would become the most suitable couple, except that Jo has no desire to make the relationship romantic. She relishes his company until he desires to elevate it into something more serious. She cannot requite a love she does not possess and subsequently risks losing his friendship altogether in her denial. This would not seem too illogical if she simply chose her independence and career, as she has forever professed her personal disdain for marriage. However, it becomes complicated when she decides at the end of Book II to marry a German professor, without Laurie's looks or money and old enough to be her father.

Alcott was perfectly content to leave her heroine a literary spinster, but neither her fans nor her publisher would allow it. Interestingly, though, she marries Jo off not to Laurie, the "appropriate" husband, but to Mr. Bhaer. Perhaps that was her revenge, to marry Jo off but not in a romantic fashion as hoped. Perhaps simply she recalled her own infatuations with her father's friends, such as Emerson and Thoreau. The professor is one who appreciates Jo's writing and will, presumably, encourage her to do more in the future. They also have a shared vision of leading a school for, appropriately, boys. Jo, in the end, matures from that "little woman" and manages to reconcile the dilemma between family and independence. Despite all "compromises, Little Women is a deathless book, one that contains its author's best self. Its hopes and defeats are those of all women" (Alcott 470).

CHAPTER IV

KATY CARR'S SCHOOL OF PAIN

Susan Coolidge (1835-1905), pen name for Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, was privileged to have the same editor as Louisa May Alcott. The editor suggested that Coolidge try her hand at the same type of story as Alcott wrote, and the result was <u>What Katy Did</u> (1872). The young heroine, Katy Carr, enchants the reader with her strong will and clever imagination until she eventually captures her audience with her strength of spirit after a paralyzing fall off a swing. The success of this sentimental tale encouraged Coolidge to publish a series of five books tracing Katy's adventures and maturity. However,

> despite the popularity of the Katy series, especially among English readers, there is little available critical material on Coolidge's work. . . . It also seems that today, particularly in the U.S., the Katy books are far less widely known than Alcott's or [Lucy Maud] Montgomery's novels. Yet, as has already been suggested, her work has much in common with theirs in its adaptation of the popular sentimental and domestic tradition for young readers and in its depiction of American girlhood, and it deserves equal recognition and critical attention. (Foster 110)

Furthermore, one critic claims, "Katy is almost as attractive as [Alcott's] Jo and sometimes more believable in her pranks . . . Coolidge's books deserve reading today, perhaps even a revival" (Donelson 79).

Coolidge creates a narrator who functions as an enthralling storyteller and who interrupts frequently to clarify or foreshadow events to come. This omniscient and conversational voice begins her tale in a meadow where she spies a couple of katydids which remind her of a Katy she once knew, "who planned to do a great many wonderful things, and in the end did none of them, but something quite different - something she didn't like at all at first, but which, on the whole, was a great deal better than any of the doings she had dreamed about" (Coolidge 3). This introduction serves to authenticate the story, and the reader from that moment on quickly turns each page to discover what Katy actually did.

The twelve-year-old suffers the same plight as many of her contemporary fictional friends in other classics, since she must face her adolescent years essentially orphaned: "The appeal of Coolidge's work lies in its exploration of juvenile behavior, isolated from direct contact with adults" (Foster 107). Her mother died after the sixth child was born, and as the oldest, only Katy remembers her. Their father, Dr. Carr, adores his children but is kept away days and often nights attending to the sick. For this reason, his sister, Aunt Izzie, comes to manage the household, but because she does not understand the ways of children, and since she also lacks the patience or desire to attempt an understanding, she alienates more than she mothers: "The children minded her pretty well, but they didn't exactly love her, I fear. They called her 'Aunt Izzie' always, never 'Aunty.' Boys and

girls will know what that meant" (Coolidge 5). Katy is thus continually reminded that her beloved mother had desired her to take over the role of mothering the little ones and of serving as their example, and it is against this responsibility that Katy rebels and then, conscience-stricken, strives to assume. At this point her greatest conflict is that she "made bushels of good resolutions every week of her life, only unluckily she never kept any of them. She had fits of responsibility about the other children, and longed to set them a good example, but when the chance came, she generally forgot to do so" (Coolidge 10).

One of Katy's favorite pastimes is to escape into "Paradise," a name she has given to a marshy thicket at the bottom of a field. In the summer "it was full of delightful things – wild roses, and sassafras, and birds' nests . . . it seemed as wide and endless and full of adventure as any forest of fairyland" (Coolidge 12-13). This wonderland implies a Christian allegory, for the paths that lead there have been named "Pilgrim's Path" and "The Path of Peace." Even the little rose bush in the center is known as "the dear rosary," which is planted at the top of the "Hill of Difficulty." Indeed, Katy will see herself as a pilgrim on her journey, and she will have to climb that perilous hill where she, too, will be rewarded with the beauty of the rose. Actually, this novel "is built on the framework of a moral pilgrimage. Depicting the passage through trial and endurance to the goal of perfect selfhood, it feminizes and domesticates the models of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and the Bildungsroman, combining the former's ethical preoccupations with the latter's concentration on the achievement of personal maturity" (Foster 108). But, at this point, Paradise represents the idyllic world of childhood, free

from any care, separated from reality, and protected from the adult world. Here the children feast on fanciful desserts and create winsome stories of fairies. It is also here that they each dream what they want to be and do when they, themselves, must grow up. While little Elsie desires simply to "be big, too, and know everybody's secrets" and Dorry, a small boy with a large appetite, plans to "have turkey everyday," Katy dreams of a time when she would be good and beautiful but would "never sew or knit garters, or do anything we didn't want to" (Coolidge 20). Moreover, before she shares her vision of fighting in a crusade on a white horse or being a nurse like Florence Nightingale, she says, "I mean to do something grand. I don't know what yet; but when I'm grown up I shall find out. (Poor Katy always said 'when I'm grown up,' forgetting how very much she had grown already)" (Coolidge 20). Katy cannot see herself as the children's guardian since she still views herself as a child. Paradise allows her to enter her fantasy world without adult restrictions or gender limitations. Here, she escapes to a place of freedom where she may be or do who or what she pleases. While back at home with her needle, "it was comforting to remember that 'Paradise' was always there . . . and without any fear of an angel with flaming sword to stop the way" (Coolidge 23). Her inevitable departure from Paradise results from a literal fall, which in turn is a result, like that of Adam, of selfish defiance.

Katy the tomboy does not satisfy herself merely with dreams of being a great warrior but also creates adventures in her everyday life. She climbs her school fence into the "enemy territory" of the rival school to retrieve her sun bonnet and, "as time went on, Katy, what with the excitement of her adventure and of being praised and petted by the

big girls, grew perfectly reckless, and hardly knew what she said or did" (Coolidge 30). Far from imitating the demure activities of Elsie Dinsmore, Katy engages in a made-up game, The Game of Rivers. Sitting up in the schoolroom during lunch, Katy assigns each of her friends a river while she, as creator, is Father Ocean. They are then to run about like raging rivers and occasionally even run into each other, for a "meeting of the waters, whereupon all the rivers bouncing, bounding, scrambling, screaming, would turn and run toward Father Ocean, while he roared louder than all of them put together" (Coolidge 31). As might be expected, the chaos that ensues alarms all that pass by outside, and Katy's teacher, upon returning, believes a murder has taken place. It is significant that Katy chooses to be Father Ocean, for he is most powerful. It is also noteworthy that she creates the game. She exerts her influence and power not only over her siblings but over her schoolmates as well, who carry torn skirts and bruises from their playing. This roughhousing does not reflect a submissive attitude but rather a wild and boyish one. After receiving a calm lecture from her father and with a penitent spirit resolving to do better, she gets into another scrape the following Monday.

On Sunday after church, she sits her brothers and sisters down to read excerpts from the religious paper she edits. Ironically, her discourses always concern topics such as neatness or obedience or punctuality, virtues she lectures about but does not herself display. This pretense of piety frustrates her family, but she does not see the hypocrisy. After singing some religious hymns they go to bed and awaken the next day to play kikeri, a game forbidden to them. Katy rationalizes that only Izzie, not her father, forbade her, and she thinks that while "Papa was authority, and must always be minded,

Aunt Izzie might now and then be defied" (Coolidge 48). The game is basically tag in the dark, and while bruises and broken furniture are necessary consequences of amusement, the rebellion it embodies is most of its fun. Coolidge's attention to the free-spirited frolicking of children suggests that she sought a particularly young audience. Coolidge's "more unsophisticated language confirms the impression that this is more unequivocally than its predecessor [Little Women] a work for a juvenile audience. This is not, however, to suggest that it has no wider significance or relevance to the cultural ideologies of its time, especially since the book's "representation of family structure prioritizes female behavior" (Foster 107). Interestingly, however, while the female is prioritized, the "femininity" of the behavior may be emphasized only during the first half of the novel.

Indeed, later there is some gender reversal in the book, which "shows children of both sexes" who possess "both faults and attractive liveliness" (Estes 398). Moreover, the novel's "fidelity to average child-life makes it historically significant and also continues to keep it readable" (Magill 1602). Notably, Katy's pale, chubby brother Dorry is described as "a girl who got into boys' clothes by mistake" whereas her sister Johnnie is a square, splendid child "like a boy who, in a fit of fun, had borrowed his sister's frock" (Coolidge 8-9). As one critic notes, Dorry and Johnnie "seem to reverse biological gender. Even their names are sexually confusing" (Foster 120). Katy is not the only one, then, who violates stereotypically gendered expectations. Dr. Carr and Aunt Izzie also seem to engage in role reversal as he gently tends to the sick while she "represents patriarchal authority" in the home (Foster 120).

Cousin Helen's visit marks Katy's first transformation toward becoming more gentle and subdued and also paves the way for solace from her impending tragedy. Helen is "the sofa invalid who becomes an icon of gendered moral excellence" (Foster 113). What makes Helen beloved by Katy and her family is her sincere goodness and genuine love and consideration for others. Upon greeting them, for instance, Helen "hugged them all round, not as if it was polite to like them because they were relations, but as if she had loved them and wanted them all her life" (Coolidge 96). Dr. Carr affirms, "'Cousin Helen is half an angel already, and loves other people better than herself . . . She's an example to us all, Katy, and I couldn't ask anything better than to have my little girls take pattern after her'" (Coolidge 105). During her short stay, she fascinates them all with her story-telling abilities and with delightful games that do not leave the players black and blue, so even Aunt Izzie joins in. Despite the hardship of being permanently paralyzed, she is the most joyful one in the house. Her joy is a credit to her, since she has lost not only her legs but also her one true love. Although engaged at the time of her accident, she decided that she did not want her fiancé to spend his life caring for an invalid. She therefore lives a vicarious existence next door, wistfully watching him with his wife and their daughter, also named Helen. Her "willing renunciation of sexual fulfillment and suppression of desire are inherent in the 'angel' image" (Foster 114). Her self-sacrifice offends critics who argue that "Helen, like her namesake Helen Burns in Jane Eyre, teaches lessons of resignation and self-forgetfulness, giving meaning to Katy's own entry into the female world of passivity and helplessness by instructing her in the concept of God's School of Pain" (Foster 114). The School of Pain is one in which God is the

teacher, the rules are hard, but the lessons are good and kind – such as patience, cheerfulness, and hopefulness. Katy is much impressed with all this, but exclaims, "'if I had to stay in bed a whole week – I should die, I know I should'" and then resolves to study, treat her family kindly, and keep her things in order, though still putting off her resolves by promising, "'I'll begin tomorrow'" (Coolidge 109). The narrator then laments, "what a pity it is that when morning comes and tomorrow is today we so frequently wake up feeling quite differently; careless or impatient and not a bit inclined to do the fine things we planned overnight" (Coolidge 110).

When the restless children are eager to try out their new swing, Aunt Izzie quickly robs their joy by warning in no uncertain terms that no one is to swing until the following day. One of the staples on the swing had cracked, making it unsafe, but unfortunately Aunt Izzie does not bother to explain the reason for her denial. Katy, angry at being refused and upset about clumsily breaking a vase which was a gift from Helen, loses all patience with her sister, Elsie, and pushes her down the stairs. This is an accident, but it leaves Katy more sulky and defiant than repentant. She decides to test the swing after considering, "'I suppose she [Aunt Izzie] thinks it's too hot, or something. I shan't mind her, anyhow'" (Coolidge 116). Moments later, Katy feels that she "had never swung so high before. It was like flying she thought . . . Suddenly at the very highest point of the sweep there was a sharp noise of cracking" (Coolidge 117). According to Foster, this metaphor of flying "challenges the narrow boundaries of female expression, and the subliminal sexual liberation of the act is an important element in the physical achievement as Katy goes beyond the boundaries of acceptability. Significantly her

punishment involves bodily repression. Paralyzed below the waist for the four years of her adolescent development, Katy symbolizes female entrapment" (Foster 118). It is during this bedridden stage, however, that she exerts the most influence and power by mastering the management of the house. According to Humphrey Carpenter, Katy "has to go through a chastening experience (the accident which invalids her) before she can learn to discipline her boyishness and be a little mother to the household – not a little father, for her own father is a strong presence in the book, and Katy really has none of the sexual ambiguity of Jo [March]" (Carpenter 98). Actually, despite the fact that she does not cut off her hair, she seems to display even more boyishness than Jo before the accident. And, after the accident, she exudes more power than her father in running the home and influencing those around her: "Katy was evidently the centre and sun. They all revolved about her, and trusted her for everything" (Coolidge 210).

Katy's first days registered as the new pupil in the School of Pain are anguishing. After years of tormenting little Elsie, seeing her come in with gifts of her long prized possessions "seemed to Katy as if the hottest sort of coal of fire was burning into the top of her head," and when she asked Elsie to come and kiss her, "Elsie turned, as if doubtful whether this invitation could be meant for her" (Coolidge 122). In most stories of this domestic genre, the heroine transforms those around her. In this case, Katy herself is transformed, converted, improved, and thereby empowered.

Instead of the shrewish Aunt Izzie softening under Katy's tragedy, Izzie's sleepless nights and endless devotion to her little invalid make Katy realize that her aunt had always cared deeply for all of them. Unfortunately, she does not fully realize this until

Izzie dies of typhoid fever. While Aunt Izzie was a nursemaid, Katy "hardly said thank you, and never saw how tired Aunt Izzie looked" (Coolidge 130). Full of self-pity and now selfishly miserable, she thinks of nothing but the wretchedness of her own life during the first semester of this School of Pain.

After another visit from Cousin Helen, Katy is reminded to ask the Teacher for help in struggling with the hard lessons. Helen encourages her to study, claiming it "will be like working a garden where things don't grow easily. Every flower you raise will be a sort of triumph, and you will value it twice as much as a common flower which has cost no trouble" (Coolidge 140). She further advises, "when one's own life is laid aside for a while, as yours is now, that is the very time to take up other people's lives, as we can't do when we are scurrying and bustling over our own affairs" (Coolidge 140).

Following some penitential suffering, Katy is restored to physical and moral health: "The story literally reproduces the traditional Christian patterning of fall after sin, succeeded by a gradual painful rise to a transformed selfhood. This enacts the conversion theme, a consistent feature of nineteenth-century children's stories of an evangelical cast, which despite their uncompromisingly stern didacticism, remained so popular" (Foster 111). The narrator explains, "Not that Katy grew perfect all at once. None of us do that, even in books. But it is everything to be started in the right path" (Coolidge 146).

Katy soon takes over Aunt Izzie's role of managing the house and does a remarkable job, even though confined to her room. As she regains the use of her legs, she plans on descending the stairs on September 8th, her mother's birthday, and amazingly asks herself, "'can it really be? Is school going to "let out", just as Cousin Helen's hymn said?

Am I going to bid a sweet good-bye to Pain? But there was Love in the Pain. I see it now'" (Coolidge 205). Katy makes her dramatic descent down the stairs and literally runs into the arms of her unexpected guest, Helen, who "saw the change in Katy's own face; the gentle expression of her eyes, the womanly look" (Coolidge 210). Full of modest humility, Katy denies praise for being the heart of the house, claiming that she does not truly deserve it, although, to quote the narrator's final words, "I think that Katy did" (Coolidge 210).

Rather than feeling entrapped, Katy abandons the rebelliousness of her earlier years and is content with the love surrounding her and flowing from her. Nonetheless, the novel, "centering on the activities of the pre-adolescent sphere, shows that acceptable womanliness and a spirit of female enterprise are not incompatible." It thereby opens "the way to a more overtly radical representation of girlhood later in the century" (Foster 125).

CHAPTER V

THE RESCUING OF REBECCA

A favorite classic enjoyed by readers of all ages is Kate Douglas Wiggin's (1856-1923) Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (1903). Rebecca Randall is introduced as a slender, dark-haired creature, clothed in her best rags and ornamented by a pink parasol, but as she takes her journey to her new home with her aunts, her enthusiasm for life and her captivating imagination shine through a somber appearance.

Rebecca leaves her mother and six brothers and sisters due to financial pressures after the death of her father. Living with her aunts and attending school is intended to be the "making of her" and her rescue. Her Aunt Miranda and Aunt Jane had originally wanted Hannah, the older sister and a quiet little homemaker, but Rebecca's mother could not spare her. It is no great surprise, then, when Aunt Miranda is initially horrified by the arrival of Rebecca, with her tomboy ways and her incessant talking, and unfortunately sees the girl's father in her, a man she holds in deep contempt and blames for her sister's present condition.

Rebecca is worthy of her aunts' generosity, however, since she emerges as one of the best scholars in her school. She becomes the first girl editor of her student newspaper and also the class president. She wins the affection and admiration of the wealthy and elegant Mr. Ladd, who arranges for her family's mortgage to be paid. Eventually, too, her carelessness, which exists despite her good intentions, improves. But it is the

transformation of Aunt Miranda that is compelling. Rebecca's love and goodness towards her aunts softens the older woman's once-brittle heart. Despite Miranda's own financial struggles, she sacrifices to keep Rebecca in school and then wills her the brick house upon her death. The theme of personal sacrifice runs throughout the novel as Rebecca then gives up her desire to teach in order to minister to her family.

The young heroine spends much of her childhood in her own world, daydreaming and renaming things around her. She even exclaims, "'It does make a difference what you call things'" (Wiggins 15). It is significant that she refers to her home not as Randall Farm, but as Sunnybrook Farm. This is the farm drenched in poverty, with small children she has had to care for as a small child herself, as well as the farm where she lost her beloved father. Yet, to Rebecca, "there is no place like home." Fondly remembering her brook, she informs Mr. Cobb, the stage coach driver, "'It's a shallow chattering little brook with a white sandy bottom and lots of little shiny pebbles. Whenever there's a bit of sunshine the brook catches it, and it's always full of sparkles the livelong day'" (Wiggin 16). In essence, that phrasing describes Rebecca herself.

She catches that sunshine, literally, in the first chapter as she refuses to open her precious parasol despite the heat: "'I never put it up when the sun shines; pink fades awfully, you know, and I only carry it to meetin's cloudy Sundays; sometimes the sun comes out all of a sudden, and I have a dreadful time covering it up; it's the dearest thing in life to me, but it's an awful care'" (Wiggins 9). Understanding her love for her pink treasure allows the reader to anticipate Rebecca's huge impending sacrifice. After carelessly getting paint on her new dress and not feeling adequately punished by

Miranda, Rebecca's guilt gets the best of her, and she devises her own punishment. In one fatal swoop, she drops her prized possession into the well. Her aunt does not appreciate her noble deed, however, since the umbrella becomes lodged and ruins the well and their water. In the end, she is rewarded as Mr. Ladd purchases an exquisite pink parasol for her from a fine boutique.

The relationship between Rebecca and Mr. Ladd is a charmed one. Rebecca first meets him as she goes door to door selling soap in order to win a banquet lamp. Of course, she is not doing this work for herself. She desires to present the lamp to a poor family she has befriended because she believes the lamp will brighten their lives and provide a certain warmth in their otherwise cold existence. Mr. Ladd is captivated by the bold, enthusiastic girl and buys up all of her supplies. In appreciation, she names him Mr. Aladdin, after Arabian Nights and the magic lamp. Appropriately, his name is A. Ladd and his benevolent gestures towards her throughout make him a sort of prince from a fairy tale. It is he who creates an essay contest at her school, knowing her talent in English will make her the winner, hands down. They have a platonic, devoted friendship, but the end hints of a more romantic future.

Jerome Griswold argues that Adam Ladd is himself caught up in a child's world, manifests an "idealized pedophilia," and has nothing but disdain for grown ladies: "He prefers his vision of Rebecca as a little slip of a thing, and he needs constant reassurance about her sexual immaturity. Most revealing are the last pages of the book, when he encounters Rebecca . . . as 'all-womanly' and is relieved when 'he had looked into her eyes and they were still those of a child; there was no knowledge of the world in their

shining depths, no experience of men and women, no passion, nor comprehension of it." He concludes by claiming that Ladd is not unlike Humbert in Lolita when he thinks, "Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, my mossy garden. Never grow up" (Griswold 83).

This reader, as was presumably also true of Wiggin's first loyal readers, came to quite a different conclusion. Ladd is no perverted "idealized pedophile," but a generous and sincere benefactor. In the end, when Ladd picks her up at the station, there is no "relief" sensed in him because of her innocent eyes, just as there is no Peter Pan syndrome. Furthermore, there is no evidence that he desires to be left alone in his "pubescent park." On the contrary, "Adam thought, when he had put her on the train and taken his leave, that Rebecca was, in her sad dignity and gravity, more beautiful than he had ever seen her, -- all beautiful and all -- womanly" (Wiggin 320). Moments later, as he thumbs through his book of Aladdin and the lamp, "there were certain paragraphs that especially caught his eye and arrested his attention, -- paragraphs that he read and reread, finding in them he knew not what secret delight and significance" (Wiggin 320-1). The passages he read reveal affection on both sides: "'Adorable Princess. . . if I have the misfortune to have displeased you by my boldness in aspiring to the possession of so lovely a creature, I must tell you that you ought to blame your bright eyes and charms, not me.' 'Prince,' answered the princess, 'it is enough for me to have seen you, to tell you that I obey without reluctance'" (Wiggin 322). The very delight he finds as he absorbs himself in these passages, and the fact that he has also just begged her to let him visit, plainly reveal his transformed feelings from an innocent affection towards a child to maturing feelings for a young woman, not the feelings of a man wishing to escape in his "mossy garden."

Indeed, he previously exclaims to Rebecca, "'Glad I met the child, proud I know the girl, longing to meet the woman!'" (Wiggin 292).

Despite much demand for a sequel, Wiggin refused. One Pennsylvania girl thus took it upon herself to write one and sent it in to Rebecca's creator. "As Wiggin's sister observed, the child's conclusion...goes straight to the point and settles things to the satisfaction of everybody. Mr. Ladd presents Rebecca with a ring on Christmas Day, and the next day they are married" (Griswold 84).

The relationship between Rebecca and Mr. Ladd is romantic, suspended in the initial blooms of courtship, but the relationship between Rebecca and Miranda is more significant. Aunt Miranda tries to rescue Rebecca, but it is Rebecca who ends up rescuing Miranda, as well as Aunt Jane and her own mother and younger siblings. Rebecca has her share of tragedies: separated from her family, she is essentially orphaned; her poverty; her anxiety over her mother's mortgage, which she helps fund; her baby sister's death; her mother's crippling fall; and her aunt's death. Nevertheless, these events, which might break one person, serve only to strengthen Rebecca.

There is almost an immediate change in Aunt Jane as Rebecca comes to live with them. She loses much of her timidity and stands up to Miranda, the stereotypical spinster. After Miranda's death, "warmth and strength and life flowed into the aged frame from the young one" (Wiggin 325). Jane rescues her mother by staying with her after her fall and then bringing her family to the brick house so she may care for them while "her mother would have once more the companionship of her sister and the friends of her girlhood; the children would have teachers and playmates" (Wiggin 327). But it is the

rescuing of Miranda that is less obvious, but more substantial because Jane does not rescue her from circumstances, but from herself.

A turning point for Miranda occurs when Rebecca attends a church meeting in her aunts' place because they are sick. A visiting missionary asks if there is somewhere he and his family might spend the night. Rebecca is embarrassed that no one speaks up and, having heard that her grandfather always put up missionaries, she invites them to stay with Aunt Miranda. At first Miranda is furious, but through the night she changes as "she hears Rebecca included in the missionaries' praise of the Sawyer family . . . 'A certain gateway in Miranda Sawyer's soul had been closed for years; not all at once had it been done, but gradually, and without her full knowledge . . . and now, unknown to both of them, the gate swung on its stiff and rusty hinges, and the favored wind of opportunity opened it wider and wider as time went on'" (Griswold 76).

What opens the gateway to Miranda's soul is Rebecca's passion for life. She is described as "a thing of fire and spirit" (Wiggin 26). Her energy explains her early disdain for being a girl: "Boys always do the nice splendid things, and girls can only do the nasty dull ones that get left over. They can't climb so high, or go so far, or stay out so late, or run so fast, or anything" (Wiggin 13). Her passion is only somewhat tempered by the fact that she paradoxically is both an idealist and realist. When she shares her original plan to become a painter, she is asked, "'I guess it ain't no trouble for you to learn your lessons, is it?'" to which she replies, "'Not much; the trouble is to get the shoes to go and learn 'em'" (Wiggin 14).

Her passion extends even into grammar as she laments the subjunctive mood, past perfect tense: "'Oh it is the saddest tense,' sighed Rebecca with a little break in her voice; 'nothing but ifs, ifs, ifs! And it makes you feel that if they only had known, things might have been better!'" Her passion is channeled into recitations on stage, and here she blossoms. After hearing applause, "Rebecca's heart leaped for joy, and to her confusion she felt the tears rising in her eyes. She could hardly see the way back to her seat, for in her ignorant lonely little life she had never been singled out for applause, never lauded, nor crowned, as in this wonderful, dazzling moment" (Wiggin 85). Soon her irrepressible enthusiasm meant that "wherever Rebecca stood was the centre of the stage" (Wiggin 89). She expresses her feelings well when she exclaims to her mother, "'It's enough joy just to be here in the world on a day like this; to have the chance of seeing, feeling, doing, becoming! When you were seventeen, mother, wasn't it good just to be alive? You haven't forgotten?'" Indeed, her mother had forgotten, yet when Rebecca reminds her, the mother admits, "'but I wasn't so much alive as you are, never in the world'" (Wiggin 313).

Rebecca, in the end, sacrifices her career as a teacher to take care of her family. She does not look at this with bitterness but instead maintains a thankful heart. Though her future is "close-folded still; folded and hidden in beautiful mists," the reader neither pities her choice nor finds her oppressed (Wiggin 327). This reader would have to agree with an admiring contemporary, Mark Twain, who labeled Wiggin's book "beautiful and moving and satisfying" (Estes 390).

CHAPTER VI

ANNE WITH AN "E"

Lucy Maud Montgomery's (1874-1942) Anne of Green Gables (1908) is a Canadian turn-of-the-century coming of age novel that continues to delight readers of all ages. It "has been constantly reissued both in Britain and the United States, as well as being widely translated and adapted for stage, screen, and television" (Foster 150). The young heroine is not the typical ideal girl. Anne Shirley is outspoken, defiant, hot-tempered, and stubborn. Physically, she is quite gawky and freckled with hair the color of carrots, but she is also all "spirit and fire and dew," which enchants everyone around her (Montgomery 178). This accounts for Mark Twain's praise when he wrote Montgomery to exclaim that she had created "the dearest and most loveable child in fiction since the immortal Alice" (Magill 49). Her character is not only endearing but as she "awakes her companions to a more sympathetic attitude towards girlhood as a fragile and complex stage on the way to mature womanhood" (Foster 153).

Anne is an orphan who comes to stay with Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, an elderly brother-sister couple who had believed they were getting a boy to help with the farm. She is eager to please and desperate to be accepted, to belong somewhere to someone. Unfortunately, her eager intentions are not usually fulfilled. She makes a series of mistakes, like putting liniment, instead of vanilla, in the cake for the new minister's wife and accidentally serving Diana, her best friend, a large quantity of cherry brandy at her

tea party. These recurring mishaps occur largely because of Anne's vivid imagination. She does not look at things the way they are but the way they can be, or perhaps the way they should be in her world of romance and high ideals.

Instantly, shy Matthew is won over by her fanciful imagination and delight in life and becomes her "kindred spirit." Marilla herself is won over just as easily, but her harsh exterior does not reveal her true feelings to Anne until traumatic events expose her love. Matthew dies from a heart attack, and Marilla discovers she is going blind. Broken with sorrow, Marilla confesses, "'I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood and you've been my joy and comfort ever since you came to Green Gables'" (Montgomery 296). Anne, at this point, turns down a college scholarship she has worked feverishly to win in order to stay home with Marilla. Like Rebecca's return in Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, she does not consider this a sacrifice: "There is no sacrifice. Nothing could be worse than giving up Green Gables – nothing could hurt me more. . . . I'm just as ambitious as ever. Only, I've changed the object of my ambitions " (Montgomery 303).

There are many other similarities between Anne and Rebecca. Both are separated from their natural mothers and journey to live with an elderly spinster. Both feel emotionally estranged from their caregiver until the end, when they create a true bond. Both are sensitive and intelligent and desire to teach school. Both experience a death of a family member in the end, which encourages them to rescue the living ones. Both also have an affinity for naming things.

This concern with identity is tied to Anne's desire to idealize. Barry's Pond becomes the Lake of Shining Waters, the avenue becomes the White Way of Delight, and the woodland path is transformed into Lover's Lane. "Central here is her manipulation of language, seen in a propensity for naming which she shares with Katy Carr. Through words, Anne reconstructs and thus reclaims for herself the surrounding environment. She transforms the prosaic into the poetic" (Foster 161). Indeed, by recreating the world around her, it becomes her own. This is significant for an orphan whose little carpetbag contains "all her worldly goods" (Montgomery 22).

The secret worlds Anne creates are a means of survival, but carried too far become absurd, even dangerous "for it is far too disengaged from the real world" (Foster 157). Her Haunted Wood has her and Diana both paralyzed with fear although they created the ghosts that inhabit it. Another example of Anne's dangerous imagination is her desire to reenact an Arthurian scene from Tennyson's Idylls of the King. She acts out the death of Elaine but nearly drowns on a leaky flatboard.

This confusion of fantasy and reality lends itself to quite a bit of humor throughout the novel. Anne is so dissatisfied with herself that she constantly dreams she is someone else -- Cordelia, perhaps, a name she chooses because she likes it infinitely better than plain old Anne. Her overwhelming melodramatic nature provokes a smile instead of a tear when setbacks do occur. On a dare, she walks along a pole connected to her roof. Flinging to the ground, she breaks her ankle and is bedridden for several weeks. This is somewhat reminiscent of Katy Carr's fall when she becomes paralyzed, but it lacks the somber note and the significant moral transformation. She calls out, "'No, Diana, I am

not killed, but I think I am rendered unconscious,'" and soon, "overcome by the pain of her injury, Anne had one more of her wishes granted to her. She had fainted dead away" (Montgomery 186-187).

Her passion is so vibrant that it even extends to the subject of her hair. When Mrs. Lynde pays her first visit to Anne, she makes the comment that she was not chosen for her looks because of her freckles and "hair as red as carrots." To which Anne retorts angrily, "'I hate you-I hate you-I hate you . . . How would you like to be told that you are fat and clumsy and probably hadn't a spark of imagination in you?'" (Montgomery 65). Her hair is obviously the color of her temper. Later, Gilbert Blythe, the smartest and best-looking boy at school, teases Anne good-naturedly. He has called Diana "crow" in the past because of her jet black hair, and he unfortunately whispers, "'Carrots'" in Anne's ear as he grabs one of her pig tails. Failing to see the event as classic immature flirtation, she responds without hesitation: "Thwack! Anne had brought her slate down on Gilbert's head and cracked it -- slate, not head -- clear across" (Montgomery 112). Keeping the grudge for what would be years, Anne swears with resentment, "'I shall never forgive Gilbert Blythe . . . And Mr. Phillips (the teacher) spelled my name without an "e," too. The iron has entered into my soul'" (Montgomery 113). Her hair gets her into a final scrape when she tries to dye it a luxurious black, but it ends up an awful shade of green. Referring to Jo March's sacrificed hair, Anne despairs,

> Please cut it off at once, Marilla, and have it over. Oh, I feel that my heart is broken. This is such an unromantic affliction. The girls in books lose their hair in fevers or sell

> it to get money for some good deed. . . . But there is nothing comforting in having your hair cut off because you've dyed it a dreadful color, is there? (Montgomery 218).

This is one of her few sincerely penitent moments, and she is rewarded. Her hair grows back a dark shade of auburn.

Indeed, "sin and guilt play little part" in this novel (Foster 160). After her scene with Mrs. Lynde, she is asked to apologize. She does not seem to grow from this experience, nor does she truly experience remorse for her harsh tongue. Instead, the "apology is undermined by the obvious delight Anne takes in the role of the penitent" (Foster 168). She even has "an air of subdued exhilaration about her" (Montgomery 73). Marilla perceives this and "understood in dismay that Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation – was reveling . . . and had turned it into a species of positive pleasure" (Montgomery 74). This lack of sensitive conscience is unique from her heroine predecessors.

Spiritually, Anne has her own formulas for the "straight and narrow". Her theology is simple: "'It's always wrong to do anything you can't tell the minister's wife,'" but her motives are often far from grace (Montgomery 234). After Diana's mother forbids her daughter to see Anne, Anne manages to save the life of Diana's baby sister. Mrs. Barry is obviously indebted and allows Diana to resume her friendship. Following the life-threatening event, Anne confides to Marilla – not with a sense of somber humility, but with an air of pride – "'I felt that I was heaping coals of fire on Mrs. Barry's head'"

(Montgomery 146). Later, she dreams of working as a foreign missionary, not to save souls, but because "'that would be very romantic, but one would have to be very good to be a missionary, and that would be a stumbling-block'" (Montgomery 192). Surely, Anne "changes attitudes not by her piety and angelic utterances but by overthrowing the domestic, social, and moral orders; her 'teaching' is affected through her questioning and disregard of the rules by which the surrounding adult world is programmed"(Foster 159). After her first encounter with Sunday school and church, Anne complains that her teacher got to ask all the questions and that the sermon was too long and boring. "Marilla felt helplessly that all this should be sternly reproved, but she was hampered by the undeniable fact that some of the things Anne had said . . . were what she herself had really thought deep down for years, but had never given expression to" (Montgomery 83).

Anne's need to challenge the world around her stems from her own lack of security since the loss of her mother. The "repeated motif of the dead or absent mother figure" is worth exploring (Foster 31). "Again and again, even in novels by major women authors, we find mothers who are absent, or distant, or mere substitutes" (Honig 15). Many explanations are given for this absence. The book may thus focus on the child more fully; also "the ever-watchful presence of the ideal mother might . . . preclude the possibility of adventure." A stronger argument is that "a mother who is too much on the scene prevents the development of a real, independent heroine" and that without the mother, "when the child comes to a crossroad, he or she must make crucial decisions alone: there is no ideal mother to call upon" (Honig 17,38).

Anne is this independent heroine. She takes it upon herself to make decisions, and her frequent mistakes only help her to mature. Of course, she has no desire to mature other than believing that "'It's a great comfort to think that I'll be able to use big words then without being laughed at'" (Montgomery 206). She remains a girl throughout the novel, but unlike Jo or Katy, she is not a tomboy, nor does she resent the female domesticated tasks set before her because she simply wants to fit in and be accepted by her new family. In fact she is obsessed by matters as stereotypically feminine as trendy fashions: "Anne felt that life was really not worth living without puffed sleeves" and later acknowledges, "'It is ever so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable'" (Montgomery 81, 231). Another time, Anne confesses, "'I'd rather be pretty than clever'" (Montgomery 109). There is also "much emphasis on food and domestic comfort in the novel . . . the heroine's introduction to responsibility and decision-making comes through the management of household affairs" (Foster 161). In fact, Anne's world is one in which men are almost obsolete. Instead, it is "a world in which women predominate and have control" (Foster 161). The sisterhood between Anne and Diana is highly valued. Anne even decides at one point never to marry but to live with her friend like "nice old maids," adding, "Young men are all very well in their place, but it doesn't do to drag them into everything, does it?" (Montgomery 239). In this female world, even Matthew fits in. He is passive, extremely shy, and more tender with Anne than disciplining or authoritative. In fact, Anne is more "masculine" than he, loving a challenge and never shying away from confrontation. Her academic competition against Gilbert continues throughout the novel, and other boys "when she thought about them at all, merely made possible good

comrades. There are no implications that such a fierce competition with a boy is unseemly. Marilla affirms her academic pursuits, saying, "'I believe in a girl being fitted to earn her own living whether she ever has to or not'" (Montgomery 242).

Through the years, signs appear of Anne's maturing. She is quieter and uses fewer big words: "'That's the worst of growing up . . . The things you wanted so much when you were a child don't seem half so wonderful to you when you get them'" (Montgomery 234-5). She also discovered that she had forgiven Gilbert without even realizing it, and the old grudge was replaced by a desire for his friendship. Fearing her childhood slipping away, Anne promises, "'It won't even do to believe in fairies then, I'm afraid; so I'm going to believe in them with all my whole heart this summer'" (Montgomery 247). Later, Anne assures Marilla, "'It won't make a bit of difference where I go or how much I change outwardly; at heart I shall always be your little Anne'" (Montgomery 276).

Anne is ready to cross over to adulthood in the final pages. She and Gilbert reunite, and Gilbert gives up his teaching position in town for Anne. Meanwhile, Anne learns that Marilla once cared for Gilbert's father. This foreshadows Anne and Gilbert's inevitable relationship. It appears that Anne will teach to provide for Green Gables and be both companion and comfort to Marilla, and, in regard to her future, "there would always be the bend in the road" (Montgomery 308). Mrs. Lynde arrives and comments, "'There's a good deal of the child about her yet in some ways'" to which Marilla retorts, "'There's a good deal more of the woman about her in others'" (Montgomery 305-306). Thus, in a sense, Anne of Green Gables becomes Green Gables – both are "where the brook and river meet" (Montgomery 250).

CHAPTER VII

FRESH AIR KIDS IN THE SECRET GARDEN

Frances Hodgson Burnett's (1849-1924) The Secret Garden (1911) is a British novel that celebrates the beauty of nature and the supernatural effects of positive thinking. In the beginning, Mary Lennox is a sickly, disagreeable, plain-looking little orphan girl sent to her uncle where she is then confined to a corner of a mansion and left to watch over herself. This environment surely does not seem conducive to redeeming the poor girl, but outside she finds escape, entertainment, and fulfillment in an abandoned, walled garden. As one commentator observes, the "mythic plot, rich pastoral imagery, and sensitive portrayal of child characters make this book Burnett's masterpiece, and its continuing appeal for readers of all ages has earned it recognition as a classic" (Estes 99).

Mary's parents die of cholera in the first chapter, but she is already in effect orphaned before this tragedy. Her mother, exquisitely beautiful in physical features, cares only for her social position and quite ignores her daughter altogether, considering her only a bother and an unattractive child with unattractive ways. A neighbor and Reverend criticizes, "Perhaps if her [Mary's] mother had carried her pretty face and her pretty manners oftener into the nursery Mary might have learned some pretty ways too" (Burnett 9). It is not coincidental that the mother's death is brought about by this selfishness. She had been warned to leave the area in India when cholera had been first

detected, but her superficial ambitions made her not want to miss a soiree. Her awareness comes too little too late when she laments, "I only stayed to go to that silly dinner party. What a fool I was!" (Burnett 3). Ironically, the mother's lack of attention to Mary ends up saving the daughter from the spread of the disease. Since Mary is forgotten and left completely alone in her nursery while others try to save themselves, she has been essentially quarantined. It seems significant that Mary does not feel she has lost a mother, but refers to the woman as the servants and village people do, as the Mem Sahib. Furthermore, her father, being an important official, was often detained by business matters and likewise ignored the child. Mary did not therefore grieve over losing them, since she had never had them.

Burnett's introduction allows the reader to empathize with Mary even when she is ornery, distant, and selfish. Such conduct is all she has ever known. Having never been loved or shown affection, she naturally does not understand how to care for others. After Mary travels to England to live with her uncle, Archibald Craven, the head servant, Mrs. Medlock, finds her irritating and offensive with her cold demeanor, gaunt frame, and yellow skin. However, Mary does not even realize that her behavior is rude: "She did not know she was disagreeable. She often thought that other people were, but she did not know that she was so herself" (Burnett 10). Because Mary lacks skills of introspection, Burnett provides a "twin" character to mirror her conduct and show Mary her true self. Thus, Colin Craven is introduced.

Living out on the moor, on a site vaguely reminiscent of the one in Jane Eyre, Mary feels displaced and alienated from all she ever knew to be familiar. Her uncle does not

want anything to do with her because he still grieves over the loss of his late wife and either spends his time shut away or attempts to escape by visiting foreign lands. Martha, Mary's maid (and perhaps biblically named), is the first kind and sympathizing character to reach Mary. Martha does not coddle her, but instead encourages. Speaking in her broad Yorkshire dialect, she talks to Mary as she would her little sister and treats her in much the same way. Shocked that Mary, at ten years old, cannot dress herself, she teaches her how and helps her become more independent of servants. As the two become more comfortably familiar, Martha tells Mary of Dickon, one of her twelve brothers and sisters, who is "part Pan and part Yorkshire St Francis" (Griswold 207). Martha becomes Mary's first unselfish role model as she relates without bitterness, "I get my day out once a month same as th' rest. Then I go home an' clean up for mother an' give her a day's rest" (Burnett 25). Mary then shares more about her mother, Susan Sowerby, who seems the epitome of ideal motherhood. Mary, remembering the Mem Sahib, remarks "She doesn't seem to be like the mothers in India" (Burnett 68). Martha also tells her of a hidden garden that once was the pride of the late Mrs. Craven but had been locked when the beloved woman fell from a swing of roses to her death. Mr. Craven had buried his key and his heart at that time, exactly ten years ago.

Not coincidentally, Mary was born the year that the garden was locked. Both have been lost and neglected, hidden away while having so much potential. Mary gets her first spark of enthusiasm as she plots to discover the neglected garden and make it her own. Out exploring, she meets Ben Weatherstaff, the surly old gardener. After telling him about a robin she has spied, a smile spreads across his face, and "it made her think that it

was curious how much nicer a person looked when he smiled. She had not thought of it before" (Burnett 29). This is one of her first steps to discovering herself by relating to others. Both the gardener and the robin become important figures in Mary's life. She looks at the robin, which is also orphaned, and tells him she is lonely: "She had not known before that this was one of the things which made her feel sour and cross. She seemed to find it out when the robin looked at her and she looked at the robin" (Burnett 30). From this point on, the robin seems to have mystic powers and actually helps produce changes in the lives of those around it. It symbolizes the eternal presence of Mrs. Craven and appears to convey her kindly spirit. Meanwhile, Weatherstaff claims that he and Mary are more or less kindred since both are ugly and have nasty tempers. Inasmuch as "Mary had never heard the truth about herself in her life," this was one of her first great lessons in her transformation, and she subsequently reaches out to the little bird and asks sweetly if he would be her first friend. The bird proves to be a good ally since it digs up a key as a gust of wind pulls back a curtain of ivy from the door to the locked garden.

Mary determines to bring the dead garden back to life, and, in so doing, she gains color in her cheeks and an appetite that puts meat on her frail limbs. As the garden is weeded and nurtured, so is she: "Their regeneration is simultaneous and mutual" (Griswold 201). The Eden-like garden represents growth and renewal and contrasts with the confinement of the mansion. It also "confers ownership, and the autonomy it grants allows the girl a psychic space in which to realize a personal identity" (Foster 181).

She continues to grow emotionally as she befriends Dickon and shares her secret with him. He charms her as he does the animals on the moor, and she becomes delighted with

each new day. She finds a balance, achieving independence from her garden and interdependence through her friendship with Dickon. She blossoms in her own child's world. Mary is at this point prepared for her next discovery, one still greater than that of a garden.

In the middle of the night, she hears crying, and, defying servants' warnings, she gets out of bed and bravely wanders the long corridors searching for the source. To her amazement, she stumbles upon a room marked by a tapestry, not unlike the garden door shrouded by ivy. Inside, she comes face to face with a young boy, ten years old – her cousin, Colin.

Both suspect each other of being ghosts at first, and because of this Colin is too awestruck to demand her immediate departure. He is the mansion's greatest secret. Born when his mother died in premature labor from the fall, he has been neglected by Mr. Craven all these years. Colin's eyes reminded Craven too much of his lost love, and doctors had told Craven that the child was sickly and would probably not live. Shut up in his tomb-like room, Colin had heard only the whispers of death and had thereby become a raging hypochondriac and often went into hysterics, believing he felt lumps on his back. Servants had been instructed to give him anything he wanted to prevent his outbursts, and he had become a spoiled, tyrannical, miserable boy.

These two cousins parallel each other, and Mary is now free to really see who she has been and who she wants to become. Oddly, Mary does not fear Colin and therefore is the first person to stand up to his tantrums and orders: "He was too much like herself. . . . He thought that the whole world belonged to him" (Burnett 103). She manages to entice him

with her stories of the secret garden and Dickon. They then plot to wheel Colin out into the special garden without any servants following them: "And they laughed so that in the end they were making as much noise as if they had been two ordinary healthy natural ten-year-old creatures" (Burnett 117). One critic comments,

> In its focus on the effects of isolation, the loss of parenting, the emphasis on physiological frailty, and the connection between bodily and psychic health, Colin's plot initially repeats almost precisely the formula of Mary's narrative, that of growth from weakness to strength, from exclusion to acceptance, from egotism to altruism and from ignorance to understanding. (Foster 182)

Mary saves Colin by befriending him and taking him outdoors, where he gains his strength and use of his legs, but he likewise saves her by acting as "Mary's alter ego, enabling her to confront in reality those aspects of the self that she is at first unwilling to acknowledge" (Foster 182).

Discovery, and, through it, self-discovery, is a theme throughout, and Mary learns more each day. Tenderly kissing the petals of her roses, she sighs, "You never kiss a person in that way . . . Flowers are so different," to which Dickon responds, "Eh! I've kissed mother many a time that way when I come in from th' moor" (Burnett 126). Gradually, Mary learns that genuine affection can and should occur between mothers and their children.

The garden provides a supernatural healing for Colin, as it has for Mary. The first time he enters it, he proclaims, "I shall get well! I shall get well!" (Burnett 170). This fortunate result is attributed by the children to the power of "magic," which they believe creates all good things. They then refuse to say anything negative or suggest anything about illness or death, focusing only on life. Such emphasis on the power of thinking positively was prevalent throughout the late nineteenth-century and indicates in part the author's fascination with Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science: "Eddy and her followers emphasized mind-healing in the conviction that disease is caused by incorrect thinking" (Griswold 204). The cousins are transformed by their new mode of thought, and their altered "language" symbolizes this conversion. Mary and Colin begin speaking the Yorkshire dialect – interestingly, the dialect of the servant class.

As Mary, Colin, and Dickon all speak in Yorkshire accents and play and garden together in the same garden, they disregard differences of gender and class. All have become equal. They encourage Colin to walk and exercise by repeatedly affirming his motions and encouraging him that he can do it. As he becomes less the invalid, however, distinctions of gender and class begin to surface. Colin even cries out, "It is my garden now" (Burnett 183). Weatherstaff spies them and is invited in to share the secret and joins the gardening and secret meetings, during which Colin demonstrates his sovereignty by giving lectures about scientific discoveries and willing things into existence. The garden again works its "magic," relieving the old gardener's rheumatic pains after Colin confides "in a High Priest tone" that "the Magic will take them away" (Burnett 194). The

quartet then performs mystic rites and chant and praise "magic." When they sing a chorus of a church doxology, Dickon's mother arrives at the scene.

It has been said that Mrs. Sowerby is "the Earth Goddess come to visit, . . . God, herself, . . . this Second Coming" invoked by the mystic rites (Griswold 210). While she is not the Earth Goddess, she is the incarnation of motherhood and functions as each of the children's mothers. She has been sending them advice and warm milk and bread, despite her lack of money and the many hungry mouths she must feed at her home. She nurtures children just as they nurture their precious garden. She is "the comfortable wonderful mother creature" (Burnett 202). Inside the garden, she assures Mary that the girl has become lovely and will look as beautiful as her mother one day. She tells Colin that she believes his father will care for him and that he must return home soon. He responds by grabbing hold of her and exclaiming, "You are just what I – what I wanted . . . I wish you were my mother – as well as Dickon's!" (Burnett 227). Mrs. Sowerby replies that she believes his mother is actually there in that very garden. She then takes action by writing to Mr. Craven and urging him to return home at once.

This abundance of nurturing provides a force field of regeneration, but Colin's redemption of his father is nothing short of miraculous: "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm warms the hard heart of aunt Miranda . . . and Pollyanna saves curmudgeons right and left. But we might observe that in no other novel can this regeneration be said to occur by such extraordinary means – by telepathy" (Griswold 212). Indeed, Mr. Craven begins to feel awakened and alive for the first time since his wife's death at what he later learns is the exact hour Colin first professed in the garden that he would get well. Furthermore,

Mr. Craven hears a distinct voice calling out to him to go to the garden. He believes it is the voice of his wife. Returning home immediately, he learns that his son is out in the gardens. The final scene has Colin winning a race and running into his father's arms. They then return side by side to the mansion.

Interestingly, Mary is left out of this final tableau. A return to conventional social hierarchy provides the "demonstration of male bonding that excludes female participation. Dickon, the working-class child who has been central in the regenerative process, is completely forgotten in the finale's emphasis on reconciliation between father and son. . . . and the return to the status quo [means] the exclusion of Mary and Dickon from the centre of love as well as from power" (Foster 189). The final words validate this switched conclusion: "Master Colin!" (Burnett 242). The ending is not bitter, however. It is filled with promise for the future, and it is presumably certain that many more days will be spent in the sacred garden with Colin, Mary, Dickon, Weatherstaff, and Father.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GLAD GAME AND POLLYANNA'S REPUTATION

Eleanor H. Porter's (1868-1920) Pollyanna (1927) follows much of the same formula as its predecessors in the Golden Age of Children's Literature, yet as one scholar explains, "the publication of the story in 1913 was only less influential than the World War" (Griswold 216). What made this novel warrant such an emphatic assessment? An eleven-year-old orphan travels across the country to live with her wealthy aunt, a spinster who only takes the child only out of a sense of duty. Pollyanna's bursts of joyous optimism soon win over the small town of Beldingsville, Vermont, and, eventually, even her unwilling guardian. What appears to be the cause of the work's success is that she transforms so many characters in the book and holds out hope to the readers as well.

Pollyanna is one of the first self-improvement books of its kind with the now familiar message of the power of positive thinking. The girl's reference to her father's "Glad Game" is the refrain of the novel. Her father had been a poor minister and therefore could not provide any dolls for his daughter, but he did write and request one. When the missionary barrel came, Pollyanna eagerly searched for her treasure, but all she found was a pair of crutches. The game originated then as her father told her that she could at least be glad she did not need to use them. Just hearing this sentimental explanation of the game is usually enough for the listener to agree to try. Consequently, when confronted with the daily trials of their own lives, players do not complain but instead reflect on their

blessings. The greater the challenge, the more fun and worthwhile the game. Eventually the players use this psychological tool without realizing that they are playing the game, and it converts the most cynical and severe into contented human beings.

Ironically, what made this theme so popular for decades after its publication causes it to be misunderstood and criticized today: "By 1946 the book had become a series, with titles by four authors, and had given birth to clubs, a play, several films, and an entry in dictionaries. Then, suddenly, the novel fell out of favor and, until very recently, was virtually unavailable from American publishers" (Griswold 215-216). Griswold continues, "By 1947 things had changed. Then a writer would lament: 'Almost nobody plays the Glad Game anymore . . . [It] seems to belong to a more innocent time" (Griswold 217). It is significant that Porter's book was on *adult* best-seller lists for two years, but now is seen as a child's book that is hardly worth reading because of its reputation for empty-headed optimism. Porter herself felt inclined to defend her work, explaining, "I have never believed that we ought to deny discomfort and pain and evil: I have merely thought that it is far better to greet the unknown with a cheer" (Porter i.). Pollyanna does experience a range of emotions and more than her fair share of pain because of early poverty, the death of both of her parents, and a paralyzing accident. Her attitude is not one of ignorant bliss but is "an available mechanism of escape" (Mott 221). While Katy Carr enjoys her stories and Mary Lennox visits her garden, Pollyanna has her Glad Game. A radical shift from popular interpretation is Griswold's contention that "the novel is far more complex than that. Pollyanna is only playing the fool . . . and is a genius at reverse psychology" (Griswold 219-220).

Her habitual willingness to see only the best in people as well as in situations results in holding certain expectations of them. Sensing her expectations, they acquiesce to her many whims. For example, Aunt Polly, who detests animals, finds herself on more than one occasion boarding stray cats and dogs that Pollyanna brings home because of the clever method the child uses to convince her aunt. She appears less innocent than manipulative as she coaxes Aunt Polly: "'Of course I knew,' hurried on Pollyanna gratefully, 'that you wouldn't let a dear little lonesome kitty go hunting for a home when you'd just taken me in, and I said so to Mrs. Ford when she asked if you'd let me keep it.'" Then, as Aunt Polly tries to explain her position, "Pollyanna was already halfway to the kitchen, calling: 'Nancy, Nancy, just see this dear little kitty that Aunt Polly is going to bring up along with me!' And Aunt Polly, in the sitting-room – who abhorred cats – fell back in her chair with a gasp of dismay, powerless to remonstrate" (Porter 94). Pollyanna's refusal to accept anything contrary to her desires in effect leaves this unpretentious young girl with more power than the adults around her. She creates her own reality, of which she is sovereign. Critic Peter Hunt concurs, writing, "she is lonely, isolated, and yet is superior to every adult she encounters, defeating them by a simple formula" (Hunt 24).

Pollyanna employs this formula as a tool to defuse her aunt's punishments as well. Being punctual for dinner is enforced at the Whittier household, so when Pollyanna arrives late, Aunt Polly sends her to the kitchen to eat a meager little meal of bread and milk. Rather than feeling satisfied at discouraging the girl's future tardiness, however, the aunt receives a shock that challenges her mode of discipline. Pollyanna enters the

sitting-room exclaiming, "'I was real glad you did it, Aunt Polly. I like bread and milk, and Nancy too. You mustn't feel bad about that one bit . . . I've had such a beautiful time, so far. I know I'm going to just love living with you!'" (Porter 39). After a few more attempted punishments and similar responses, Aunt Polly "was being confronted with the amazing fact that her punishment was being taken as a special reward of merit. No wonder Miss Polly was feeling curiously helpless" (Porter 61). Pollyanna is not sincerely joyful about her scanty rations and cannot feel that she has had "such a beautiful time, so far." Indeed, moments after her cheerful speech to her aunt in the privacy of her little attic room, "a lonely little girl sobbed into the tightly clutched sheet" (Porter 40). In reality her undaunted gratitude provides a temporary escape from her tragic life, as well as serving to protect her from punishment and providing her with fulfillment. This leads Griswold to conclude,

> Only an open-minded reader, ready to go beyond received opinion, will open the book. And only a skillful reader will recognize that Pollyanna is not as naïve as she might seem at first. She is, instead, one of the most cunning tricksters to appear in American children's books since Tom Sawyer persuaded his friends to whitewash the fence for him. (Griswold 218)

What makes this novel especially rich is that its heroine is not only successfully adept at manipulating the world around her, but she also remains inculpable while doing so. This blamelessness allows her to function as a Christ symbol. Born from an angelic

mother, Pollyanna emerges as savior to a town "that seems to be populated almost entirely by invalids" (Griswold 231). She befriends the dour Mrs. Snow, paralyzed and bedridden, who has shut out the world and lost her will to live. Her room is dark and dismal, and she alienates herself from well-intentioned friends by criticizing the various foods they bring. If they bring chicken, she laments her craving is for lamb broth, and vice-versa. Her bedclothes are worn and her hair is disheveled as she resigns herself to an existence of misery. Despite all this, after a couple of visits from Pollyanna, the woman opens her blinds, dresses in new gowns, and wears her hair adorned in neat curls. More significantly, she eagerly anticipates each day and the opportunities it affords her to seek out new blessings since she is the newest player of the Glad Game. All this because Pollyanna is clever enough to have brought her an assortment of foods and to have asked her previously what she wanted to eat. Mrs. Snow "did not realize it herself, but she had so long been accustomed to wanting what she did not have, that to state offhand what she did want seemed impossible" (Porter 86). Simply put, "instead of a fallen world tainted by original sin, these new secularized novels seem to offer a vision of the world as a sick world . . . and salvation often comes through optimism" (Griswold 231).

Pollyanna rescues Mr. Pendleton, a crabby aristocrat, after he breaks his leg; she has more of a recuperating effect on him than the doctors. It turns out he was once in love with Pollyanna's mother years ago, and her rejection when she married a modest pastor left him alone and bitter. Enchanted by Pollyanna, he becomes a prominent game player and even offers to adopt her and make her his heir to his entire estate. She politely refuses and encourages him to adopt a poor orphan boy for whom she has been seeking a

home, thus showing her desire to serve rather than be served. Pendleton continues his positive outlook and becomes a great father to the needy boy. Thus, Pollyanna cures the sick and acquires disciples who spread the word about the Glad Game. And, to drive home the Christian parallel, since it was her father's game, she is always about her father's business, spreading the message of good news. There is even an "empty tomb" scene as Nancy, the maid, goes to the attic to get Pollyanna and finds nothing there. Nancy wails to the gardener, "'Mr. Tom, Mr. Tom, that blessed child's gone. She's vanished right up into heaven where she come from, poor lamb – and me told ter give her bread and milk in the kitchen – her what's eatin' angel food this minute, I'll warrant, I'll warrant!'" (Porter 32). On the contrary, this time Pollyanna has simply climbed out of her window and down a tree. According to Griswold, "writers like Porter, abjured by a secular age to make little mention of the heavenly 'Father,' resorted to analogy" (Griswold 233). Appropriately, the novel was first "published serially in the Christian Herald" (Mott 221).

Another symbol in the story is a prism. Pendleton has a prism, which casts rainbows over his otherwise dreary home. When Pollyanna expresses delight in the shimmering object, he provides her with several, which she then plans to dispense to others. As she gazes on the spectrum of colors from the sunlight, she laughs and says, "'I just reckon the sun himself is trying to play the game now, don't you? Oh, how I wish I had a lot of those things! How I would like to give them to Aunt Polly and Mrs. Snow and – lots of folks. I reckon then they'd be glad all right! Why, I think even Aunt Polly'd get so glad she couldn't help banging doors – if she lived in a rainbow like that'" (Porter 163). This

shift in perspective, another technique for seeing things differently, suggests possibilities. In fact, in this narrative, "adults are made child-like, made to realize that they are free to choose how they see life" and to discover "it is possible to remain innocent without being ignorant" (Griswold 235). The shift in perspective also manages to redefine the very definition of living. Pollyanna distinguishes simply "breathing" from "living" after she hears her aunt's rigid schedule of reading, sewing, and cooking. to be carried out each day. She cries out, "'Oh, but Aunt Polly, Aunt Polly, you haven't left me any time at all just to – to live . . . Oh, of course I'd be breathing all the time I was doing those things, Aunt Polly, but I wouldn't be living. You breathe all the time you're asleep, but you aren't living. I mean *living* – doing the things you want to do'" (Porter 51). This philosophy causes Pendleton to moan after her accident, hearing that she would never walk again, "'It seems cruel – never to dance in the sunshine again! My little prism girl!'" (Porter 228). And, profoundly, he remarks, "'I'm thinking that the very finest prism of them all is yourself, Pollyanna'" and to become misty eyed when she replies, "'Oh, but I don't show beautiful red and green and purple when the sun shines through me, Mr. Pendleton!'" (Porter 164).

Although the book could be dismissed as a tract offering of hopeful confidence and rays of sunshine, adult readers may appreciate some of the criticisms of hypocrisy that are spelled out in between the lines. Pollyanna's view of the adult world would seem discouraging, except for the memories she has of her parents. Her optimism thereby becomes "a subversive alternative to maturity – if 'maturity' means a surrender to 'things as they are', ironic resignation, and 'level-headed realism'" (Griswold 234). For example,

the narrator describes the Ladies Aid of Beldingsville, a church society of women whose mission statement is to help the less fortunate. When Pollyanna is looking for a home for her new orphan friend, Jimmy, she bravely petitions the group and assures the little foundling that he will soon find his place. Unfortunately, the ladies are more interested in boys overseas than in their own community. They receive attention for offerings to Hindu missions but will go unrecognized for any support locally. Pollyanna "thought she could not have understood, . . . for it sounded almost as if they did not care at all what the money did, so long as the sum opposite the name of their society in a certain 'report' 'headed the list' – and of course that could not be what they meant at all!" (Porter 110-111). Hypocrisy also reigns within the church itself. Rev. Paul Ford is sick at heart by his encounters with "wrangling, backbiting, scandal, and jealousy" (Porter 187) and intends to preach a fire and brimstone message to his congregation, until Pollyanna empathizes with his situation, remembering her own father's ministry. She confides that he would not have stayed "'a minister a minute if 'twasn't for the rejoicing texts . . . those that begin "Be glad in the Lord" or "Rejoice greatly" or "Shout for joy". . . Once, when Father felt specially bad, he counted 'em. There were eight hundred of 'em'" (Porter 192). Thus, Pollyanna subtly reveals that her Glad Game has been sanctioned by Scripture.

Pollyanna's accident serves as her game's greatest test when she is the victim of a hit and run driver as she is hurrying home from school. Temporarily she believes that she finally cannot think of anything on earth to be glad about. It is at this time that she is bombarded by well-wishers who communicate to her how they have been touched by her

life for the better. The reverend in a sermon says, "'The influence of a beautiful, helpful, hopeful character is contagious, and may revolutionize a whole town'" (Porter 195). Thus inspired, Pollyanna, even in her sick-bed, manages to achieve her greatest transformation, that of Aunt Polly. With a melted heart, the aunt dotes on her niece and promises (at last) to play the Glad Game with her. The tragic incident even serves to reunite Aunt Polly with her estranged lover, Dr. Chilton, who comes to their rescue with his knowledge of a dear friend who has experience in spinal injuries and has had success with healing some of his patients. The contagious optimism of the novel infects the readers at this point, for we fully expect the experiment to heal Pollyanna. Domestic harmony is resolved with the reconstruction of the family as Aunt Polly and Dr. Chilton marry at her bedside. The last chapter is a letter written by Pollyanna informing her aunt and uncle that she has walked six steps and will try eight tomorrow. The Glad Game comes full circle, for she must now be truly thankful she received those little crutches in that missionary barrel years ago as they aid her now in her walking. Rather than wallowing in her suffering, Pollyanna conveys genuine strength of will and character by rising above earthly pain when it comes her turn to experience major suffering and discouragement.

CHAPTER IX

FRANKIE ADDAMS: THE MEMBER OF NOTHING

Carson McCullers' (1917-1967) The Member of the Wedding (1946) marks a definite shift in the attitude and behavior of the young adolescent from previous works in this study. The main character, Frankie Addams, is not truly a "heroine" by conventional standards. Like many of her predecessors, she is a twelve-year-old tomboy, caught between the world of adults and the world of children, but her tremendous sense of isolation causes her to hate the world and herself. Disgusted with her Southern town, she falls in love with distant and unknown places. Meanwhile, her brother is a soldier in Alaska who returns home to share his wedding plans. This sets the scene for her immediate infatuation with his wedding and her scheme to be part of that union in order to escape from the site of unhappiness.

Frankie "first experiences loneliness as a sense of alienation from the person she once was" (Wikborg 6). She sees the other neighborhood children who were formerly her playmates as silly and ugly. She is still afraid at night, but her father no longer allows her to sleep with him because of her size. Plagued by a poor self-image, she looks in the mirror and quickly closes her eyes and turns away. Physically, she is a typical gangly teenager, all arms and legs, but she exaggerates her height into something unnatural. She is only five feet five but imagines herself as growing to over nine feet: "'And what would be a lady who is over nine feet high? She would be a freak'" (McCullers 16-17).

She is further dismayed by her short red hair. She yearns for long flowing blond hair instead of her crew cut. Interestingly, a girl's hair being cut off is a literary pattern seen throughout these books, but she does not have it cut to make money nor does she have to sacrifice it in order to get rid of green dye. She has chosen this style as a carefree young tomboy only to wake up as a young woman with an adolescent's vanity.

"At the same time, 'according to one commentator,' she is excluded by the adult world, the exciting wider world of which she is gradually becoming aware" (Wikborg 7). Older, prettier girls leave her feeling rejected when they form a club and do not invite her to join. They further disgrace her by gossiping that she smells bad. This occurs after her only friend moves to Atlanta. Left alone, she continues her childish games of make believe. She puts on a sombrero and pretends she is Mexican, uttering foreign phrases to those who cross her path. At other times, she picks up her father's tools and pretends she is an experienced watchmaker at her father's jewelry shop. She tries anything to escape being Frankie. The narrator explains, "This was the summer when Frankie was sick and tired of being Frankie. She hated herself, and had become a loafer and a big no-good who hung around the summer kitchen: dirty and greedy and mean and sad" (McCullers 19-20).

"Frankie's position in this unpleasant land between the worlds of child and adult is aggravated by her sense of exclusion from the lives of the three people who are closest to her" (Wikborg 7). Her mother died when she was born, so her father and a black servant, Berenice, are raising her. Her six-year-old cousin, John Henry, spends most of his time with her at her home, though he "cannot relieve her loneliness because she no longer

belongs to his child's world" (Wikborg 8). Frankie's father is mostly absent, working long hours at his store and leaving Frankie for endless hours with Berenice and John Henry. These two companions "represent the two worlds of experience and innocence respectively, between which Frankie darts uncertainly back and forth, feeling at home in neither" (Evans 110).

With a deceased mother and an often-absent father, Berenice represents the adult world to Frankie, and this explains some of Frankie's inner turmoil and rebellion. Berenice is

> several selves struggling in a fragmented spirit and becomes at different times the affectionate or stern mother, the primitive seer, and the black queen who once lived with her dream-lover, Ludie Freeman, in a beautiful land of ice and snow, . . . the grieving widow, insulted divorcee, the battered and disfigured wife, the woman fearful of aging, the exploited black servant, the woman who greatly enjoys sex, and the perennially hopeful bride. (McDowell 81)

Similarly, Frankie feels she has alternate personalities within her, and she struggles to discern which "Frankie" she truly is. This is most obvious by her change of names throughout the book. The novella covers only four days of her life, yet she has three different names and three distinct personalities within this time.

As Frankie, she is the tomboy. She longs to be a soldier and fight oversees. She steals her father's pistol and shoots in vacant lots. She stomps her feet and whistles at movies

and even practices knife throwing in the kitchen. When confronted by a soldier in a hotel room, she breaks a pitcher of ice over his head and leaves him unconscious. "Frankie exists in a divided state – while she hesitates to stay in childhood, she can't fulfill her desire to be 'grown up' without accepting her identity as female, and she already suspects that her gender will be confining" (White 91). Her struggle then manifests itself through "odd eating habits, kleptomania, self-mutilation, and running away from home" (White 99). For example, she often hacks at her foot with a knife, trying to remove a splinter. Even her name, "Frankie" is "sexually ambiguous and is generally more applicable to boys than to girls" (Evans 13). However, with the birth of her wedding dream, she becomes reborn -- as F. Jasmine "because women who are part of a wedding change their names as they enter a 'joined' life" (McDowell 83).

The name "F. Jasmine," also a reference to the quintessential Southern flowering vine, holds significance for her since the names of her brother and his fiancée both begin with "Ja." Thus, she delights in this union of the three "ja's" and dreams of snow, thousands of friends, and memberships to any club she desires. "She does not wish to be joined to a person but to that which joins all people – to the 'we' of people. For this, a wedding is of course exactly the right symbol. And what she has fallen in love with is an idea, the idea of a wedding" (Evans 107). Thinking of Jarvis and Janice, she "almost said aloud: '*They are the we of me.*' Yesterday, and all the twelve years of her life, she had only been Frankie. She was an *I* person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a *we* to claim, all other except her" (McCullers 39).

As F. Jasmine, she loses her old fear and becomes self-confident. Adorned in her pink dress, lipstick, and perfume, she roams her town and shares with anyone who will listen her plan to leave home with the wedding party and live with her brother and his bride. Unfortunately, no one really cares, including her father, who interrupts, asking where his tools have been misplaced. Nevertheless, she senses a new connection with all those around her. This relieves her since the only connection she had ever felt before was with the "freaks" at the fair. "She only wanted to be recognized for her true self. It was a need so strong, this want to be known and recognized" (McCullers 56). As F. Jasmine, however, she mistakes a soldier's desire for sex with her desire to connect mentally. She longs to discuss the war that has left her feeling so misplaced while he escapes from that very war into his can of beer. When he tries to seduce her and she escapes, the "Frankie" is still the part of her she cannot share regarding what happened when she returns to John Henry because she doesn't fully understand that event herself. She further shows her naiveté by reassuring Berenice, "'I don't think he was drunk. People don't get drunk in broad daylight'" (McCullers 72).

Part of the reason Frankie's world does not make sense is because she sees so much of it as "unfinished." It is not coincidental that Frankie hears the piano tuner mounting towards a climax with no resolution. Another time, she hears a horn playing in the night: "Just at the time when the tune should be laid, the music finished, the horn broke off. All of a sudden the horn stopped playing. For a moment Frankie could not take it in, she felt so lost . . . The tune was left broken, unfinished. . . . She hit herself on the head with her fist, but that did not help at all" (McCullers 41-42). Even people are seen as unfinished.

Berenice's brother, Honey Brown, is described as a "boy God had not finished. The Creator had withdrawn from him too soon" (McCullers 122). Other "unfinished" characters are the freaks at the fair, the half-man/half-woman, for example. Because of this sense of the incomplete, Frankie, Berenice, and John Henry decide that they themselves would make a more effective Trinity in creating the world. John Henry would create chocolate dirt while in Berenice's world "there would be no separate colored people." The old Frankie added "a world club with certificates and badges" and "she planned it so that people could instantly change back and forth from boys to girls, which ever way they felt like and wanted" (McCullers 92).

"Allusions to abnormality occur throughout" (Evans 123). Indeed, the novella is permeated with a sense of subtle perversion. An intriguing figure to Frankie, for instance, is the monkey man. The monkey does tricks and onlookers give the man change. Interestingly, the man and his monkey look alike. John Henry prefigures a transvestite as he "stood like a little old woman dwarf, wearing the pink hat with the plume, and the high heeled shoes" and dresses this way for much of the book (McCullers 117). Berenice, having lost her beloved husband Ludie Freeman, marries another because he has the same deformed thumb as Ludie. Berenice tells the story of Lily Mae, a black boy who changed his sex and turned into a girl. All of these incidents reflect the loneliness and isolation of any form of humanity that seems different.

Perhaps there is so much gender confusion in the novel because of the social stereotypes and expectations. Berenice is similar to Amanda Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie as she instructs Frankie to fix herself up, speak sweetly, and act shy. In other

words, "passivity, submission, and trickery" are the ways to win a man, and she recalls the number of beaux she has had in her life (White 94). The old Frankie is not interested in beaux and, feeling misunderstood, rebels. She "can fight more intensely the authority character . . . when it is represented in a servant than in a parent" (McDowell 86).

Disturbingly erotic passages with seemingly innocent meanings are prevalent. Continual mention is made of F. Jasmine and John Henry undressing and lying down in bed together, despite her being too mature to sleep with her father. Another passage simply involves Berenice comforting F. Jasmine, but the language is somewhat erotic:

> She leaned back and put her face against Berenice's neck; her face was sweaty and Berenice's neck was sweaty also . . . He right leg was flung across Berenice's knee, and it was trembling . . . She could feel Berenice's soft big ninnas against her back . . . She had been breathing very fast . . . the two of them were close together as one body, and Berenice's stiffened hands were clasped around F. Jasmine's chest . . . It was Berenice who finally sighed. (McCullers 113)

The episode is harmless, yet the tone reminds the reader of the darkness of the novel with its silent fears and insecurities. The wedding dream is doomed to fail and the theme becomes "the essential loneliness of man and the eternal futility of his escape" (Evans 125).

The entire book builds up to the wedding, but that pivoted event is described in one sentence:

> The wedding was like a dream, for all that came about occurred in a world beyond her power; from the moment when, sedate and proper, she shook hands with the grown people until the time, the wrecked wedding over, when she watched the car with the two of them driving away from her, and flinging herself down in the sizzling dust, she cried out for the last time: 'Take me! Take me!' – from the beginning to the end the wedding was unmanaged as a nightmare. (McCullers 135)

The reader thus becomes as disillusioned with the wedding as Frances, the new girl who left F. Jasmine behind kicking and screaming to go on the honeymoon.

After the wedding, this Frances steals money and runs away, deciding she needs no one to see the world. She decides to hop a freight train until she discovers she does not quite know how one does that. Instead, she places a gun to her head, but changes her mind. She claims she wants independence yet she mourns, "'If there was only somebody to tell her what to do and where to go and how to get there!'" (McCullers 144). She returns to the hotel where she had met the soldier and decides she will ask him to marry her. Instead she is apprehended by the law, and her father picks her up.

The conclusion is quite abrupt. Frances is thirteen. Berenice compromises and marries another man for companionship, not love, and moves out. She is last seen

gripping the fox fur that her first husband bought her. The reader learns that John Henry died somewhere between chapters of meningitis. His death is "consistent with the logic of the story: it emphasizes the sense of universal meaninglessness and chaos. . . it serves a purpose since he is identified with Frankie's childhood" (Evans 124). His death is also the death of her early identity. Yet despite all of this, Frances is happy for the first time in the novel. She no longer feels isolated and is elated with her new friendship with Mary Littlejohn, a girl who belongs to the club: "'I consider it the greatest honor of my existence that Mary has picked me out to be her one most intimate friend'" (McCullers 151). Her joy at this point may seem sudden and insensitive in light of the tragedy around her, but she is visited by John Henry in nightmares and has suffered repeatedly in her few years. She is now older but can actually enjoy her childhood more as she does not relinquish her dreams but plans to become a poet instead of a soldier and go around the world with Mary in three more years. Her idealism is not sacrificed, but her self-loathing has been diminished.

CHAPTER X

FROM RAPE TO RIOT TO RUNAWAYS: A LOOK INTO SCOUT FINCH'S WORLD

Harper Lee's (1926 -) To Kill a Mockingbird (1960) is a provocative novel depicting a seemingly quiet Southern town with undercurrents of racism and bigotry beneath its surface. The disturbances that ensue are uniquely narrated through the eyes of Scout Finch. This first-person point of view allows a mature Scout to recall events of the past as she had seen them as a child, without any moralizing interpretation. Despite the absence of a judgmental tone, and despite the inclusion of profanity and violent sexuality, this classic is perhaps more didactic than previous books in this study. While holding up a mirror to hypocrisy and to the reader's conscience, the stirring novel elicits compassion and empathy for those who are considered different according to race, gender, age, or class. Donelson contends, "Mockingbird was for many young adults the first book they had read about racial problems in the South, a book that gave them a hero . . . to some, Lee's novel served as a sympathetic introduction to black people" (Donelson 161). Claudia Johnson asserts, "To Kill a Mockingbird is unquestionably one of the most widely read, best selling, and influential books in American literature." She goes on to report that "researchers found that one of the three books most often cited as making a difference in people's lives was To Kill a Mockingbird (it was second only to the Bible)" (Johnson, Understanding xi). Amazingly, Johnson recognizes in a 1994 publication that

although "the novel steadfastly maintains its position in the contemporary canon as an American masterpiece . . . in the thirty plus years since its publication, it has never been the focus of a dissertation, and it has been the subject of only six literary studies, several of them no more than a couple of pages" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 20). Volumes could be written on the significance of the rape trial and the emergence of the recluse "Boo" Radley, but the focus here will be on Scout and her relationship with the world around her.

Scout is six years old at the beginning of the story, and her experiences cover two and a half years. In many ways, she is not unlike the other girls studied here. Her mother died when she was too young to have any real memory of her. In fitting with the angelic mother image, the entire town seems to have had tremendous respect for the late Mrs. Finch, including the crusty old Mrs. Dubose, a neighbor who while fighting morphine addiction approves of no one. Raised by her attorney father, Atticus, Scout is the typical tomboy, dressed more comfortably in overalls than skirts and found chasing after her older brother Jem. She does have reservations about joining some of Jem's plots to spy on Arthur "Boo" Radley but is quickly persuaded when he shouts, "'You're getting more like a girl everyday,'" to which she admits, "'With that I had no option but to join them'" (Lee 56). She has no girl friends and plays with guns instead of dolls. Her nickname is obviously androgynous, but she prefers it to her given name, Jean Louise. She does enjoy an innocent relationship with Dill, a fatherless runaway who proposes marriage the first summer he meets Scout. She derives a sense of satisfaction from her engagement, but she envisions married life as a continuation of their adventures of their "boyish"

childhood. In her innocence, she informs Dill of how they will have their own children one day: "'God drops 'em down chimneys'" (Lee 146). Her misinformation is due not only to her age, but also to the elderly widows or widowers who live on her street, and she considers it quite a challenge to consider any of them, including her father, as someone who was once young. Meanwhile, she feels misunderstood by the genteel members of the community who disapprove of her boyish ways and her frequent fistfights. These tomboy tendencies and the sense of alienation from society reveal parallels with previous works: "Very few reviewers venture any surmise about influences on the novel. But Phoebe Adams does note an Alcottish tone, and several other reviewers make a connection between To Kill a Mockingbird and the work of Carson McCullers, particularly Member of the Wedding" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 23).

One significant difference between Scout and Member's Frankie Addams is that Scout feels needed by her family. Reflecting on her father and Calpurnia, the maid who functions more as the children's "surrogate mother," Scout wonders, "'What would I do if Atticus did not feel the necessity of my presence, help, and advice? Why, he couldn't get along a day without me. Even Calpurnia couldn't get along unless I was there. They need me'" (Lee 145). Her sense of security is a credit to her father although she does not recognize his significance. Describing her relationship with Atticus, she asserts, "'Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment'"(Lee 10). Atticus is the hero of the novel, but in his family, this "courteous detachment" reflects their rather formal relationship. He speaks to her as if he

were speaking to an adult. He hides nothing from her and fully answers all of her questions, appropriate or not, with patience. There is little expressed affection. The reader never sees him kiss his daughter or shower her with words of love. Their most tender moments come when she sits upon his lap to read the newspaper. Upon the arrival of her first day of school, which simultaneously terrifies and overwhelmingly excites Scout, Atticus offers Jem a handful of dollars to take her to class for him. It is not surprising, then, that Scout calls her father by his first name. Their father-daughter relationship is indeed unique. Nonetheless, she has immense respect for Atticus, a man of constant integrity who (Scout acknowledges,) "often woke up during the night, checked on us, and read himself back to sleep" (Lee 61). Furthermore, when criticized by his sister Alexandra, Atticus truthfully explains, "'Sister, I do the best I can with them!'" (Lee 85).

Calpurnia may be likened to the stereotypical spinster aunts of the earlier novels. Scout describes her as "'all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard. She was always ordering me out of the kitchen, . . . and calling me home when I wasn't ready to come. Our battles were epic and one-sided . . . and I had felt her tyrannical presence as long as I could remember'" (Lee 10). Scout comes to realize in the course of the novel that Calpurnia treats her as one of her own and that not only does Calpurnia need Scout, but Scout needs Calpurnia as well. One turning point in their relationship occurs when Calpurnia takes Jem and Scout to church with her. It is here that Scout discovers Calpurnia has a whole other life, completely distinct from the one at her house, and Scout's egocentric world consequently

expands. Fascinated with Calpurnia's "other self," complete with a different dialect as long as she is among other blacks, Scout begs to go home with her one day soon and experience Calpurnia's world. Not long before, Scout, in a Frankie Addams mood, had "told Calpurnia to just wait, 'I'd fix her: one of these days when she wasn't looking I'd go off and drown myself in Barker's Eddy and then she'd be sorry'" (Lee 29). Scout's transformation is prompted by Atticus's advice always to try to walk in others' shoes to understand them. Calpurnia and Scout reach an understanding and an intimacy, but Scout is never allowed to visit Calpurnia's home because Aunt Alexandra deems it unfitting to associate socially with people who are "different." It is Scout who, from the mouths of babes, confides in her brother, "'Naw, Jem, I think there's just one kind of folks. Folks'" (Lee 230).

Scout's observations of the adult world leave her little to emulate as far as the "traditional" family. Interestingly, her little town of Maycomb, Alabama in the 1930's offers no mention of children who are able to remain with both mother and father except Mr. Dolphus Raymond. A white man married to a black woman, he steals sips of coca cola out of a brown paper bag so that the town will think he is an alcoholic and excuse his interracial ways. The other fathers in the novel contrast strongly with Atticus. Dill's biological father is unknown, and his stepfather has no use for him. Boo Radley's father has imprisoned him in his house for decades because of a high school misdemeanor. Mayella Ewell's father, considered "white trash" in the community, accuses an innocent black man, Tom Robinson, of raping and beating his daughter, when he himself is guilty

of the abuse and incest. Tom's family life is actually strong and loving, so it is even more tragic that the Ewell trial strips him from his home.

Harper Lee integrates much symbolism through the image of the mockingbird in her novel and is effective in creating several aptonyms for her characters. "Ewell" is homophonic for "evil" while "the Finches are also like the mockingbirds in the novel; and Jem and Scout evoke a sense of value and selfless service" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 25). The book is divided into two parts, one introducing Boo Radley and the second focusing on Tom Robinson's trial. While these men are repeatedly likened to mockingbirds because both are vulnerable innocents "shot down" by a careless society, it is Scout who emerges with this symbol as the victorious surviving mockingbird. Johnson explains, "The narrator, herself, is the singing mockingbird, joined in story with Tom Robinson and Boo Radley and others, conveying their different songs as she sings first the song of one bird, then that of another" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 37).

Scout's understanding of Boo parallels her understanding of herself. At first she sees him as some supernatural ghost or vampire. There are strange reports floating around Maycomb that he stabbed his father in the leg with the kitchen knife, and eerily, no explanation is ever given. While Jo March reenacted scenes from Pilgrim's Progress, Scout, Jem, and Dill instead reenact the horrors they envision transpire in the Radley house. Keith Waterhouse of the New Statesman finds significance in the children's games, "which lead them and us into danger, and the inevitable attraction of the forbidden and the different" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 22). Eventually, Scout discovers that Boo has left them little treasures like chewing gum and soap dolls in the

tree in his front yard. And, when Scout faces her most dangerous hour, it is Boo who saves her and Jem from a drunken and murderous Bob Ewell and then carries a wounded Jem to Scout's home. Afterwards, he asks Scout to escort him home. Once terrified of his shadow, she now sees him more as her guardian angel. On his front porch, a place she would not have dared ventured earlier, she applies Atticus's counsel as she examines their street as Boo would have seen it over the past several years. A more mature Scout remembers, "'As I made my way home, I felt very old'" (Lee 282).

Scout does not conform to "accepted" society by choice. When Uncle Jack asks, "'You want to grow up to be a lady, don't you?'" Scout responds, "'Not particularly'" (Lee 84). Johnson contends, "Part of the process of Scout's learning to know Boo Radley and the black people in Maycomb is Scout's coming to feel just how much of an outsider she is herself" (Johnson, Understanding 2-3). She is ridiculed at school for already knowing how to read. Her teacher spanks her hand with a ruler on her first day after Scout tries to explain the ways of some of the students in the class. She feels increasingly isolated as Jem grows up and, instead of teasing her for being a girl, shouts, "'It's time you started bein' a girl and acting right!'" (Lee 117). Later, when she and Jem get into a brawl and she gets punched in the stomach, she exults, "'It nearly knocked the breath out of me, but it didn't matter because I knew he was fighting, he was fighting me back. We were still equals'" (Lee 140). On another occasion, Jem is punished for ruining Mrs. Dubose's lawn after she insults Atticus and is forced to spend his afternoons inside her putrid home, reading aloud to her until her alarm sounds and she dismisses him. It is noteworthy that Scout accompanies him each day. She volunteers to share his penalty

simply because she wants to be with Jem. Aunt Alexandra comes to the Finch house in order to be a female influence in Scout's life. Ironically, Atticus understands girls better than Alexandra. When Alexandra invites the missionary ladies over, they rudely discuss Atticus's decision to represent Tom Robinson and reveal their hypocrisy and self-righteous attitudes under the pretense of a Christian meeting. This is significant for Scout, who is dressed up and compelled to participate. Scout also recognizes the inconsistency of her teacher who criticizes Hitler's racism and ethnic cleansing but feels that blacks in her own community are getting too "uppity." It is therefore not surprising that Scout agrees with the state's decision to prevent women from serving on juries: "'Perhaps our forefathers were wise'" (Lee 224). Unable to relate to any of these women, she feels most comfortable at her father's trial with Jem among the blacks in the balcony. "As an independent minded daughter of Atticus Finch, she is the object of brutal ridicule," but among kindred spirits who understand alienation, she is encouraged (Johnson, Understanding 3).

Atticus teaches Scout to appreciate the differences in people and to show courage and persevere even when there is little or no possibility of winning. Struck by the integrity of her father, Scout remembers vividly the poignant words a black preacher declares as Atticus leaves the courthouse after defending Tom: "'Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father's passin'" (Lee 214). Actually, "the word passing in the vocabulary of African-Americans refers both to the passage from life to eternal life and also from black to white identity, or vice versa" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 100). The notion of eternal life appears appropriate, for Atticus is a Christ figure in the novel. He is the obvious

peacemaker whose code of ethics is to turn the other cheek. His brother, "recognizing a Christ-like agony in Atticus's description of the impending trial, is led to respond: 'Let this cup pass from you, eh?'" (Johnson, Threatening Boundaries 100). Yet it is Scout who saves her father. Atticus, unarmed, decides to stay with Tom at the jail to protect him when several men arrive with guns to teach Atticus a lesson for believing the word of a black man over a white one, and for defending a man who has the audacity to pity Mayella, a white girl. Scout and Jem follow their father, and Scout runs in. Seeing one of the men is a classmate's father, she asks him how his son is doing and explains that they go to school together and that she has had him over for dinner. In effect she gets these riotous men to walk in her shoes, and they leave quietly with their weapons. Atticus acknowledges, "'So it took an eight-year old child to bring 'em to their senses, didn't it?'" (Lee 160).

Scout and Mayella Ewell, the only other young girl mentioned, share much in common. Both have lost their mothers. Neither one has any girl friends. Both experience loneliness and isolation. What saves Scout is a father of honor and goodness. Under his guidance, she is able to embrace both the outsiders among her and the outsider within herself.

CHAPTER XI

ADDIE PRAY: PARTNER IN CRIME

Joe David Brown's (1915-1976) Addie Pray (1971) centers on a young adolescent with the tongue of a street rogue who inhabits the Depression in the South. This best seller and Literary Guild selection was renamed Paper Moon during its second publication in 1972 and was later adapted as a motion picture starring Ryan and Tatum O'Neal and as a weekly television sitcom starring Jodie Foster (Commire 55). At the beginning of the novel, Addie is only six years old when her mother dies, and con-artist Long Boy Pray "adopts" her to help him swindle widows and others out of their savings. The two do not seem to be plagued with pangs of conscience for their manipulations but relish the adventure in their schemes. It is thus a great achievement of Brown's writing that readers are inclined to develop a fondness for the two, especially since they never repent and change their ways. Though generally avoided by critics, this work offers insight into the twentieth-century girl figure.

Addie has been labeled "a virtuous Moll Flanders," but "virtuous" does not seem to be an accurate characterization. This is because she has lost her innocence or perhaps has never had it. Like most girls in this study, Addie's mother is deceased, and she has no real memories of her except the smell of jasmine. However, Addie's mother is no angelic type. In actuality, "Miss Elsie Mae Loggins was the wildest girl in Marengo County, Alabama" and her death was a scandalous one (Brown 1). She died in an

automobile wreck late one night after a party. A married man was driving. Addie is not sheltered from this information but is aware of her mother's reputation and remembers that she "'used to laugh and say that any one of three men could be my daddy, but if I was real fortunate I'd never find out which'" (Brown 13). The candidates are narrowed to a baseball player, an ice cream server, and the con artist Long Boy. Addie recalls asking, "'What does Long Boy do, Mama?'" to which she laughingly responded, "'Jes' any pore ole soul he kin' sugar'" (Brown 14). It is not surprising, then, that Addie has little initial respect for Long Boy.

Taking a complete shift from the relationship of Scout and Atticus, Addie, when describing her relationship with Long Boy, brags, "'I guess I was the only one who could make a fool out of him on a regular basis, but it was natural for him to underestimate me'" (Brown 15). The putative father figure in the novel, Long Boy behaves more like an irresponsible older brother. He habitually visits houses of ill repute and even exposes Addie to some of his "professional acquaintances." His illegal business deals land him in jail on more than one occasion, leaving Addie in the hands of strangers until his release. More often than not he leaves her alone at night while he pursues a one-night stand. Yet she thrills at being with him and aiding him in his deceptions.

A tomboy with street smarts, Addie snaps at Long Boy when in the mood with all the vulgarity she can muster. Minutes after rebuking her behavior, he apologizes to her and tries to win her over. This inconsistent discipline leaves her understandably lacking in distinctions between right and wrong. What is startling about this eleven-year-old is not

that she commits these criminal acts frequently and with joyous expectation, but that she suffers no remorse for them during or afterwards.

The first signs of fledgling conscience occur after she cheats a widow by selling her an expensive Bible that her deceased husband supposedly ordered prior to his death. After paying, the kind lady takes her into her kitchen, offers her gingerbread, and tells her she used to have a little girl like Addie until she went to heaven. Her home, like the one in Addie's past, smells of jasmine. Once back in the car with Long Boy with a fist full of cash, Addie starts wrestling with horrible feelings of regret. Immediately, she pitches the cookie out of the window and yells, "'That fat old egg-sucking slut'" (Brown 11). It is easier for her to hate the woman than to admit her own immoral character. Later, the two hook up with Major Lee, a big league swindler who drinks away his own guilty feelings. Lee confronts Addie, saying, "'You truly don't know the difference between right and wrong,'" to which she replies, "'Why, I'm not bad'" (Brown 199). The reader has compassion for a girl so savvy in business while so naïve in the ways of the heart.

Addie's lack of morality separates her from previous girls studied here and marks the shift of girls in recent works. Like Frankie Addams and Scout Finch, Addie is exposed to sexuality and violence, but Addie is often the instigator. She hits a policeman for arresting Long Boy. He pushes her out of the way, and she subsequently drops her pants and shows the judge a bruise from another occurrence to get the policeman punished. Another time, Long Boy falls in love with Trixie Delight, a retiring prostitute Addie despises because she feels jealous and neglected. Addie sabotages the relationship by arranging for a hotel clerk to seduce Trixie and for Long Boy to catch them together.

Afterwards, Addie gives her heartbroken "father" some cold advice: "'From now on you ought to buy it. It's cheaper that way'" (Brown 91). Oblivious to her actions, Long Boy urges, "'When you grow up, don't be the kind of woman who goes aroun' deceivin' men. Promise me that.'" She remembers, "'I tried to yawn. "I promise," I said. The old fool'" (Brown 92).

Nonetheless, Addie reveals a vulnerability. At her first fair she remarks, "'Maybe that fair sort of made up for the fairy tales I had never been told and the children's books I had never read'" (Brown 70). And when she would drive down Southern neighborhoods and see mothers rocking on their front porches, fathers watering their lawns, and children playing in the yard, "'It seemed like such a good, peaceful life that I always felt choked by a yearning to be part of it. I reckon it stirred the woman in me'" (Brown 47). Actually this scene presumably stirs the child in her, since she was cheated of the opportunity to experience childhood herself. She does not even attend school since she is busy in business deceits and already knows how to read and write and do arithmetic. All this makes her lament, "'Growing up is a downright painful experience'" (Brown 70).

Her biggest heist occurs when she assumes the identity of a dying aristocrat's long lost granddaughter to get included in her will. After living with the woman, Amelia Sass, and her maid for six months, Addie realizes that she has never spent that long at any one place since the death of her mother. She is now about thirteen. It is here that she experiences, like Rebecca Randall and Anne Shirley, life with a faultfinding elderly woman. The ailing grandmother croons, "'Someday you'll be old and ugly, sitting in a bed with soup running down your chin'" (Brown 250). Addie wins her over in the end,

but her plan backfires when she discovers that the woman has lost all of her money, and worse than that, Addie discovers she has fallen in love with the old lady. This is a perfect opportunity for her to have a character transformation as Katy Carr did after her swing accident. Addie does save Grandma Sass's failing estate but manages this by swindling someone else. At the end of this novel she does not become a more mature, enlightened heroine but hops in Long Boy's truck and rides away in search of more adventures.

Addie is a high spirited, determined heroine who tries to live her young life to its fullest. The subtle tragedy is that her life merely goes from one robbery to another. Touchingly, she comments after an informative discussion with Major Lee, "'I almost went wild when I first found out I could walk into bookstores and buy books like Little Women'" (Brown 199). Lee taught her about the stores' existence. She had only known about gift shops in hotel lobbies. It is quite ironic that while she and Long Boy endeavor to make their seamy fortunes, neither one of them cares about material things. For one thing, Long Boy believes it would hurt business if he appeared too wealthy. It seems as if conning people is an end in itself instead of a means to an end. In conclusion, Addie's world, then, involves many more people and places than any of the other literary heroines. She is also subjected to more adult situations. Yet, ironically, she is more limited, and her world never expands notably. This is also the only male author treated.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

Ten works, spanning more than a century, surprisingly have much in common. The girls' maturing process involves various crises through which they discover their own identity and find acceptance from their protagonist, but more importantly, of themselves. Their parental control is limited since the girls each have dead or, in the case of Little Women, absent mothers. Perhaps this is one reason the girls are unwilling to embrace their full fate as women. Their tragedy does develop a more intense heroine, who has faced loss and is therefore less superficial than other adolescents. The absent parent also allows the girl to experience more freedom and pursue her own path. Choosing to enjoy the life of a tomboy, these girls fulfill the dream of "growing up into full humanity with all its potentialities instead of into limited femininity" (Egoff, Only Connect 255).

While the novels may have been written primarily for younger readers, they have been cherished by adult audiences. Each book was hugely successful in its time, and most continue to find a market today. Smith defines a classic as encountering "significant facts of human existence - birth and death, friendship and enmity, loyalty and disloyalty, justice and injustice" (Smith 122). Smith continues, "My basic criterion for a classic would be that, for one reason or another, I should hate to see a person miss reading it before he got out of childhood" (Smith 120). Judged by this definition, each of these books essentially is a classic.

Despite the wide and ongoing readership of these books, relatively little criticism has addressed them. Hunt suggests, "This may be because they [critics] fear the loss of a valued part of childhood - that the spell will be broken" if they analyze their prized first novels (Hunt 2). C.S. Lewis has challenged this sort of timidity: "When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness" (Hunt 2).

In tracing these girl books, there is a discernable shift from domestic drama, in which the idea of the house and garden were symbols of stability, to a "new realism." Earlier works had girls facing physical sickness as trials. Katy Carr, for example, spends years paralyzed from a swing accident. In more recent works, girls are apt to face moral sickness. Hunt notes that "it is no doubt a sign of the times that earlier forms have been overtaken by brasher, more worldly works" (Hunt 127). Religious novels have been superceded by psychological ones that are more politically correct and socially and racially aware. This affects the character of the child: "Innocence, if it ever existed in the sense of sexual ignorance and/or purity, is a vanished quality" (Hunt 151). Perhaps because of the current trend to dismantle absolute truths and the distinctions between right and wrong, these older books are again being appreciated. Egoff implores, "Above all, to balance the speed and confusions of our modern world, we need to find books which build strength and steadfastness, . . . books which develop faith in the essential decency and nobility of life, books which give a feeling for the wonder and the goodness of the universe" (Egoff, Only Connect 56). Hunt further argues, "No true expert on

boyhood or girlhood doubted that what a child read was a vital key to what he became - we are what we read" (Hunt 63). Perhaps this will prove to be a lure for the once-abandoned didactic novel.

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