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FROM SNOW-GIRLS TO WATER-BABIES:
SHIFTING AESTHETICS AND TRADITIONS IN THE
CHILDREN'S LITERARY MARKETPLACE

by

Marilyn Bloss Koester

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: English

The University of Memphis

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family.

To my mother and father, Linda and Bob. Thank you for your constant support of my endeavors.

To my aunt, Marilyn. You have always been my best cheerleader.

To my husband, Drew. Your constant love and support made this possible.

To my children: Mary Lee, George, and John David.

You have been there for me as much as I have been there for you.
Thank you for providing the laughter and fun necessary to help me keep going.

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Abstract

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This dissertation traces the separation of children's literature from a general fiction market to its own lucrative genre during the mid-nineteenth to early-twentieth century in order to demonstrate the shifting attitudes about childhood and womanhood affecting, or affected by, the development of the children's literary market in America. I focus on the shifting ideology about children and childhood as a separate sphere and the ability of the literary marketplace to harness the profit potential of changing attitudes and advancements in consumer culture. To that end, the analysis suggests mass-culture and shifting cultural ideas about both femininity and childhood play significant roles in developing children's literature as a separate genre and solidifying its role in the literary marketplace during the Golden Age of the early twentieth century. I analyze neglected short stories and novels from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and Margaret Sidney to argue that their overlooked texts can offer opportunities for new research and are important works to include in comprehensive scholarly discussions of major themes for not only these authors, but also the development of children's literature as a whole. For example, Hawthorne's "The Snow-Image" and Alcott's "Fancy's Friend" reveal anxieties about female creativity and artistic vision with links to the commercial and literary marketplace. Both Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book* and Alcott's *An Old-Fashioned Girl* redefine what it means to be "American" and explore similar conflicts of creativity. Sidney's *Five Little Peppers* series builds upon Alcott's sentimentalization of poverty and exploits the romanticized child, illustrating the predominance of these attitudes in the late-nineteenth century. The life and work of illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith effectively

demonstrate the anxieties of female creativity in the literary and artistic marketplace, also present in Alcott and Hawthorne, and expose the new possibilities of independent womanhood alluded to in Alcott's novel. Furthermore, Smith's illustrations continue the trope of the romanticized child, like Sidney, to demonstrate the conflicting place that women artists and writers find themselves in the early twentieth century in terms of careers and subject matter.

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INTRODUCTION

Redefining Genre: Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century America

The influential editor and children's writer Mary Mapes Dodge begins her 1873 article "Children's Magazines," published in *Scribner's Monthly* with the following: "Sometimes I feel like rushing through the world with two placards – one held aloft in my right hand, BEWARE OF CHILDREN'S MAGAZINES! the other flourished in my left, CHILD'S MAGAZINE WANTED! A good magazine for little ones was never so much needed, and such harm is done by nearly all that are published" (*Scribners* 352).¹ Dodge's frustration regarding the ubiquity and content of children's writings in the late nineteenth century highlights the complicated relationship of the literary marketplace in terms of a separate children's literature genre in America, in which the marketplace sought to produce an abundance of children's writings to meet the demands of, and profit from, the growing juvenile base, sometimes at the expense of quality content. From its early beginnings in the late eighteenth century to its height of the Golden Age a century later, children's literature in America shifted from a family-friendly reading practice, in which the entire family shared reading material, to the development of a separate genre of writings exclusively for children.² During the nineteenth century, numerous trends affected the production of children's literature: technological advancements in the fields of printing and illustration, shifting attitudes about the role of childhood and the child as a

¹ *Scribner's* asked Dodge in 1873 to be the editor of a children's magazine, and the classic and well-respected *St. Nicholas* was created. She was the editor from then until her death in 1905.

² The Golden Age of Children's Literature generally refers to the period from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, during which many of today's classic children's books were published. Some critics use the date of 1865, when *Alice in Wonderland* was first published, as the starting point, and the publication of A.A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh books from 1924-1928 as the ending date.

non-adult, and an influx of women seeking to participate in the professional literary sphere. The literary marketplace met the growing demand for children's literature head on, actively participating in the publication, marketing, and promotion of both children's books and magazines, as well as their authors and illustrators. This push resulted in a proliferation of children's literary material by the later decades of the nineteenth century. In my analysis, I trace this separation of children's literature from a general fiction market to its own lucrative genre in order to demonstrate the shifting attitudes about childhood and womanhood affecting, or affected by, the development of the children's literary market.

Initially, the history of American literature written and produced specifically for children begins in the late eighteenth century with chapbooks and periodicals. The first American children's magazine, *The Children's Magazine*, appeared in 1789 in Hartford, Connecticut.³ After this appearance, periodicals directed towards children began to flourish. The most well-known periodicals for children in the nineteenth century were *The Youth's Companion* out of Boston and *St. Nicholas* from New York.⁴ In fact, the circulation of the *Youth's Companion* in 1885 surpassed all other U.S. magazines for both children and adults (Clark 49). In addition, many of the popular adult periodicals of the nineteenth century, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*,

³ Printed by Hudson and Goodwin, *The Children's Magazine: Calculated for the Use of Families and Schools* had a short run from January to April 1789 and folded after only four issues. Although this periodical failed to succeed long-term due to postal issues and lack of contributing writers, 279 children's magazines were published between 1802 and 1899 (Silvey 429).

⁴ *The Youth's Companion*, originally *Youth's Companion*, was launched in 1827 by editor and publisher Nathaniel Willis. He served as editor for thirty years. The magazine thrived for over a hundred years. Roswell Smith, one of the founders of the successful *Scribner's Monthly*, launched *St. Nicholas* in 1873. Edited by Mary Mapes Dodge, the magazine set high standards and drew high-quality authors and illustrators to contribute content, such as Louisa May Alcott, Rudyard Kipling, and Howard Pyle (Silvey 429).

situated their content for a family readership and began regularly including reviews of children's literature by the 1860s.

Generally speaking, the literary audience of the mid-nineteenth century was a family audience. The content of popular texts, from books such as *Pilgrim's Progress* or magazines like *Harper's*, was thought to be suitable for the entire family, from child to adult. Conversely, books considered "children's classics" today, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, were welcomed reading for adults as well as children. Beverly Lyon Clark reminds us that the popular texts of the nineteenth century were "more likely to be *Little Women* than *The Portrait of a Lady*, more likely to be *Treasure Island* than *Moby-Dick* – more likely to be Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* than James' *What Maisie Knew*" (Clark 48). In short, the line between what was suitable reading for a child versus an adult blurred to a great extent during the first half of the nineteenth century. This blurring allowed mid-century authors, like Nathaniel Hawthorne, to write in multiple arenas for multiple audiences.⁵

After the mid-century, a number of factors caused this blurring of audience to dissipate: the changing view of childhood in an ideological sense, the changing status of children as laborers, the strengthening school system, technological advancements in printing and illustration, the rise of the middle class, the success of mass-culture, and the

⁵ In *Kiddie Lit*, Clark shows how publishers welcomed the revenue from children's books, but contemporary critics and scholars fail to take writing for children seriously. She maps the changing attitudes towards children's literature over the late nineteenth through the end of the twentieth century to illustrate this shift towards dismissing children's authors and writings as canonically-worthy work. In a telling example, Clark notes that frequently taught anthologies, like the *Heath Anthology*, will not reprint any children's work from Louisa May Alcott, such as an excerpt from her famous *Little Women*, but rather include an excerpt from one of her less popular novels for adults. This shift is examined in more detail in Chapter Three.

growing marketing and sales opportunities for the literary marketplace.⁶ I primarily focus on the shifting ideology about children and childhood as a separate sphere and the ability of the literary marketplace to harness the profit potential of changing attitudes and advancements in consumer culture. I suggest mass-culture and shifting cultural ideas about both femininity and childhood play significant roles in developing children's literature as a separate genre and solidifying its role in the literary marketplace during the Golden Age of the early twentieth century.

This shift begins with changing attitudes towards the nature of childhood itself during the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, children were viewed as miniature adults, who should begin learning, acting, and working as adults from an early age.⁷ Implied here was the belief that written texts for adults, and, of course, the Bible, were suitable material for youth. Basic learners and alphabet books did exist, but a consolidated literature that sought to entertain and teach through fiction had not yet fully developed. But as the middle-class expanded and public schooling developed, children became increasingly separate from adults and childhood took on a mystique of its own. A new view of the child emerged: a juvenile being of its own, full of innocence and promise, and separate from an adult. As Anne Scott MacLeod notes, there

⁶ Numerous studies have traced these shifts. *The History of the Book in America vols. 1-3* (UNC Press) offer a comprehensive look at the changes in book production and the literary marketplace during the nineteenth century. Anne MacLeod's *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (UGA Press, 1994) and Gail Schmunk Murray's *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood* (Twayne Publishers, 1998) provide wide-ranging analyses of changes in ideas about childhood, and the lifestyle of the child, during the American nineteenth-century.

⁷ While analyzed extensively in Phillipe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* from a European perspective, scholar Fleming argues this same view in terms of Colonial Americans nearly three decades prior to Ariès' work, and later articles, such as Ross Beales' "In Search of the Historical Child: Miniature Adulthood and Youth in Colonial New England" perpetuate this interpretation. More current work, like Maris Vinovskis' chapter "Changing Perceptions and Treatment of Young Children in the United States" from *Images of Childhood*, while acknowledging that this view seems to dominate early American society, offer alternative ways in which early Americans viewed children and adults as separate beings.

are two assumptions inherent to this more modern view of childhood: “children need to be separated to some degree from adult life until they have been educated or ripened in some important way” and “adults have something of value to teach children, so that the very concept of childhood in modern history is closely associated with that of the nurture, training, and conscious education of the child by responsible adults” (176). These assumptions, further bolstered by claims made in Phillipe Ariès’ influential work *Centuries of Childhood*, directly impacted the construction of a separate literature for children.⁸ Children were now thought to be moldable, innocent beings to be properly taught and trained through literature designed specifically for their delicate minds.

Childhood became privileged not only outside literature, but also within literature, resulting in a preoccupation with the romanticized child. As children were viewed as separate persons, so children’s literature underwent similar shifts in both genre and content that divided it from the realm of adult literature. Children’s books, unlike those for adults, must ultimately appeal to two buyers: the parent and the child. Parents concern themselves with appropriateness, in terms of content, age appropriateness, durability, and price. Children, particularly young children, look at pictures. Thus, the illustrated book cover in the latter part of the nineteenth century takes on a larger importance.⁹

Furthermore, the value of, and opportunity for, entertainment in children’s literature rose,

⁸ According to Ariès, modern childhood develops in the early seventeenth century as a result of the rise of the middle class. Middle-class society viewed childhood as a preparation and education period prior to adult life, in which the child’s central focus was schooling. Freed from labor, the middle-class child could pursue formal education for a long length of time. Part of this schooling and education included the development of a separate literature for children (*Centuries of Childhood*).

⁹ The 1870s witnessed a flourishing of illustration and illustrated covers, due to technological advancements in both printing and binding, as well as an increased demand for children’s books (*History of the Book*, vol. 3).

opening the doors to new possibilities for fantasy and adventure content, as opposed to the didactic moralism and bland plotlines of early children's writings.¹⁰ This shift can be linked to, as Sarah Wadsworth claims, "the popularization of a Romantic sensibility that fundamentally reconceived of the nature and status of childhood and the significance of childhood as a uniquely privileged stage of life" (Wadsworth 17). As a symbolic representation of idealized innocence, seen in numerous late nineteenth-century children's novels, like Margaret Sidney's *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* (1881), the romanticized child flourished and provided an idealized world of innocent youth separate from imperfect reality.¹¹

This division of adult and child, however, had long-term ramifications for children's literature. Having separated from adult texts, books exclusively for children were seen as simplistic, naïve, and less worthy of scholarly attention. Even the excessively studied Hawthorne faced the same prejudice. While criticism of his adult works occupy shelf upon shelf in most university libraries, his children's writings take up only a minor sliver of space. Although Hawthorne wrote six full novels for children and numerous short-stories for the same audience, only one book and a handful of articles analyze these texts in detail.¹² While Louisa May Alcott scholars continue to spend

¹⁰ Well-known examples of late-nineteenth century fantasy and adventure children's books include: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Black Beauty* (1877), *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883), *Treasure Island* (1883), and *The Jungle Book* (1894).

¹¹ Williams Wordsworth and William Blake are credited for the emergence of the Romantic Child in nineteenth-century British fiction, in which the fictive child becomes more symbolic representation of innocence than real-life juvenile. American authors, like Sidney, adopt this attitude of romanticizing of the child outside of the formal Romantic period, imbuing child characters with idealized attitudes and actions.

¹² Laura Laffrado's *Hawthorne's Literature for Children* (1992) and Calvin Schorer's dissertation, "The Juvenile Literature of Nathaniel Hawthorne" (1948), are the only full-length works to analyze Hawthorne's writings for children.

abundant time on her oft-analyzed *Little Women* and excerpts from her adult novels make their way into anthologies, her short-stories and lesser-known children's novels fail to obtain the same critical treatment.¹³

This dissertation does its own small part to rectify this lack of scholarly inclusion. I analyze neglected short stories and novels from these authors to argue that their overlooked texts can offer opportunities for new research and important works to include in comprehensive scholarly discussions of major themes for not only Hawthorne, Alcott, Sidney and Jessie Willcox Smith, but also the development of children's literature as a whole. For example, Hawthorne's "The Snow-Image" and Alcott's "Fancy's Friend" reveal anxieties about female creativity and artistic vision with links to the commercial and literary marketplace. Both Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book* and Alcott's *An Old-Fashioned Girl* redefine what it means to be "American" and explore similar conflicts of creativity. Sidney's *Five Little Peppers* series builds upon Alcott's sentimentalization of poverty and exploits the Romantic Child, illustrating the predominance of these attitudes in the late-nineteenth century. Jessie Willcox Smith's life and illustrations effectively demonstrate the anxieties of female creativity in the literary and artistic marketplace, also present in Alcott and Hawthorne, and expose the new possibilities of independent womanhood alluded to in Alcott's novel. Furthermore, Smith's illustrations continue the trope of the romanticized child, like Sidney, to demonstrate the conflicting place that women artists and writers find themselves in the early twentieth century in terms of careers and subject matter. As "children's literature has been primarily middle class and

¹³ Part of this snub stems from the assumption that children's writings are too simplistic to be worthy of critical discussion, an assumption which contemporary children's literature scholars continue to successfully challenge.

white since its inception,” my analysis traces canonical figures that fall under this whitewashed umbrella and remains aware of the limitations of doing so (Clark xiii). Some diversity of viewpoints and ethnicity among nineteenth and early-twentieth century children’s literature authors do exist, but, by and large, the writers and characters of popular children’s literature were white and usually middle-class by birth or circumstance.¹⁴

Children’s literature allowed writers like Hawthorne to expand their audiences. New writers, particularly women, were able to use this genre to begin careers. But the enormous influx of writings for children was not always welcomed. Horace Scudder’s column “Books for Young People” in *Riverside Magazine* expresses his views on children’s reading and literature and bemoans the prolific publication of children’s writings, noting in the column’s first installment of 1867: “Any one who recalls his resources of reading among books designed expressly for children forty, thirty, or even twenty years since, will see that not only has the style of such books changed, but there has been increased fertility of production, and the signs all point to a still greater fruitfulness...Children have too much reading, and that fault is not theirs but their elders” (*Riverside* 43).¹⁵ Despite this criticism, mid-century authors, like the growing literary marketplace, used the large demand for writings for children to their advantage.

¹⁴ Several articles in Monika Elbert’s edited volume, *Enterprising Youth: Social Values and Acculturation in Nineteenth-Century American Children’s Literature* (Routledge, 2008), reveal the ways in which children’s literature defied conservatism and engaged with diverse perspectives. For example, Martha L. Sledge discusses the positive and negative ramifications of the anti-slavery alphabet, Jeannette Barnes Lessels and Eric Sterling argue that Jacob Abbott sought to overcome racism in his depictions of black characters, and Rita Bode analyzes Harriett Prescott Spofford’s attempt to challenge racism in her children’s writings.

¹⁵ A well-known writer for children in his own right during the nineteenth-century and editor of the *Atlantic*, Scudder is primarily remembered for launching *The Riverside Magazine for Young People* in 1867, dubbed “one of the finest American children’s periodicals” by critic Richard Darling (217).

Nathaniel Hawthorne enters the literary marketplace as this expansion of children's writings begins and his career spans this shift in which children's literature increasingly separates from writings for adults. As I will show in Chapter One, Hawthorne's initial foray into children's writings reflects not only his awareness of the changing literary marketplace, in which children's literature is becoming more profitable, but also his desire to stake claim to an authorial career. In *Moral Enterprise*, Derek Pacheco argues that Hawthorne sought to "not only capitalize upon the reputation earned as these children grow into adults who buy books, but also to regulate the market's future by altering the habits of its youngest consumers" (12).¹⁶ Initially, as with his first short story for children "Little Annie's Ramble," Hawthorne's stories for children were presumably written to broaden his opportunities for financial gain. As a struggling author, the swiftly growing world of juvenile periodicals offered another avenue for publishing his short stories. In addition to short stories, Hawthorne wrote three historical books for children that celebrated American heroes and famous figures, which were met with moderate success.¹⁷

It was not until after his lucrative *The Scarlet Letter* that Hawthorne turned to children's writing with more zeal, particularly with *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*, seeking to, in her term, "revolutionize" children's literature through his re-telling of Greek mythology. With struggling finances no longer an immediate burden,

¹⁶ Pacheco quotes Elizabeth Peabody's statement that Hawthorne "thinks society in this country is only to be controlled in its *fountain of youth*" (11). Pacheco contends that Hawthorne wanted to mold the morality of juvenile readers through a new literature for the young.

¹⁷ Written in 1840, these three historical novels for children - *Grandfather's Chair*, *Famous Old People*, and *Liberty Tree* - were published at close intervals in 1841 by Elizabeth Peabody.

Hawthorne was able to consider his children's writings in more ideological terms, which resulted in the more charming and well-written short story "The Snow-Image" and his Greek myth novels. The fantasy present in these works exemplifies shifting attitudes regarding appropriate content for children and challenge the usual overly moralistic tone of children's literature.¹⁸

Although well-known for his fiction, Hawthorne also became famous in scholarly circles for his remark about the "damned mob of scribbling women," along with other less than complimentary comments regarding women writers.¹⁹ To Hawthorne, the influx of women writers during the nineteenth century was competition, limiting his own chances of publication.²⁰ In this way, Hawthorne is emblematic of the critical male artist who bristle at the idea of women intruding upon the masculine marketplace.²¹ This "fear" expands as the field of children's literature intensifies. Hawthorne struggles to find a place for himself "in a role defined by male-female/publisher-writer power relations" (Pacheco 91).²² Seen as an appropriate genre for the female sex to pursue a professional career in the literary marketplace, children's literature gave women new career opportunities that increased competition for male writers and artists.

¹⁸ Fantasy and fairy tales were generally deemed inappropriate reading for American children. This debate over their corruptible value extended from Mrs. Trimmer's *Guardian of Education* in 1802 to Agnes Repplier's "Battle for the Babies" in 1895. Although a popular mainstay today, fantasy struggled to take hold due to criticisms of inappropriateness.

¹⁹ While in Britain, Hawthorne wrote to his publisher William D. Ticknor in 1855: "America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed" (Stern, 101).

²⁰ "The Snow-Image" illustrates this anxiety of authorship.

²¹ Artist here is being used in its wider sense, inclusive of literary writers and fine artists.

²² This observation concerning Hawthorne appears in a chapter about Elizabeth Peabody and her struggles to work as a publisher and bookstore owner, which similarly breaks from this assumed gendered dynamic of the publishing industry.

Louisa May Alcott was one of these women who took advantage of the ripening children's market. Although bolstered by Hawthorne in both the personal and professional sense, Alcott epitomizes the female professional who succeeds despite his larger criticism about women writers. Chapter Two analyzes the ways in which Alcott both manipulates the literary marketplace for her own authorial gain, but also becomes pigeonholed in the "appropriate" sphere of children's literature. Her reflections in personal letters and unconventional scenes in her traditional novels, such as "The Sunny-Side" in *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, illustrate Alcott's preoccupation with wanting to write material different from that desired by her conservative audience. In addition, Alcott's personal letters and journals reflect her ambivalence -- and often straightforward criticism -- about having to write "moral pap for the young" in order to be financially successful in the literary marketplace, as opposed to Hawthorne's proactive desire to enter that same market. But while Alcott may have privately lamented her forced role as a writer of children's stories, publicly she embraced the prolific opportunities offered to her.

As middle-class consumerism grew during the span of Alcott's career, so did the association between women and mass culture. The buying audience was a feminine one and industry responded by creating products and advertising those purchases to appeal to the middle-class woman with the leisure time and permitted finances to shop. The gift book, and later the children's book, were marketed to women of all ages as suitable and attractive products for a proper middle-class household.²³ Industrialism and consumerism similarly opened the doors for more women to enter the workforce at large, in which the

²³ Having first appeared in England during the 1820s, gift books were highly decorative volumes of poetry, short fiction, and essays published in the fall and designed to be holiday presents. The content tended to be both overly sentimental and religious in nature, and therefore proper for women to read. Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Battle for Christmas* (Vintage, 1997) traces this development.

arena of literary mass-culture was deemed a suitable and appropriate field for “respectable” women. Women, after all, were natural wives and mothers, so who better to write for children and illustrate books or advertisements for family products in magazines.

A separate children’s literature enabled more women to enter the literary marketplace, so the child became increasingly separate from the outside world of adulthood. In response, images of children become sentimental and romantic in both literature and art in the later part of the nineteenth-century. Children’s literature, and its accompanying illustrations, redefined the child as a Romanticized innocent. William Wordsworth and William Blake are credited with immortalizing the innocence of childhood, and American children’s writers continuing this romantic paradigm. MacLeod summarizes: “Everything about the romantic novel of childhood stands in startling contrast to early nineteenth-century children’s fiction. The emotional language, the sentimental view of life, the lingering delight in children’s beauty, and, most of all, the assumption that children were by nature good as well as innocent, and that their God-given moral purity could redeem fallen or strayed adults – all these combined to create an image that is nearly as remote as it is possible to be from the somber rationality of earlier literature” (MacLeod 155). The beautiful and morally-pure figure represents the height of this romanticized movement, where some child protagonists become more symbolic representation than characterization of a real child. Darling alludes to this preoccupation with the romanticized child, noting that children’s book illustrations in the 1910s remained “remarkably free” from the influences of modernism, including scientific, technological, and artistic advancements: “As far as children were concerned, the world

was still the prosperous, secure place that it had seemed in the late Victorian era” (59). Writers, illustrators, publishers, and parents sought to isolate their children from contemporary issues of modernity and children’s books, therefore, reflected idealized scenarios or fantasy worlds with an “old-fashioned,” nostalgic appearance.

So whereas Hawthorne and Alcott’s writings for children often push boundaries or defied convention, the works of Sidney and Smith do the opposite: they cement the idealized child in text and art. Sidney manifests this conservative movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century version of the Romantic child in her famous *Five Little Peppers* novels, while philosophizing about the “unknown” and perplexing nature of the child as an Other in her non-fiction articles. She reflects a feminine conservatism, particularly in her choice to use a pseudonym due to her family’s belief that women were unfit for public professionalism, and through her positioning of characters that fall firmly along established gender lines in personality and action.²⁴ Wadsworth links this shift to “the popularization of a Romantic sensibility that fundamentally reconceived of the nature and status of childhood and the significance of childhood as a uniquely privileged stage of life” (17). Chapter Three outlines evidence of this conservative idealization primarily through the beloved character of Phronsie Pepper, the youngest of the five Pepper children, who seems fixed in a Romantic state of perpetual immaturity.

The literary trend of creating child characters with Romantic traits of innocence within Sidney’s career also invites a discussion of the status of children’s authors and

²⁴ Alcott similarly used a pseudonym, A. M. Barnard, when writing her thrillers, but this seems somehow more appropriate as those were “blood and thunder” stories. Sidney’s use of a pseudonym for even benign children’s writings reflects a more pronounced conservatism. Sidney’s family, her father, in particular, disapproved of women working in the public sphere and so she used a pseudonym to distance herself from her authorial persona.

their writings within the critical realm. Despite the fact that, as a 1907 *The New England Magazine* states, “every one knows of the popularity of the Pepper Books,” Sidney and her works have been woefully neglected in terms of scholarship.²⁵ Her “famous” Pepper series sold enormously well, the books were adapted into two major feature films in 1939 and 1940, and the series has been continuously available in major libraries and bookstores throughout the nation; yet Sidney and her novels have a scant amount in terms of a critical legacy. The importance of Sidney’s Pepper series should not be overlooked. It effectively demonstrates the juxtaposition between the Romanticized child in literature and the progressive independence of the actual turn-of-the-century child. But the combination of children’s literature and her conservatism has relegated Sidney and her novels to the realm of bygone nostalgia.

Nostalgia and images of romantic childhood permeate not only the content of children’s books during this period, but their accompanying illustrations as well, best exemplified by the well-known artist Jessie Willcox Smith. Not only does Smith chronologically continue the trajectory of children’s literature after Sidney, but her sentimental illustrations continue the same theme of the romanticized child. Smith’s case is particularly important for many reasons. One, she lived in an unconventional arrangement as the “Red Rose Girls” with three other women, two of whom were fellow artists and the third ran their household. This communal artistic group mirrors the dream of Alcott’s Sunny Side muses from *An Old-Fashioned Girl* and illustrates the ability of children’s literature to offer opportunities for independent success. Two, Smith demonstrates the ability of women to carve out financially successful illustrative careers

²⁵ Indicative of her books’ popularity, Sidney’s *Five Little Peppers Midway*, published in July, 1890, was already in its sixth edition by January, 1891 (*Young Men’s Era*).

with the burgeoning proliferation of advertisements and technologically-efficient means of mass-reproducing images. And, finally, Smith once again illustrates the problematic position of women as producers of more “lowbrow” art sequestered in the world of motherhood and childhood content.

The sum of these chapters argues that, during these shifts in ideologies of childhood and culture, a conflict emerges between content -- namely juvenile, mass-produced content -- and opportunity for women writers and artists. This difficult relationship between output and opportunity becomes more complicated in light of the view that women were also assumed to be the protectors of civilized culture. Women and culture, Kirsten Swinth contends, “appeared to represent values that transcended the increasingly pervasive market, and women began to include the protection and cultivation of art and culture among their duties” (Swinth 18). Swinth invokes *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), in which Ruskin insists that women should “purify” culture, to emphasize this trend. To be bearers of culture, however, women had to know and understand genteel culture themselves, hence the emphasis of drawing as a typical “lady’s accomplishment.” Women, therefore, began to arrive at the footsteps of publishers and art schools in droves. According to an 1890 census, nearly 11,000 women artists, sculptors, and teachers of art practiced their profession, versus only 414 in 1870 (Swinth 3). This indicates that women, young women in particular, wanted to do more, be more, and produce more. They wanted to be part of the professional and artistic workspace and, since dabbling in the arts or writing for children was deemed suitable, women jumped at the opportunity.

This influx results in a problematic, and conflicting, view of women as treacherous vehicles of mass culture: “As part of a ‘horde,’ women signified the dangers

of mass culture and popular consumption; as ‘disorderly females,’ their cultural productions signified a violation of gender roles” (Swinth 8). Chapters Two and Four outline the ramifications of this influx of women artists, specifically the boxing in of women as writers and illustrators exclusively of childhood and motherhood. Female student artists were often met with hostility or exclusion because “the feminization of art school student bodies seemed to many male students, teachers, and nervous boards of directors to undermine their professional aspirations and threaten the status of their institutions” (Swinth 26).²⁶ The images of the girlish art student also pervaded popular literature, such as the characters of May in Alcott’s *Little Women* or Psyche from Alcott’s “Psyche’s Art,” both of which end with the artists setting aside career aspirations for their husband and family.

By and large, masculine professionalism stands in opposition to the dabbling female amateur.²⁷ Although directed towards artists and illustrators in the early twentieth century, the same claims could be said to bolster the increasing stigma of children’s literature as unworthy of serious criticism during the same period and beyond. If adult literature equates with “masculine” pursuits and children’s literature equates with “feminine” talents, then it stands to reason that academia, like the literary marketplace and the fine arts world, would view the feminized, popular realm of children’s literature as less important or less worthy of serious analysis.

²⁶ This same threatened attitude can be seen in Hawthorne’s concern about women invading the masculine space of authorship in the literary marketplace.

²⁷ “Amateur” itself was seen as the equivalent of “bad work” and was understood to be the work of women when the term was employed.

Moreover, the question of “taste” arises when dealing with mass culture versus finer arts. Magazines, children’s books, advertisements and other forms of popular print culture, which women often produced, separate from the more refined and mature writings of great novels and treatises, just as book and magazine illustration separates from the more talented, genius work of fine art. Reproduction was perceived as a “force for cultural dilution,” in which mass-produced images thinned the degree to which consumers and critics could uphold highbrow taste and quality (Levine 160).²⁸ For example, chromolithography – the later nineteenth-century method of mass-produced color printing – gave a false impression that one was cultured and appreciated art, and the term “chromo” came to mean “offensive” and “unattractive” by the 1890s (160).²⁹

One trouble with these fixed cultural categories is that an inherent hierarchy develops, where “Lowbrow,” “Mass,” and “Popular” reside at the bottom of the ladder of critical esteem. Lawrence W. Levine’s classic *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988) argues that nineteenth-century Americans shared a public culture less hierarchically organized, but that these cultural categories became increasingly fragmented by the turn of the century, resulting in more sharply defined differences between “high” or “fine” arts, such as opera and painting, and “low” arts, like mass-produced illustrations and writings for children. As a result, children’s literature becomes “less than” adult literature. Illustration becomes “less than” fine arts. This

²⁸ On the other hand, Richard Ohmann argues: “The magazine was a signifier, not only of the house, whose ‘character and taste’ it reflected, but of ‘certain qualities’ identified both with the house and with a high level of culture” (106). Therefore, according to Ohmann, the elite monthly claims “cultural dominance” away from the authority of the bound book (106).

²⁹ Levine cites the examples where chromolithographs were exhibited as “fine” arts at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, but then relegated to the “industrial” or “commercial” arts by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

distinction results in the more troubling aspect of gender, as society deigns to offer women these less desirable roles, thereby equating women with less genius and less talent in the literary and artistic marketplaces. As a result, women in general are subsequently “less than” not only in terms of artistic value in the literary environment, but also in the critical and scholarly realm. High culture is the sphere of the masculine domain. Low culture allows women to participate in its production. The Victorian feminine infused the personas of Margaret Sidney and Jessie Willcox Smith, even despite Smith’s unconventional lifestyle; modern high-culture was the realm of the self-realized man.

Even as this hierarchy develops, male artists and publishers can still feel progressive about employing and promoting women writers and illustrators.³⁰ The marketplace forces justify the placement of women in the arenas of children’s literature and mass culture illustration of childhood and motherhood as “natural” and in line with inherent feminine sensibilities. Referring to the 1900s, Howard Darling states: “Childhood became, during this decade, a popular consumer trend” (47). More children’s books were being published than ever before to meet the ever increasing demand, and women were seen as the perfect vehicles for producing the needed supply.

In his study of this disparity, Levine argues that Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century “shared a public culture less hierarchically organized, less fragmented into relatively rigid adjectival boxes than their descendants were to experience a century later” (9). In fact, this shift can be seen less than a century later, primarily through the

³⁰ An example of this would be Howard Pyle’s Brandywine School, an artists’ colony and style of illustration at the end of the nineteenth century. Pyle ran the school in Wilmington, Delaware for a ten-year period and, significantly, of his 110 students, 40 were women (Pitz). Other companies appealed directly to women’s “natural” abilities and desires to earn an equal living. A 1918 advertisement promised the potential to earn up to \$75 a week for “ambitious girls” stating, “[i]n this modern profession you are not handicapped: you are paid as much as a man with the same ability. Women are naturally fitted for the work” (qtd in Scanlan 6).

development of children's literature. As children's literature separates from adult literature, so do assumptions about authorship of those literatures. Whereas a mid-century Hawthorne could dabble equally in blurred genres with little repercussions in terms of genius or talent, resulting also in his complaints about the mob of women writers trying to assume his place, writers of the next generation like Alcott become locked in one genre – the lesser genre of children's literature. Although Alcott did write thrillers, they were written under a pseudonym and for quick profit. Her enduring work and legacy rests on her writings for children, for which she was continually pressed by publishers and editors. By Margaret Sidney's generation in the latter nineteenth-century, the separation of children's and adult literature in the market, where female authors have been “naturally” associated with children's writings, has cemented these categorical and hierarchical shifts to an even larger degree. Sidney begins and ends her career with children's writings, as turn-of-the-century female illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith begins and ends her career with sentimental illustrations of childhood and motherhood.

In academia, children's literature has continued to face discrimination. In her book *Kiddie Lit*, Beverly Lyon Clark remarks: “In the realm of children's literature, trade publishers happily turn to children's books to bolster their revenues, yet contemporary critics have been slow to take children's literature seriously and treat it canonically” (2). Although Clark's remark refers to our current culture, the same trepidations about the seriousness of children's books existed for nineteenth-century writers and critics. Nineteenth-century publishers quickly seized upon the profitable new genre of children's literature, and crossover authors like Hawthorne and Alcott made their way into that genre for the same financial reasons, but children's books were increasingly dismissed

and patronized outside of the nursery. Clark examines how women and children become conflated in the critical imagination around the turn of the century, resulting in “academic gatekeepers” all but ignoring children’s literature until the mid-twentieth century (xii).³¹ Part of this stigma associated with children’s literature, and the writers of such literature, derives from the early twentieth-century influence of “cultural arbiters, academic and nonacademic, [who] were white males who were college educated and hence influenced by the professoriate” (Clark 58). As the majority of the professoriate was male, and the majority of children’s writers and illustrators were female, their lack of support for, and interest in, the genre of children’s literature furthered the gendering of such literature as a feminized category.

This complex relationship of femininity, reading, and children’s literature, and children’s illustration has even greater long-term consequences when examining reading practices and stereotypes about what girls versus boys should read, or even that boys enjoy reading at all.³² But, most importantly, my project illustrates that the development of children’s literature in America is complex and the question of agency shifts throughout the trajectory of children’s literature, like childhood, becoming a separate sphere. This dissertation traces these agency shifts between the forces of author, publisher, and juvenile consumer from the mid-nineteenth century through the Golden Age of the early twentieth century. It begins where Hawthorne proactively makes his mark on the children’s literary genre in an effort to carve out a successful niche career,

³¹ Clark uses Henry James as a major critical examples of one who redefined what was “literary” and what was not (i.e. children’s literature).

³² Various studies analyze this “books for boys” discourse and the ramifications of stereotypes about boys and reading. Some, importantly, trace these trends back to the nineteenth century. Some current titles include: *Boys and Literacy: Practical Strategies*, *Guys Write for Guys Read*, *To Be a Boy*, *To Be a Reader*, or *Getting Boys to Read: Quick Tips for Parents and Teachers*.

demonstrating the power and agency of the author to respond to, or even create, market demand. Alcott's career emphasizes the power of the publisher and editor to demand specific content and material from their author, driving her to spend the majority of her career entrenched in writings for children, particularly girls. For Sidney, the juvenile consumer takes center stage, actively writing and pressuring her to continue the creation of her series, despite her personal feelings that the series was concluded. Finally, society itself drives Smith's work, bolstering the idea that women should create art and illustration exclusive depicting the realm of childhood and motherhood. These multiple roles in terms of who controls the material or development of children's literature, however, fail to deter from the whimsy, nostalgia, and charm of the content itself.

Despite the separation of children's literature as its own market apart from other genres, and despite the marketplace and academic drive to see children's literature as something juvenile and simplistic, books for childhood often have a way of lingering into adulthood. Barbara Sicherman, author of *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women* (2012), notes how the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir, the Jewish American author Cynthia Ozick, the African-American novelist Ann Petry, and the rock star Patti Smith have all acknowledged the importance of *Little Women* in their personal and professional lives. Author Chris Eliopoulos says that *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein "taught me about unconditional love...I loved the book for one reason as a child and a different one as an adult and that is the mark of genius. It has multiple meanings and new things can be discovered in its rereading" (Barrett). Even well-known children's book authors have favorite children's books that continue to influence them: for Judy Blume, it's Ludwig Bemelmans' *Madeline*, for Kate DiCamillo,

it's Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, for Bruce Coville, it's *The Voyages of Dr. Dolittle* by Hugh Lofting. As *Frindle* author Andrew Clements says of his favorite book, "I think everyone should read *Charlotte's Web* when they are six or ten years old, and then read it again, every five years for the rest of his or her life. It's a great book that keeps on growing as you do" (NEA). For many readers, the dog-eared copy of *Little Women*, the grandmother's hardback edition of *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, or the worn and much loved Smith edition of *The Water-Babies*, hold imagination and memories long after the "separate sphere" of childhood is over.

CHAPTER ONE

Myths and Miracles: Hawthorne and Children's Literature

In his 1894 treatise reflecting on nineteenth-century childhood and children's literature, prominent author and editor Horace Scudder remarks: "I have been led into a long digression through the natural correlation which exists between childhood in literature and a literature for children...The one author in America whose works yield the most fruitful examples in illustration of our subject is Hawthorne, and at the same time he is the most masterly of all our authors who have aimed at writing for an audience of children" (225).¹ Today, most readers predominantly associate Hawthorne with *The Scarlet Letter* and his other historical sketches that exhibit the "blackness of darkness" first mentioned by Melville.² But the nineteenth century also viewed Hawthorne as a writer of children's literature.³

¹ Although a well-known writer for children in his own right during the nineteenth-century and editor of the *Atlantic*, Scudder is primarily remembered for launching *The Riverside Magazine for Young People* in 1867, dubbed "one of the finest American children's periodicals" by critic Richard Darling (217). In an important column for that magazine titled "Books for Young People," Scudder set forth criteria and suggestions for books "worthy" of his contemporary children's audience. This quotation is taken from Scudder's *Childhood in Literature and Art: with some observations on literature for children; a study* (1894).

² In "Hawthorne and His Mosses," published in *The Literary World* in 1850, Melville remarks: "Now it is that blackness in Hawthorne, of which I have spoken, that so fixes and fascinates me. It may be, nevertheless, that it is too largely developed in him. Perhaps he does not give us a ray of his light for every shade of his dark." This association of Hawthorne with grim darkness, while long established, dismisses the light-hearted charm of his juvenile works.

³ Nineteenth-century sales of Hawthorne's children's books indicate a moderate popularity with several reprintings, with *A Wonder-Book* being his best-selling novel for children. The books were also consistently praised and recommended in nineteenth-century critical reviews. To date, only two book-length works have focused exclusively on Hawthorne's writing for children: Calvin Earl Schorer's dissertation "The Juvenile Literature of Nathaniel Hawthorne" (1949) and Laura Laffrado's *Hawthorne's Literature for Children* (1992).

In Hawthorne's time, the split between adult and juvenile literature, and therefore adult and juvenile authors, had yet to be fully delineated, allowing many authors to write in for multiple audiences, often with financial gain in mind. Henry Steele Commager writes that, in the nineteenth century, "almost every major writer...wrote for children as well as adults, and...for over a century the line between juvenile and adult literature was all but invisible" (qtd in Clark 48). In fact, as Beverly Lyon Clark points out, the best-sellers of the nineteenth century were "more likely to be *Little Women* than *The Portrait of a Lady*, more likely to be *Treasure Island* than *Moby-Dick* – more likely to be Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* than James' *What Maisie Knew*" (Clark 48). Clark's observation substantiates claims that what is now considered "children's" literature or "adult" literature fell simply under one category during the nineteenth-century: fictional literature. In addition, many of the popular adult periodicals of the nineteenth century, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, situated their content for a family readership and began regularly including reviews of children's literature by the 1860s.⁴ This reminds us that writing for children in the nineteenth century did not limit authors to one audience and that juvenile literature was considered part of fictional literature in general.⁵

Despite this overlap, a separate children's literature began gaining ground in its own right, predominantly with the advent of children's periodicals. After the first American children's magazine, *The Children's Magazine*, appeared in 1789 in Hartford,

⁴ As Clark points out, the three editors of the *Atlantic* between 1871-1898 – William Dean Howells, Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Horace Scudder – all published, and advocated for, children's literature (55).

⁵ In *Kiddie Lit*, Clark maps the changing attitudes towards children's literature over the late nineteenth through the end of the twentieth century to illustrate the shift towards dismissing children's authors and writings as canonically-worthy work.

Connecticut, a widening proliferation of juvenile periodicals appeared, with the most well-known in the nineteenth century being *Juvenile Miscellany*, *The Youth's Companion*, and *St. Nicholas*. Hawthorne's first writings for children, beginning with "Little Annie's Ramble," were published within similar juvenile periodicals.

The ways Hawthorne manipulates and challenges traditional juvenile material, however, help shift children's literature towards the more distinct genre by redefining what could be considered proper content for writings specifically for children. In this way, Hawthorne differentiates himself from other antebellum children's authors. In response to the overarching didactic moralism of American writings for children, Hawthorne attempts to move beyond these limits to, what he terms, "revolutionize" children's literature, primarily in *A Wonder-Book* and his sketch "The Snow-Image." At the same time, Hawthorne competes with a growing influx of women writers simultaneously staking claim to children's literature as a means to develop a professional writing career, resulting in anxieties both in Hawthorne's personal writings and his fiction, like "The Snow-Image." All of this results in a complex shift in Hawthorne's career as a writer, as well as in his writings in the children's literature genre. After *The Scarlet Letter* offers Hawthorne a degree of freedom, both creatively and financially, he opens new doors for children by rewriting Greek mythological tales and exploring a greater aesthetic freedom in his writings for both adults and children. But before this shift can occur, Hawthorne begins with simple, more traditional tales for a juvenile audience.

Hawthorne's first foray into writing for children was "Little Annie's Ramble," published in the *Youth's Keepsake* in 1835. Roy Harvey Pearce refers to this sketch, along with "Little Daffydowndilly" published in *Boys' and Girls' Magazine* (1843) and

“A Good Man’s Miracle” published in *The Child’s Friend* (1844), as “yet another example of the lovingly sentimental hackwork that from the outset he [Hawthorne] was willing to undertake in order to make his way as a writer” (*Vol VI* 288). These first stories for children were, Pearce argues, fluff pieces for profit that subscribe to the sentimental moralizing popular within writings for children in the antebellum era. After a short and less than successful stint as the editor of the family-friendly *American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge* - a job offered courtesy of Samuel Goodrich - Hawthorne was asked by Goodrich to write a “Universal History,” specifically a world history written for young readers. Hawthorne sarcastically remarks in a letter to his sister and colleague, Elizabeth: “Our pay, as Historians of the Universe, will be 100 dollars the whole of which you may have” (qtd in *VI* 288).⁶ The *Universal History* was published as part of Goodrich’s popular, and conservative, Peter Parley series for children.

While writing these first traditional, sentimental and didactic works directed to a juvenile audience, Hawthorne begins to push for the writing of a new kind of children’s book. In a letter dated March 21, 1838, Hawthorne writes to close friend Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

I was sorry that you did not come to dinner on Sunday; for I wanted to hold a talk with you about that book of fairy tales, which you spoke of at a previous interview.⁷ ...Possibly we may make a great hit, and *entirely revolutionize the*

⁶ It is interesting that, given Hawthorne’s repeated remarks about financial gain from children’s writing having a “very fair chance of profit,” he would so freely give the payment away to his sister. Elizabeth also helped her brother during his six-month position as editor of *American Magazine*.

⁷ Fairy tales, in general, were deemed inappropriate reading for American children. The majority of writings for children in the nineteenth century were realistic, didactic in nature and full of Protestant rhetoric. This debate over the corruptible value of fairy tales extended from Mrs. Trimmer’s *Guardian of Education* in 1802 to Agnes Repplier’s “Battle for the Babies” in 1895.

whole system of juvenile literature [emphasis added]. I wish you would shape out your plan distinctly, and write to me about it. Ought there not to be a slender thread of a story running through the book, as a connecting medium for the other stories? If so, you must prepare it. If I recollect right, it was your purpose to select some of the stories; but I should deem it preferable to have them all either original or translated – at least, for the first volume of the series. I would not have it a very bulky book – say two or three hundred 18mo pages, of large print; it being merely an experiment. (*Selected Letters* 46)

This letter illustrates a number of Hawthorne's concerns and maneuvers. He dismisses magazine writing and children's histories as less creditable "scribbling" compared with this opportunity to "entirely revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature" by writing oft-criticized fanciful tales. Furthermore, Hawthorne shows his interest in the material book itself, suggesting a thin book of octodecimo pages with large print to better serve his audience of young readers.⁸

It continues:

You shall be the Editor, and I will figure merely as a contributor; for, as the conception and system of the work will be yours, I really should not think it honest to take an equal share of the fame which is to accrue. *Seriously, I think that a very pleasant and peculiar kind of reputation may be acquired in this way* – we will twine for ourselves a wreath of tender shoots and dewy buds, instead of such withered and dusty leaves as other people crown themselves with; and what is of more importance to me, though none to a Cambridge

⁸ 18mo refers to pages that are the size of a sheet of paper resulting from folding and cutting a sheet of paper into eighteenths (3.5"-4.5" x 4.9"-5.9").

Professor, we may perchance put money in our purses [emphasis added].

Think about it, and write to me; and let us get our babyhouse ready by

October. (*Selected Letters* 46)

Here, Hawthorne exhibits his deference to Longfellow as the chief creator and Editor of the volume, while he will serve “merely as a contributor,” yet he simultaneously posits that this book will establish his own “peculiar” reputation as well; presumably the reputation would be “peculiar” not only because it would be one for children’s writings, but one for a new style of children’s literature. Finally, Hawthorne uses subtle humor to expose his clear financial goals. In sum, Hawthorne’s letter emphasizes thoughtful and serious deliberation about the development of children’s literature and his (hopefully profitable) role in shifting writing for children in a new direction for American audiences.

Longfellow was less than receptive, however, indicated by a letter from Hawthorne in 1839 that states: “Thus you see I have abundance of literary labor in prospect; this makes it more tolerable that you refuse to let me blow a blast upon the “Wonder-Horn.”...Really I do mean to turn my attention to writing for children, either my own book, or for a series of works projected by the Board of Education – to which I have been requested to contribute. It appears to me that there is a very fair chance of profit” (*Selected Letters* 49). Hawthorne encourages his family members to also take up the juvenile charge for financial betterment. In August 1841, he writes to his sister Louisa that he had contracted to write and edit a “series of juvenile books...to be adapted to our market...I wish Elizabeth would write a book for the series. She surely knows as much about children as I do, and ought to succeed as well. I do hope she will think of a subject – whether historical, scientific, moral, religious, or fanciful – and set to work. It will be a

good amusement to her, and profitable to us all...Cannot your mother write a book?" (*Letters* 15:555). The idea that Hawthorne alludes to – that women must write children's literature – supports the growing connection between women and juvenile writings, particularly that women are "naturally" suited towards, and only meant to write for, children.

While waiting on his female family members to perhaps write a children's book, Hawthorne writes his first three children's novels in 1840 - *Grandfather's Chair*, *Famous Old People*, *Liberty Tree* – all of which were published at close intervals in 1841 by Elizabeth Peabody, sister to his future wife Sophia. After first publications by E. A Peabody in Boston, Tappan and Dennet of Boston published the titles again in 1842. This history focuses on New England history, not a broader American history, but his retelling of history in these writings for children echoes his use of history in his writings for adults. The books contain short histories of figures like Roger Williams, King Philip, William Phips, Cotton Mather, and Lt. Governor Hutchison linked together by a benevolent grandfather as narrator. Importantly, Hawthorne notes his aim in his Preface to *Grandfather's Chair*: "To make a lively and entertaining narrative for children, with such *unmalleable material* as is presented by the somber, stern, and rigid characteristics of the Puritans and their descendants, is quite as difficult an attempt, as to manufacture delicate playthings out of the granite rocks on which New England is founded [emphasis added]" (*Vol VI* 6). As opposed to the delicate plaything fashioned out of snow in "The Snow-Image" or the Greek myths of *A Wonder-Book* made "plastic" in his hands, remolding the materiality of New England history proves challenging. Here we see Hawthorne first grappling with the materiality of history in his children's writings. As

Laffrado notes, “writing American history for the young creates a tension between what he sees as the required lively narration and the ‘unmalleable material’ of American history itself” (9). Hawthorne begins his children’s literature career with his familiar mode of historical revisionist sketches, but the challenge of replacing his typical grim and dark tone with one more whimsical and child-friendly seems initially difficult. The series, however, garnered enough of an audience to warrant republishing after Hawthorne’s successful *The Scarlet Letter*. Ticknor, Reed and Fields published *True Stories from History and Biography* in 1851 as a revised reissue *Grandfather’s Chair, Famous Old People, Liberty Tree* and *Biographic Stories* which, according to Roy Harvey Pearce, “represents Hawthorne’s attempts to write for an established juvenile market in an established juvenile genre” (*Vol VI* 287).

Although Pearce claims that the juvenile market and genre were established entities in 1851, the demarcation between adult and children’s literature shows a new manipulation. Hawthorne attempts, however, to show a new manipulation of materiality. In his dissertation on Hawthorne and juvenile literature, Calvin Schorer notes: “Hawthorne manipulated his materials in two ways: in the first place, he adopted them to his juvenile audience; and in the second to his own artistic methods” (115). Material manipulation, for Hawthorne, includes reworking American historical facts for an American childhood audience in his first children’s books. Later, after establishing success as an author, he manipulates European mythology in *A Wonder-Book* to break free from realistic moralizing and directly satirizes that same moral didacticism in “The Snow-Image,” written near the same time as his mythological tales.

The overwhelming majority of children's books, and the larger sphere of fictional literature itself, in the early to mid-nineteenth century were moral stories that were meant to instruct, rather than to just entertain. Even when children's literature like Samuel Goodrich's *Peter Parley* series, for which Hawthorne wrote, meant to entertain, it did so with a clear underlying didacticism.⁹ Reviewers in *The Dial* enviously remarked even as late as 1881 that they had only "the 'goodie' books in the Sunday schools; plain and clumsy to ugliness in their exterior, and mortally dry and unpalatable in their contents" (qtd in Darling 24). Hawthorne also subscribes, at least partially, to the didactic nature of early nineteenth century children's books through his use of a narrative framing device to, as Laffrado argues, "mediate the experience of childhood" (5). All of his children's books feature a collection of stories with the "connection medium" of a narrative framing device (*Letters* 15:266). His first four children's books – *Grandfather's Chair* (1841), *Famous Old People* (1841), *Liberty Tree* (1841), and *Biographical Stories* (1842) - feature a Grandfather narrating the historically-based tales to his child audience. Similarly, his last two children's books – *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls* and *Tanglewood Tales* – use the sophomoric Eustace Bright to narrate the mythological tales to childhood readers. This structure allows Hawthorne to write in his most comfortable mode – the short story or sketch – and then draw those sketches together to the full-length book form. Furthermore, it also gives him, through the narrator, control over the interpretation of the stories' material.

⁹ As a prime example of adult concern regarding children's literature content, Samuel Goodrich vehemently opposed folk and fairy tales for children and preferred to publish realistic stories of children that illustrated moral lessons.

Hawthorne's endorsement of familiar concerns about "polluting" young minds appears in his 1842 Preface to *Biographical Stories*:

The author regards children as sacred, and would not, for the world, cast anything into the fountain of a young heart, that might embitter and pollute its waters. And, even in point of the reputation to be aimed at, *juvenile literature is as well worth cultivating as any other* [emphasis added]. The writer, if he succeed in pleasing his little readers, may hope to be remembered by them till their own old age – a far longer period of literary existence than is generally attained, by those who seek immortality from the judgments of full grown men" (*Vol VI* 214)

While assuring adult readers that he holds their children's innocence dear, Hawthorne additionally promotes a strong position for juvenile literature as a genre. Hawthorne also passes judgment on authors who have grand desires for their words to be immortalized for generations to come. For the more pessimistic, or perhaps realistic, Hawthorne, immortality in letters cannot be attained. It is a fruitless exercise and the aim instead should be remembrance for a generation, a more modest and attainable goal. Perhaps Hawthorne also feels that juvenile literature is his only chance for remembrance and wishes to prophesy his own memory by encouraging the genre. Once his reputation is established, however, his outward endorsement of didacticism disappears in his most celebrated writings for children.

Before the *The Scarlet Letter* ensured this reputation, but after the moderate success of *Twice-Told Tales* (1837), which included "Little Annie's Ramble," Elizabeth Peabody encouraged Hawthorne to contribute to a series of children's books for the

district school libraries being planned by Horace Mann, her future husband.¹⁰ The resulting book, *New-England Historical Sketches* by N. Hawthorne, was never published, although it appears likely that its contents were related to, or part of, *True Stories*. Some copies of the *True Stories* books had trouble selling though, as reflected by an advertisement dated April 5, 1842 for Elizabeth's West Street book shop from the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, which states: "remnants of *Famous Old People* and *Liberty Tree*, first editions at ½ price" (*Vol VI* 295). Although his new historical sketches were never published, and his earlier novels were often remnants for cheaper sale, Hawthorne continues to pursue publishing success in the field of children's literature and believes in that market's potential. In 1843, he writes to his wife Sophia, "I intend to adhere to my former plan, of writing one or two mythological story books, to be published under O'Sullivan's auspices in New-York – which is the only place where books can be published, with a chance of profit" (*American Note-books* 428).

In 1846, Hawthorne continues this proposal for a children's book of mythological stories, as detailed in a letter to Evert Duyckinck, the editor of publishing house Wiley and Putnam.¹¹ Hawthorne writes:

I hope you will go on with the project of the Juvenile Series of books; - there seems to me to be a vacancy in that department, just now. I have had in my head, this long

¹⁰ Elizabeth's letter to Mann notes that Hawthorne "had in his mind one great moral enterprise as I think it & you will agree – to make an attempt at creating a new literature for the young" (qtd in *Vol VI* 290). Elizabeth actively encourages Hawthorne's foray into children's literature claiming, as Hawthorne does himself, that he is capable of revolutionizing the growing genre.

¹¹ Hawthorne was originally introduced to Duyckinck by Longfellow in 1838. Furthermore, Duyckinck wrote a favorable review of Hawthorne's *Grandfather's Chair* in the January, 1841 issue of *Arcturus*. Pearce claims that this relationship was one that illustrates Hawthorne's beginning to "make the right connections" with editors and publishers (*Vol VI* 301).

time, the idea of some stories to be taken out of the cold moonshine of classical mythology, and modernized, or perhaps gothicized, so that they may be felt by children of these days. For instance, the story of Midas seems admirable for the purpose – so does that of Pandora, with her box – and a multitude of others. I know I could make a pretty volume of such materials. Tell me more definitely about the plan of your series, if you conclude to go on with it. (*Letters*)

To “modernize” these tales by adapting the material content of the myths for a modern age exposes a tension in Hawthorne’s attitudes about modern society. Hawthorne both embraced and distrusted modernity, evidenced by his many sketches that bemoan the advancing industrial age and romanticize the pre-industrial natural world.¹² That said, the resulting *Wonder-Book* successfully modernizes the myths to appeal to a broad audience.

Although Duyckinck apparently did plan for a series of juvenile books, as evidenced by announcements in Wiley and Putnam’s *Literary News Letter*, there is no record of his response to Hawthorne.¹³ Instead, Hawthorne returns to the Customs House in 1846 for a three year period, out of which came the career-changing *The Scarlet Letter*. After his dismissal from the Customs House in 1849, but before the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne petitioned Mann to meet because “I think of writing a school book – or, at any rate, a book for the young – and should highly prize your advice as to what is wanted, and how it should be achieved” (qtd in *Vol VI* 296). Here, the financial

¹² “The New Adam and Eve” is one sketch that emphasizes this tension, in which a “natural” Adam and Eve awaken in a modern city replete with industrial and civic horrors. Other sketches that critique the struggle between the natural world and the modern scientific include: “The Artist of the Beautiful,” “The Birth-Mark,” and “Rappaccini’s Daughter.”

¹³ The September, 1841 edition of the literary news journal advertises an upcoming “Library for the Young,” and the June, 1844 issue announces “The Young American’s Library” (*Vol VI* 302).

goals appear to outweigh his desire to expand the realm of children's literature to include more original, entertaining works, as he suggests help for publishing a school book or another volume that would be readily received by the current market. Following the success of *The Scarlet Letter*, however, two more printings of *True Stories* were issued in both 1851 and 1854 offering a moderate financial return for Hawthorne.¹⁴

It is worth noting that the majority of "entertaining" books for children at this time were imported from England and adapted to the American trade, particularly Newbery's story-books. Following the Revolutionary War, publishers altered versions of old books with patriotic edits, such as the replacement of "Whales in the Sea God's Voice obey" with "By Washington Great deeds were done" in the alphabet rhyme within the *New England Primer* (Halsey 121). Education and American patriotism infiltrated books for children during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. But not until Clement Clarke Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas" published in December 1823 within the *Troy (New York) Sentinel*, did American children's writings claim freedom "from the restraining hand of the moralist and from the warning finger of the religious teacher, if we except Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Wonder Book'" (Halsey 149). *A Wonder-Book*, therefore, similarly signaled a shift in American children's literature away from didacticism and towards entertainment. On short story published a year before the writing of *A Wonder-Book*, "The Snow-Image," directly plays with this didacticism and overturns the rules and moral lessons in Hawthorne's continued effort to redefine the content of children's literature.

I. SNOW GIRLS AND SCRIBBLING WOMEN

¹⁴ The nine printings – 9,000 copies - of *True Stories* during this period brought Hawthorne \$667.50 in royalties (*Vol VI* 297).

Hawthorne's criticism of aesthetic ideologies and intention to refashion stories for a modern, American childhood readership continues in his son's call to revolutionize children's literature. In his 1887 essay "Literature for Children," Julian Hawthorne bemoans the "scientific and skeptical age" that forces moralistic didacticism and practical knowledge onto young American children (46). Imagination and fancy exist in the liminal space of childhood, where "everything is free and possible" until they are contaminated by "artificial cravings which the artificial prohibitions incident to our civilization create" (48). Julian Hawthorne alludes here to the imposition of the material and artificial upon the child, which distances that child from their natural imaginative intuitiveness. He uses the brief anecdote of a young child running to his mother to say he believes in fairies, and her reaction that fairies do not exist and are ignorant superstitions, to exemplify the destruction of childhood imagination in favor of practical and proved knowledge. Julian Hawthorne's commentary proves particularly useful when examining the narrative and thematic elements of his father's writings for children, *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls* and "The Snow-Image" specifically. He states in his essay that, "Children do not know what it is that makes a human being smile, move, and talk; but they know that such a phenomenon is infinitely more interesting than a doll; and they prove it by themselves supplying the doll with speech and motions out of their own minds, so as to make it as much like a real person as possible" (54). In Hawthorne's "The Snow-Image," a young girl protagonist creates a new playmate fashioned from natural materials, but endowed with human awareness, whose existence threatens the scientific and rational sensibilities of her father figure and must, therefore, be destroyed. "The Snow-Image," like *A Wonder-Book*, uses themes of transformation and creation to

explore the clash between imagination and sensible materialism, yet “The Snow-Image” simultaneously participates in the gendering of imagination, in which women conflate with children as the bearers of fancy and creativity. Scudder argues: “The story, however, which all would select as the most expressive of Hawthorne’s sympathy with childhood is The Snow Image... Would it be straining a point too far to say that as Andersen managed, whether consciously or not, to write of his own spiritual biography in his tale of The Ugly Duckling, so Hawthorne in The Snow Image saw himself as in a glass?” (232).¹⁵

First published in the *International Miscellany of Literature, Art and Science* in 1850 and published as the title story for a collection of sketches in 1852, Hawthorne’s “The Snow-Image: A Childish Miracle” illustrates another refashioning of mythology using the Pygmalion myth and the destruction of imagination at the hands of “matter-of-fact” materialistic men. Described as “a little masterpiece” by biographer Henry James, the story is often grouped together with two similar tales, “Drowne’s Wooden Image” and “The Artist of the Beautiful,” both of which use a Pygmalion-esque theme to explore the limitations of artistic idealism (James 63). The use of snow-images reflects a common theme seen in other writings by Hawthorne, namely the use of snow images as figurative symbols of imagination in “The Custom House” introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, written about the same time as “The Snow-Image,” as well as in *The Blithedale Romance*. In “The Customs House,” the coal fire and the moonbeams combine to communicate “a heart and sensibilities of human tenderness to the forms which fancy summons up. It converts them from snow-images into men and women,” suggesting the image fashioned

¹⁵ As in my analysis, Scudder presumes that Hawthorne explores his own personal ideologies and insecurities in this tale.

from snow, but converted into a young girl in “The Snow-Image” (52). Similarly, Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance* is associated with snow-storms and described by Zenobia as a “shadowy snow-maiden, who, precisely at the stroke of midnight, shall melt away,” perhaps alluding to the melting of the snow-girl in “The Snow-Image” (Blithedale 41). As Darrel Abel notes in his analysis of “The Snow-Image,” the story is “an allegory expressing the difference between the realities seen by idealist and materialist” (331).¹⁶ “The Snow-Image” certainly concerns itself with the conflict between creative imagination and sensible materialism, but the tale simultaneously genders these dialectical categories and bolsters the fear of imagination “inherently” found in children and women. Furthermore, the tale directly mimics and parodies traditional didactic children’s moral tales in structure and form.

The story’s introductory paragraph introduces the family members of the tale, beginning with Violet, an elder sister of a “tender and modest disposition,” and her ruddy-faced younger brother, Peony, both of whom may have been modeled on Hawthorne’s own children, Una and Julian (13). Their names suggest nature and whimsy and allude to Hawthorne’s use of fanciful flower names for children, such as Primrose, Buttercup and Sweet Fern in *A Wonder-Book*. Next comes their father, Mr. Lindsey, an “exceedingly matter-of-fact sort of man” who takes the “common-sense view of all matters” (13). Their mother, however, being a “delicate and dewy flower,” reminiscent of the children’s names, still maintains a trace of otherworldliness and imagination despite

¹⁶ Abel traces the use of needlework as a medium of investment in tandem with symbolism of “snow-images,” or imaginative power, within the story. Abel adeptly argues that the story explores the separation of the common-sense man, and his material world, from the ideal word, but this argument will be expanded here to discuss the gendered ramifications of such separations.

“the dusty realities of matrimony and motherhood” (14). Before the story has truly begun, Hawthorne recreates the stereotypical middle-class family structure in which the level-headed father provides for the family financially outside of the home and the mother, already associated with childish thoughts, remains at home to care for the children. These prescribed roles play an important part in Hawthorne’s criticism of “stubborn materialism” - materialism here referring to both the actual material world and fact-based knowledge, as well as to economic commodification. As the title suggests, this is nothing more than a “childish miracle,” meaning that it is a miracle based on child characters and creations, but also implying that men such as Mr. Lindsey would find such miracles “childish,” thereby relegating the word to a pejorative term connoting juvenile, frivolous, and feminine.

Violet and Peony frolic outdoors in an Edenic winter wonderland covered in snow “just fallen from heaven” like young Adam and Eve (15).¹⁷ While listening to the children outside, the mother wishes that fairies or “angel-children” would come down from paradise to help the children create snow-images with the “features of celestial babyhood,” furthering the association of the children with the divinely innocent and prelapsarian world (18). This idea “seized upon her imagination” and the mother dreams of seeing idyllic golden-haired children of paradise frolicking with her own. This first association of the mother and imagination begins a continued trope of woman as imaginative and fanciful, thereby inherently childish, distanced from the practical, material man. Building upon these introductory temperaments, young Violet remains

¹⁷ Hawthorne echoes a version of a young Adam and Eve in “Paradise of Children,” his re-telling of the Pandora’s Box myth in *A Wonder-Book*, that also details a similar fall from innocence experienced by Violet and Peony.

aware of her parents' prejudices, acknowledging that her mother will immediately see the beauty of the snow-image that she creates, while her father will say, "Tush! Nonsense!— come in out of the cold!" (19).

Furthering the separation of adult male materiality, the feminine becomes immaterial and unreal within the story. The narrator describes Violet as a "cheerful thought more than a physical reality," and her mother as "unworldly" (13). The ethereal snow-sister never speaks and blows "hither and thither about the garden" in a way that makes the mother doubt whether "it were a real child after all, or only a light wreath of new-fallen snow" (23). In his study of Hawthorne and material boyhood, Ken Parille claims that the "celebration of the spiritual girl is intimately tied to this unease with the material boy" within Hawthorne's stories (113).¹⁸ In particular, Parille states that "The Snow-Image" employs the antebellum contrast of "childhood gender and value: the moral girl and the corporeal boy," emphasized by the fact that the snow-image must be fashioned after the feminine, associated with purity and lightness (118). The ethereal nature of Violet, "the artist as a young female Transcendentalist," disconnects with the physical materiality of her brother Peony (Parille 118). Although equipped with a feminine name and fanciful disposition, Peony cannot help but to be seen as a precursor to his fully-developed materialist father, Mr. Lindsey. While Violet, the creative feminine, conceptualizes the snow-girl and guides her creation, Peony, "acting rather as a laborer," hauls the snow to the workspace (18).

Despite the correlation between the feminine and the immaterial, the mother, while unworldly herself, spends the story creating very material domestic productions.

¹⁸ Parille traces this trend through several Hawthorne stories, including "Little Annie's Ramble" and *A Wonder-Book*.

When women work in the domestic sphere, Gillian Brown argues that their work is “characterized as spiritual, transcendental; woman is imaged as an ideal beyond her body, the selfless domestic angel” (64). The mother embodies this transcendental “angel of the house,” whose imagination further separates her self and her body from the physical materiality of the home. But the domestic economy relies on the material in forms of food, shelter and clothing. While the children build their snow sister outside, the mother periodically checks on them before returning to her “work” - trimming a bonnet, darning a pair of stockings and sewing Peony’s new frock. She and the children both create simultaneously, although she is “busily at work again with her needle as the two children made their snow-image” (16). Time runs out, however, and the mother is forced to quickly finish Peony’s outfit before twilight comes, “faster and faster, therefore, went her flying fingers” as the children hurry to finish their snow-sister at the same time (20). This juxtaposition of creation between the children’s imaginative building of a new being from natural elements and the mother’s tedious sewing of manufactured fabric highlights the distance of their production. Although linked to childhood and fancy, the mother operates within a material domestic sphere that conflicts with her continuous daydreaming.

When the statue of the snow-sister is complete, the artistic leader Violet declares that they must kiss her to make her come to life. This kiss of life from both of the children does indeed awaken the snowy statue. The pristine, white young girl, dressed in white with golden ringlets, runs and plays about the yard, much to the mother’s shocked surprise. Reminiscent of Julian Hawthorne’s later anecdote of a child’s belief in fairies, Violet and Peony repeatedly tell the mother that the little girl is, in fact, the very snow-image that they created and not some lost child from the town. The mother “hesitated

what to think and what to do,” wanting to believe her children and perhaps sensing that a deeper part of herself, the imaginative childish part presumably, knows it to be true (25). But before she can respond, a bundled-up Mr. Lindsey appears and “this very sensible man” inquires about the child and why she is so irresponsibly dressed in a “flimsy white gown and those thin slippers” (25). He cannot accept the children’s explanation and responds, just as Violet predicted, with “Poh, nonsense, children!” (26). Importantly, the mother stands up for the children and remarks, “I do believe she is made of snow!,” but Mr. Lindsey discounts both her and the children, dragging the young snow-image into the house to warm up by the fire in what he perceives to be the appropriate and logical thing to do (30).

At this point, the mother’s commitment wavers and she acquiesces to her husband’s demand that they warm up the poor freezing child. She goes in search of a shawl, “for her own view of the matter, however subtle and delicate, had given way, as it always did, to the *stubborn materialism* of her husband [emphasis added]” (31). As a stand-in for the marketplace’s domination over imagination and non-conformity, Mr. Lindsey also cannot accept that which seems immaterial and lacking reasonable substance. This parallels earlier statements about American children’s literary marketplace staunchly rejecting writings that lacked a moral and didactic center. Hawthorne, like later nineteenth century children’s writers, seeks to shift away from moralizing towards entertaining and fanciful literature for children. Mr. Lindsey’s wife battles his stubbornness inwardly, but always submits to his opinions and courses of action. The children and the snow-sister manage to run outside, while their frustrated father cries “Nonsense, children, nonsense, nonsense!,” again echoing the prevailing label

of children's writings without a didactic or religious basis as "nonsense."¹⁹ The wife, one last time, attempts to intervene. Warning her husband that "you will think me foolish," she beseeches him to leave them be, for perhaps God may have created this "miracle," and begs him not laugh at her. Naturally, her husband does laugh heartily and states, "My dear wife, you are as much a child as Violet and Peony" (27). The collapsing of woman and child is complete, echoing the blurring of women and children in the eyes of the literary and artistic marketplaces of the nineteenth-century. Hawthorne's narrator exalts this childishness, stating that the woman had kept her "childlike simplicity and faith" throughout her life and this immaterial "transparent medium" allowed her to see profound truths that others would call "nonsense and absurdity" (28). Imagination, although praised by Hawthorne, is not mature or socially acceptable, and a woman's indulgence of such fancies results in patronizing laughter and ridicule.

Ultimately, the snow-sister melts in front of the fire, much to anger and dismay of Violet and Peony, who blame their "naughty father" for her destruction (32). At this point, Hawthorne inserts a direct moral lesson, building on the familiar didacticism of early nineteenth-century children's tales. Subversively, the "lessons" to be learned are for the "sagacious class of people to whom good Mr. Lindsey belongs" and not, importantly, meant for the children, their mother, or Hawthorne's larger juvenile audience (32). One lesson noted states that "it behooves men, and especially men of benevolence, to consider well what they are about, and, before acting on their philanthropic purposes, to be quite sure that they comprehend the nature and all the relations of the business in hand" (33).

¹⁹ As discussed previously in footnote 7, nineteenth-century critics and educators believed that fanciful tales and fairy stories to be either utter nonsense or harmful, having no place in the education and reading material of American children.

Even the language of this “moralizing” evokes the link between these men and the marketplace of “business” and philanthropy. Yet all of this moralizing is in vain, for “there is not teaching anything to wise men of good Mr. Lindsey’s stamp” who “know everything, --oh, to be sure!” Even if some phenomenon, like the miraculous snow-image, should “transcend their system,” they could not recognize it (33). Men’s practical minds have effectively shut out any possibility beyond the rational and the material. The story ends with Mr. Lindsey commanding, “Wife, see what a quantity of snow the children have brought in on their feet!...Pray tell Dora to bring some towels and mop it up!” (33). In a reaction of fear of imagination and unwavering commitment to common-sense, he criticizes the children and commands the women of the household to take care of their misbehavior, thereby separating himself from the domestic incident and its aftermath.

Hawthorne’s financial difficulties during his career, particularly prior to the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, the same year as the first publication of “The Snow-Image,” may influence his view of men in the marketplace. This material lack incites bitter sentiment towards common-sense men of material means, such as Mr. Lindsey, the presumably successful “dealer in hardware,” who becomes the recipient of the narrator’s moralizing. At the same time, Hawthorne offers no alternative or redemption for Mr. Lindsey. As Baym criticizes, Hawthorne allows the father no sympathy, even though he is the one to “go out daily into the rough world and earn the means on which the protected domestic world depends for the very insularity that develops its imaginative capacities” (118). “Crudely and carelessly conceived,” Baym

views the story as a weak tale in which the “profound connection between actuality and imagination, swings almost violently backward” (119).

If this connection between imagination and practicality does swing backward, as Baym contends, then the destruction of the snow-image is inevitable. In his analysis of class and gender in Hawthorne’s fiction, Joel Pfister states that nineteenth-century discourse “represented womanhood as a human hearth whose domestic function was to keep a beleaguered masculinity, chilled in the marketplace, emotionally warm and psychologically secure” (6).²⁰ Assuming Hawthorne was conscious of these discourses and culturally produced categories, as Pfister argues, then the destruction of the snow-girl becomes unavoidable if Hawthorne is to represent the status quo in which childish, and female, creativity is destroyed by chilly masculine logic. Mr. Lindsey arrives home from work bundled head to toe in scarves, hat and gloves, clearly chilled to the bone, for the cold marketplace has frozen the father, who returns home to find warmth. If the feminine space, embodied in the mother and Violet, is meant to be warm and comforting, the intrusion of a cold, young snow-girl hampers their ability to thaw Mr. Lindsey. Furthermore, the imaginative creation threatens his psychological security by requiring a faith in the miraculous and fanciful. The narrator’s reproach of Mr. Lindsey’s actions in the “moralizing” end of the tale suggests that Hawthorne takes issue with these constructed gender roles, although the final loud demand of Mr. Lindsey ends the narrative and alludes to his unwavering position of control and power. It seems

²⁰ Pfister’s close reading of “The Birth-Mark” argues that Hawthorne fears the creativity of women, illustrated through Georgiana. In “The Snow-Image,” fear of female creativity outside of the domestic, such as Violet’s creation of the snow-girl versus Mrs. Lindsey’s sewing, may echo this argument; however, the imagination is squelched for both children, Violet and Peony, and their mother, broadening the fear to a fear of imaginative and childish creativity in general.

appropriate then that Hawthorne offers no sympathy for Mr. Lindsey, when he himself was often beleaguered by attempts to find success in that same marketplace of which men like Mr. Lindsey belong, although he substitutes a jealousy of men and women's success in the literary marketplace with the success of men in material goods.

Thus in "The Snow-Image," fear of imagination transforms into fear of creation. Amidst the burgeoning praise of the American self-made man, fear of the self-made woman emerges and threatens the status quo of domestic womanhood. In this transformation story, it is the young girl who conceptualizes and actualizes a new form of young woman, one more free-spirited, unfamiliar and nonconforming than herself. Violet creates a "snow-sister" out of loneliness and isolation. Her creation is an act of hubris, attempting to create a new version of girlhood to complement herself, without the approval of the patriarchal sphere. Violet, therefore, creates anxieties for Mr. Lindsey that the men cannot process, except through dismissal and destruction.²¹

At the same time, Hawthorne reacts to materialist denunciations of the imaginative, but he additionally reacts to a specific-version of masculinity. Clark illustrates the changing face of nineteenth-century American manhood, best reflected in the shift from the Christian gentleman to the manly self-made man as a member of the emerging middle-class.²² As the century progresses, the Christian gentleman, of whom Hawthorne would have most likely identified, becomes increasingly associated with the effeminate. Hawthorne himself was often associated with the feminine, an association

²¹ This echoes Hawthorne's own dismissal of women writers, so famously embodied in his remark about the "damned mob of scribbling women."

²² For further analysis of these types of nineteenth-century manhood, see Clark's Chapter "What Fautleroy Knew" in *Kiddie Lit*.

that later nineteenth-century critics made sure to qualify. Louisa May Alcott's poem "A Wail Uttered in the Woman's Club" to the tune of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" contains the first lines from stanzas about the men around her, "There's Emerson, the poet wise," "There's Alcott, the philosopher," and then "Hawthorne, shy as any maid" (qtd. in Porter 25). After reading Hawthorne's anonymously published short story, "The Gentle Boy," Margaret Fuller wrote in her journals, "I am very desirous to know the author, whom I take to be a woman" (Person 94).²³ Perhaps to qualify or balance these associations, late nineteenth-century male critics and friends paid particular attention to note Hawthorne's more masculine qualities. Despite being an artistic dreamer, Henry James states that Hawthorne had "something plain and masculine and sensible," and "the play of Hawthorne's intellect was light and capricious, but the man himself was firm and rational" (James 10). In an 1879 biography, Richard Stoddard states that "His work is pervaded by a manly personality, but by an almost feminine delicacy and gentleness" (Stoddard 15). Hawthorne's friend Horatio Bridge remarks in his biography, "He was a gentlemen in the best sense of the word, and he was always manly, cool, self-poised and brave" (Bridge 6). These comments reflect society's ambivalence towards the "feminine" man and emphasize Clark's contention that late nineteenth-century ideal manhood is associated with practical ambition and detached physicality. Although praising Hawthorne's gentleness, the writers balance such effeminacy with masculine attributes to be sure that readers understand that Hawthorne was, above all, a man.

²³ Leland Person notes several instances in which Hawthorne's contemporaries praised his "womanly knowledge" and argues that Hawthorne often blurred conventional gender roles in his characters. Building on Nina Baym's criticism that supports the idea of Hawthorne as a protofeminist, Person contends that Hawthorne's fiction can be read "as a progressive effort to liberate a power female figure, clearly identified with his own creative power" (96). This seems more light-hearted in "The Snow-Image," where materialism and masculinity are chided for their lack of faith and imagination, but the same argument could be made in that text.

In writing romances and stories for children, Hawthorne enters a female-dominated sphere resulting in an authorial mode “of a feminized male author who knows he has entered a female world in becoming a writer” (Bell 15). His increasingly antagonist remarks about his female competitors in the literary marketplace reflect Hawthorne’s discouragement about financial security. Although women “prostituted [themselves] to the public,” Hawthorne was not innocent of manipulating his own writings to that same public readership and attempted to capture his own share of that market (*Selected Letters* xv). At the same time, Hawthorne believes that “true” women, like Mrs. Lindsey in “The Snow-Image” or Georgiana in “The Birth-Mark” are naturally and spiritually above the manipulations of the material literary marketplace, stating: “Women are too good for authorship, and that is the reason it spoils them so” (*Letters* 17:457). Baym furthers this tension by reminding critics that Hawthorne was “making a name for himself with fictions that seemed to be characterized by ethereality and a rejection of the actual world, at the very moment when women writers were laying literary claim to the real world he was rejecting” (33). This tension between entering a genre dominated by women writers and wanting to revolutionize that same genre illustrates Hawthorne’s ambivalence towards the children’s literature marketplace, as seen in “The Snow-Image.” At times, he must lean on women writers in his own family to produce conservative writing for children, such as Parley’s *Universal History*; at other times, he reaches out to his male friends like Longfellow to break new ground and expand the limitations of popular children’s literature in America.

Beyond criticizing certain modes of masculinity or women’s place in the literary publishing, Hawthorne exalts childhood as a liminal space of delight and optimism.

Murray notes that the “romantic construction of childhood as a brief, angelic state of innocence permeated nineteenth-century culture and allowed writers either to see children as instruments of others’ redemption or to see childhood as a time of pleasure, escape, and freedom” (53). Hawthorne sees his child protagonists as both. Violet and Peony represent the redeemers who can free their materialist, common-sense father figure from the imagination-crushing realities of consumer and scientific culture, but they also represent an idyllic space of creativity and creation, accepted only because they are young. In his 1902 biography, George Woodberry notes that Hawthorne’s writings for children had “that element of the purity of being which is felt also in his reverence for womanhood, and which, whether in child or woman, was typical of the purity of the soul itself” (224). Women, particularly mothers, become lumped together with children, as do imaginative fantasies with effeminacy. The death of imagination is the success of patriarchal no-nonsense. Masculine “stubborn materialism” triumphs, affirming Julian Hawthorne’s later lament, “for though the child, if fairly engaged in single combat, might make a formidable resistance against the infliction of ‘lessons,’ it cannot long withstand our crafty device of sending it to a place where it sees a score or a hundred of little victims like itself” (49). For Hawthorne, the weeping Violet and her created female image represent the “little victims” whose imagination and existence are destroyed by an overwhelming and oppressive masculine materialism.

Although Hawthorne may criticize this masculine materialism, a gendered graduation occurs where his juvenile works, such as “Little Annie’s Ramble” and “The Snow-Image,” are allowed to move into adult collections of tales. Not only did these juvenile sketches move into collections for an adult audience, but “The Snow-Image”

was chosen as the title sketch for a compilation of tales that included such dark works as “Ethan Brand,” “The Devil in the Manuscript” and “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.”

This move to place “The Snow-Image” as the title work of the collection reflects both the ability of writers like Hawthorne to blur the lines between juvenile and adult texts, as well as Hawthorne’s acknowledgement of the growing juvenile consumer and female readership. Whereas writers like Louisa May Alcott become trapped in the juvenile market despite desires to distance themselves from such “moral pap for the young,” as seen in the next chapter, Hawthorne actively exploits that same readership to garner profit and reputation in both adult and juvenile fields.

Admittedly, Hawthorne initially saw children’s literature as a means to make money, remarking “that there is a very fair chance of profit,” but his impetus to move into juvenile literature also had a broader scope. Hawthorne sought to “entirely revolutionize the whole system of juvenile literature” as early as 1838, as stated in his letter to Longfellow (Pearce 298). Thus, Hawthorne’s desires in terms of what children’s literature could accomplish for him as an author vacillate between financial success and authorial fame. The concept for *A Wonder-Book* was evidently several years in the making, as shown by the numerous times he mentions this project in his previously mentioned letters. Throughout *A Wonder-Book*, Hawthorne extols the benefits of the American landscape, both literally and figuratively, and he stakes a claim for a uniquely American authorial use of classical mythology.

II. AMERICANIZING GREEK MYTHS FOR CHILDREN

Beyond re-telling American history in his first novels for children, Hawthorne aims to re-cast ancient Greek myths in a warm, romantic tone, defying the coldness of

traditional classical scholarship. In a letter dated May 23, 1851, Hawthorne details his plans for the book in a letter to his publisher James T. Fields as follows:

I mean to write, within six weeks or two months next ensuing, a book of stories, made up of classical myths. The subjects are - the story of Midas, with his golden touch - Pandora's Box - The adventure of Hercules in the quest of the Golden Apples - Bellerophon and the Chimaera - Baucis and Philemon - Perseus and Medusa - these, I think, will be enough to make up a volume to be sold at 50 or 75 cts, according to the style of publication. As a framework, I shall have a young college-student telling these stories to his cousins and brothers and sisters, during his vacations, sometimes at the fireside, sometimes in the woods and dells. Unless I greatly mistake, these old fictions will work up admirably for the purpose; *and I shall aim at substituting a tone in some degree Gothic or romantic, or any such tone as may best please myself, instead of the classic coldness which is as repellant as the touch of marble* [emphasis added] (Fields 59)

This letter indicates Hawthorne's engagement with the aesthetics of his time, particularly concerning the marble statues abundantly placed throughout Britain and America, most of which derived from classical themes. Hawthorne's relation to art and aesthetics can be seen throughout his lifetime of work, most notably in "The Artist of the Beautiful" (1846) and *The Marble Faun* (1860), and he remains one of many nineteenth-century American writers to directly engage with Hellenism's popularity. This aesthetic concern relates to Hawthorne's manipulation of the material in that he sought to transform the mythological

stories into new American creations for American children, thereby reshaping the myths two-fold: adapting them to America, but also adapting them to a juvenile readership.

In less than two months, Fields had the full manuscript for *A Wonder-Book*. Sales went well, with Hawthorne receiving \$531.00 in royalties from the 4,667 copies printed in 1851. By 1863, he had received \$1,021.35 from the 10,349 copies in print (*Vol VI* 308). The retail price for the book was seventy-five cents – the same price as *The Scarlet Letter*, *Twice-Told Tales* and *The Blithedale Romance*, indicating, perhaps, the rising importance of children’s novels, or, the rising worth of Hawthorne’s name as an author (*Literary World* 192). The sequel, *Tanglewood Tales*, was not only published simultaneously in American and Britain, by Ticknor and Fields and Chapman in Hall, respectively, but, by 1863, Hawthorne had received \$771.38 in royalties on 6,930 copies from Ticknor and Fields and fifty pounds from Chapman and Hall. Additionally, *A Wonder-Book* received positive reviews after its publication. Contemporary critics and readers praised Hawthorne’s fresh new approach to classical mythology, encouraged by its playful nature and accessibility. Inherent in that playful nature and accessibility, of course, is a break from European classicism and imitative representations. And unlike his ambiguous and self-critical feelings towards his adult literature, particularly his early writings for adults, Hawthorne confidently sent *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales* out into the world.²⁴ On July 16, 1852, he writes to Washington Irving praising children’s literature: “I sent you ‘The Wonder Book’; because, being meant for children, it seemed to reach a higher point, in its own way, than anything that I had written for grown

²⁴ Embarrassed by his first novel *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne attempted to burn every copy that he could find and told his publisher Fields to “not brush away the dust” from any lingering copies of the disowned publication (Fields 48).

people” (*Selected Letters* 164). After finishing *Tanglewood Tales*, he wrote to Richard Henry Stoddard on March 16, 1853, stating, “I never did anything else so well as these old baby stories” (*Hawthorne and His Wife* 462). Both of these quotations emphasize Hawthorne’s positive response to his own writing for children, and demonstrate his belief that juvenile writings can not only meet, but exceed, the possibilities of adult literature.

Buoyant upon the success of *The Scarlet Letter*, as well as his role as father to three young children, Una, Julian and Rose, Hawthorne enters the current Hellenic and Hebraic discourse with an American’s preoccupation with re-invention and freedom. Disregarding, or directly subverting, the connection between English imperialism and classic Greece, Hawthorne simultaneously becomes identified as “the first writer in English to recast stories out of classical myth for children” (Pearce 311).²⁵ Like his historical revisionist sketches, these “old baby stories” establish a new, decidedly American, method of portraying national identity and cultural heritage and thereby establish a new direction for American children’s literature away from realistic didacticism and towards fancy and fantasy.

Not only did Hawthorne make these tales entertaining, but he did so with a patriotic fervor. We again return to Scudder’s *Childhood in Literature and Art*:

Most notable still is Hawthorne’s version of Greek myths...He only added the touch of his own genius. Only! and the old rods blossomed with a new variety of fruit and flower. It is easily said that Hawthorne Yankeeized the stories, that he used the Greek stones for constructing a Gothic building, but this is academic criticism. He really

²⁵ Despite this accolade, Hawthorne was actually not the first American writer to re-fashion Greek myths for children. Eliza Robbins published her *Classic Tales: Designed for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons* in 1833 through Peabody & Co. in New York.

succeeded in naturalizing the Greek myths in American soil, and all the labors of all the Coxes will not succeed in supplanting them. Moreover, I venture to think that Hawthorne's fame is more firmly fixed by means of the *Wonder Book*. The presence of an audience of children had a singular power over him (226-7)

Scudder's extensive praise of *A Wonder-Book* bolsters the novel's ability to "Americanize" the Greek stories. Scudder repeatedly acknowledges Hawthorne's success in this regard, as well as reiterates what Hawthorne himself noted to Stoddard – that this book is his best work.

In the Preface to *A Wonder-Book*, Hawthorne, distancing himself as "The Author," remarks on the necessary "freedom" he has taken to translate these myths for children. Not just any children, but American children. He notes that "it will be observed by every one who attempts to render these legends malleable in his intellectual furnace, that they are marvellously independent of all temporary modes and circumstances" and he refuses to plead guilty to a sacrilege since nobody can claim copyright over these "immortal tales" (Preface). Here again we see Hawthorne engaging with immortality and materiality. He stresses the point that no one owns these myths and they are free to be used, translated and refashioned at will. He chooses to reinvent the myths within an unspoiled American pastoral landscape burrowed within a cozy framing narrative. It is within this frame that Hawthorne most directly expresses his motives and ideologies regarding children's literature.

His six chosen mythological stories are woven into a bright autumn narrative based in Tanglewood, a country town nestled between Monument Mountain and the Dome of Taconic. In *A Wonder-Book*, the narrative frame includes an idyllic American

countryside filled with an audience of healthy, bouncing children and a charming narrator. The group of children flocking about include boys and girls of “all sorts, sizes and ages,” indicating that these will be tales for every child (8). Hawthorne adopts friendly country names reminiscent of the fields for the children, calling them “Primrose, Periwinkle, Sweet Fern, Dandelion, Blue Eye, Clover, Huckleberry, Cowslip, Squash Blossom, Milkweed, Plantain and Butter-cup,” although he admits that these names might be better suited for fairies than children (9). Hawthorne’s fairylike children in the text connect the children with natural elements of the pure, romanticized American landscape.

Readers are then introduced to the narrator of the stories, Eustace Bright, a precocious eighteen-year-old student at Williams College. Although a larger narrator exists, in the form presumably of a Hawthorne-esque established writer, the bold claims stated within the narrative frame come from Eustace himself. Eustace is, as Byam states, “a real technical triumph, for he resolves all Hawthorne’s difficulties and is a perfect go-between for Hawthorne and his readers” (Baym 41). This echoes Laffrado’s argument concerning Hawthorne’s use of the narrator in general to mediate his stories and their reception. In some ways, Eustace stands in as the scapegoat should criticism of the work go awry. Although Eustace speaks authoritatively, Hawthorne mitigates this authority with comments that he is “feather-brained” and alludes to his still juvenile and fanciful nature when describing how Eustace compares Monument Mountain to “a huge, headless Sphinx, wrapped in a Persian shawl” (55). Eustace plays heartily with the Tanglewood children, particularly on a snowy day when he rides the sled, builds snow caves and has snowball fights as playfully as any of the other youngsters. Hawthorne makes a similar

move through the character Primrose, the eldest child of the audience. Following the myth of Pandora titled “The Paradise of Children,” Primrose, age ten, pedantically chides the young Sweet Fern after he makes idyllic claims about the pleasure of snow-storms, crying “Hear the child! How little he knows about the troubles of this world! Poor fellow! He will be wise when he has seen as much of life as I have” (126). Hawthorne humorously adds, “So saying, she began to skip the rope,” reminding readers that she is only a child herself (126). Hawthorne remains ever conscious of his young narrator and takes pains to ensure that Eustace, and Primrose, retain a degree of childishness amidst their more advanced musings regarding the tales.

Yet, through Eustace, Hawthorne opens the narrative by criticizing the fact that the original materials of continental mythology have been relegated to academia and old “musty volumes of Greek” poured over by “old gray-bearded grandsires” (13). These nursery-tales for grandmother Earth should have been put into picture-books long ago, sighs Eustace. The young storyteller then launches into his first tale, “The Gorgon’s Head,” delightfully disregarding “all classical authorities, whenever the vagrant audacity of his imagination impelled him to do so” (14). From the initial pages, Hawthorne alerts the reader that this book will break the rules. Classical authority will be challenged by the upstart narrator, with the focus remaining on imagination and entertainment. Imagination, both here and in Hawthorne’s “The Snow-Image,” represents a freedom from materialism - an unfixd and intangible world where Hawthorne and his child audience might escape the rigid material structures of their surrounding society as well as the conservative didacticism of children’s literature.

Nestled into the charming dell, the children rapturously gaze upon their narrator. In every introductory and concluding paratext between the myths, the American countryside remains sublime, like its own Elysian Fields, perfectly lovely in every season. Following the first tale, the landscape unfolds in beauty, inviting the children to run about freely as Eustace remarks, “oh, what a day of Indian Summer was it going to be!” (55). With the term “Indian Summer,” readers are reminded here again that they are in an American landscape, but one that welcomes Greek mythology in its new whimsical form. In fact, the landscape seems mythological in nature as well. Monument Mountain reminds Eustace’s of a great Sphinx. The dell of Shadow Brook gleams like gold in the Autumn, where “a little brook ran along over its pathway of gold,” foreshadowing the tale of King Midas (58). Later, the author assumes that Eustace will “write an ode, or two or three sonnets, or verses of some kind or other, in praise of the purple and golden clouds, which he had seen in the setting sun” (131). For the final tale of the book, the children and Eustace climb up to Bald Summit where Hawthorne again uses nature to mirror his own authorial intentions, noting that although the hillside looks “so aged...whichever way you turned your eyes, something fresh and green was springing forth” (210).²⁶ Like the old woods, the ancient myths of Greece have been reborn and made fresh by Hawthorne’s translation, and his childish audience represents the new life in bloom. This idyllic scenery found in the book may suggest a bit of Americanist propaganda on Hawthorne’s part since, despite personal vehement criticisms of the Berkshire weather, such as “I detest it! I detest it!! I de-test it!!! I hate Berkshire with my whole soul, and would joyfully see its mountains laid flat,” he idealizes the natural

²⁶ Scudder praised Hawthorne’s new content for children, stating “the old rods blossomed with a new variety of fruit and flower,” reiterating this metaphor.

surroundings of Berkshire in his narrative, imbuing its seasons with supernatural and awe-inspiring beauty (*Complete Works* 413). Elizabeth Foeller-Pituch supports this claim in stating that “the freshness and strength of America is stressed by the symbolic use of natural phenomena as contrasted to the classical monuments of Europe” within the narrative (Pituch 105). The classical monuments overtaking the European scenery coincide with the cold classicism of the original myths, whereas the fresh virginal countryside of America allows for creative growth, supported by a Christian love of God and nature, embodied in these romantic tales.

Eustace further reminds us again that the group resides in new, and better, territory, remarking, “Why did I not tell you how old King Midas came to America, and changes the dusky autumn, such as it is in other countries, into the burnished beauty where it here puts on?” (90). To young Eustace, autumn golden leaves and dells cannot be as beautiful anywhere else in the world. The myths themselves, in King Midas and others, travel to America to increase its bounty, and their own. Eustace asks the children if they have heard such a wonderful tale before, to which “saucy” Primrose, perhaps standing in for the snobby European critic, replies, “Why, as to the story of King Midas, it was a famous one, thousands of years before Mr. Eustace Bright came into the world, and will continue to be so, as long after he quits it” (89). Primrose reminds readers that these myths have long been in existence and will continue to exist long after these versions; however, Eustace promptly replies with the crucial impetus of the text, “But you well know, in your naughty little heart, that I have burnished the old gold of Midas all over anew, and have made it shine as it never shone before” (90). The original Greek myths have, as Eustace mentions at the beginning of the narrative, grown old and dusty,

held captive by European classicism and scholarship. Through Eustace, Hawthorne re-burnishes the tales, making them shine with new vitality and resonance, not only with Americans, but specifically American children.

The most telling clash between old and modern comes in the framing narrative scene between Eustace and the venerable Mr. Pringle. While Eustace sits alone to write poetry, the children rush in and Primrose, now thirteen, tells Eustace that her father, Mr. Pringle, wishes to hear one of his stories. A frustrated Eustace replies that he cannot tell his stories in front of grown people, particularly a scholar like Mr. Pringle: “Your father is a classical scholar; not that I am much afraid of his scholarship, neither, for I doubt not it is rusty as an old case-knife, by this time. But then he will be sure to quarrel with the admirable nonsense that I put into these stories, out of my own head, and which makes the great charm of the matter for children, like yourself. No man of fifty, who has read the classical myths in his youth, can possibly understand my merit as a re-inventor and improver of them” (132). Here, Hawthorne anticipates criticism of his own book, while simultaneously criticizing that very staid scholarship presently circulating in academic circles. He also playfully inserts the age remark as Hawthorne himself was nearing fifty when he wrote the collection of stories. Eustace, however, finally acquiesces to the children’s demand and visits the room of Mr. Pringle.

In the recessed window of the Pringle’s apartment stands a marble sculpture of Horatio Greenough’s “Angel and Child,” an 1833 work by the American sculptor that celebrates popular continental themes of classicism and the Renaissance, flanked by shelves of richly bound books. Eustace gingerly enters the room to find the tall and well-dressed Mr. Pringle - a symbol of sensible material, traditional aesthetics and classical

learning - seated in a deep arm-chair awaiting his story. Mr. Pringle smiles at Eustace and welcomes his oral narratives out of curiosity, noting that “it would be so much the more gratifying to myself, as the stories appear to be an attempt to render the fables of classical antiquity into the idiom of modern fancy and feeling” (134). Eustace remains wary, directly noting that Mr. Pringle is “not exactly the auditor that I should have chosen,” to which Pringle replies, “a young author’s most useful critic is precisely the one whom he would be least apt to choose” (134). With a muttering under his breath about sympathy having no place in criticism, Eustace agrees to tell a story, but not without a final reminder to Pringle, and perhaps Hawthorne’s readership and critics, to “be kind enough to remember, that I am addressing myself to the imagination and sympathies of the children, not to your own” (135). Hawthorne, through Eustace, makes it clear that his intentions are not to please the classical scholars of the day. His first and foremost aim remains to entertain his juvenile audience, therefore he anticipates the reaction of classical scholars like Mr. Pringle who merely humors Eustace by listening to his tale.

Following a rousing rendition of Hercules in “The Three Golden Apples,” Mr. Pringle deliberates before offering his critical verdict, stating, “I find it impossible to express such an opinion of this story as will be likely to gratify, in the smallest degree, your pride of authorship. Pray let me advise you never more to meddle with a classical myth. Your imagination is altogether Gothic, and will inevitably gothicise everything that you touch. The effect is like bedaubing a marble statue with paint” (170). “Bedaubing a marble statue with paint” is precisely what Hawthorne intends to do. He rejects the cold marble of classicism and these myths in their original form, painting them in a fresh way and “gothicising” them by adding Christian morality and American pastoral landscapes.

Mr. Pringle criticizes the revolutionary aspects of the tales and dismisses them as tacky markings dirtying an otherwise pristine marble, preferring the same repellant “classic coldness” that Hawthorne scorns in his personal letters.

Eustace counters immediately, “Sir, if you would only bring your mind into such a relation with these fables, as is necessary, in order to re-model them, you would see at once that an old Greek had no more exclusive right to them, than a modern Yankee has. They are the common property of the world, of all time. The ancient poets re-modelled them at pleasure, and held them plastic in their hands; and why should they not be plastic in my hands as well?” (171). Eustace once again reminds readers that Americans should have the same right to the material of these historic tales as any other scholar, person or child. This “common property” has been re-shaped for centuries through writers and artists, and radically re-fashioned by Hawthorne for his contemporary juvenile audience.

Going further, Eustace praises the stories’ material malleability and notes that “the moment you put any warmth of heart, any passion or affection, any human or divine morality, into a classic mould, you make it quite another thing from what it was before. My own opinion is, that the Greeks, by taking possession of these legends, (which were the immemorial birthright of mankind,) and putting them into shapes of indestructible beauty, indeed, but cold and heartless, have done all subsequent ages an incalculable injury” (171). Eustace shuns the fixed immortality of these legends, in a similar move to Hawthorne’s earlier criticism of authors who seek immortal fame. Hawthorne takes a step further in his critique of clinging to traditions, stating that these indestructible classics hinder future generations by failing to engage with modern sensibilities and forcing a cold regurgitation of tone and principle, which is reflective of the didacticism of most

American children's literature of the period. Mr. Pringle laughs at Eustace's claims, reminding him to "never put any of your travesties on paper," and suggests that Eustace strive to re-tell Apollo's myth next. Eustace accepts the challenge to create a "Gothic Apollo" (172). Nina Baym summarizes the encounter, stating that "Eustace and his host clash entirely on aesthetic grounds" (*Shape* 176). As Baym notes, Mr. Pringle holds true to classical qualities of "balance, order, harmony, abstraction, and above all rationality" ("Myths" 39). The "gothicizing" of Eustace reflects the attention to detail, the disregard for perfect balance, and the asymmetry that comes inherent with childlike things full of whimsy and malleability.

Ultimately, as Ellen Butler Donovan notes, Hawthorne undercuts the narrative authority of Mr. Pringle, giving Eustace a chance to provide strong counterarguments and displacing a moral authority within the narrative (Donovan 28). Donovan goes further to suggest that Hawthorne "has erased himself out of the collection" by allowing Eustace and all of the children to create their own opinions, existing on the same authorial plane as Hawthorne himself. While I agree with Donovan's conclusion that Hawthorne allows children to freely participate in the creative act implying "that children have and should cultivate the same aesthetic and imaginative powers as adults," I would argue that Hawthorne does insert his own aesthetic and patriotic ideologies within the narrative to shape the overarching thematic threads with which the children engage (Donovan 38). Hawthorne also literally inserts himself directly within a striking moment prior to the next tale that remains relatively undiscussed in modern criticism of the text.

Fast-forward five months or so after the incident with Mr. Pringle and Eustace returns to Tanglewood still the same merry boy, but with a hint of a moustache indicating

his gradual maturity. The wildflowers are in bloom and Eustace sits below a tree surrounded by his eager audience waiting for another tale. Interestingly, the “Author” himself hides behind a bush and is there to hear and transcribe the story for readers. Hawthorne, as the older Author, has not fully erased himself from the text, as Donovan argues, but lurks on the fringes, where “I was there to hear it, hidden behind a bush, and shall tell it over to you in the pages that come next” (176). Sheila Murnaghan argues that Hawthorne uses Eustace as a surrogate for himself in order to “banish the ‘hidden adult’ who lurks behind all works of children’s literature,” as exemplified in Perry Nodelman’s seminal text (Murnaghan 345).²⁷ Yet here is the hiding adult, listening and then claiming authority to translate Eustace’s oral tale into written word. This inclusion highlights a distinct break in the narrative frame, where the older Author supersedes Eustace’s solitary claim to narration. Nowhere else within the framing device, aside from the Preface, does the Author directly appear. The implications of this hiding adult could merely be a friendly reminder that, although Eustace tells the tales, the Author transcribes them, or a play on the child’s game hide and seek. Or, perhaps, Hawthorne as Author wishes to situate himself more directly into the narrative as to “approve” of Eustace’s alterations of the classic myths, illustrating his own interest and participation, and his role-play as both editor and publisher, of Eustace’s tales.

Seated at the top of the hill, “among the clouds,” Eustace begins his final tale of Pegasus “with as much fervor and animation as if he had really been taking a gallop on the winged horse” (251). Even saucy Primrose is moved to tears by his engaging story.

²⁷ In *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature*, Nodelman argues that adult knowledge and assumptions remain hidden in even the most simple of texts.

Eustace wishes that he had access to Pegasus at that moment, to “make literary calls on my brother-authors,” including Dewey, James, Longfellow, Melville, Holmes, and a mysterious unnamed female author (252).²⁸ Hawthorne has joined together names of American authors in a comradeship of excellence and patriotism, under the flying horse of classical Greece. This direct nod to the proliferation of significant authorship not only reminds readers that numerous writers of importance exist on American grounds, but, in a larger context, the passage substantiates the existence of an American literary tradition. Hawthorne humbly includes himself, through the inquiry of Primrose, “Have we not an author for our next neighbor? That silent man, who lives in the old red house, near Tanglewood avenue, and whom we sometimes meet, with two children at his side, in the woods or at the lake. I think I have heard of his having written a poem, or a romance, or an arithmetic, or a school-history, or some other kind of book” (253). Hawthorne plays with his audience here, as he had published many of those types of books by this point in his career. Eustace quickly quiets her with a “Hush, Primrose, hush!” (253). If that author happens to overhear their chatter and not find it pleasing, “he has but to fling a quire or two of paper into the stove; and you, Primrose, and I, and Periwinkle, Sweet Fern, Squash Blossom, Blue Eye, Huckleberry, Clover, Cowslip, Plantain, Milkweed, Dandelion, and Butter-cup-yes, and wise Mr. Pringle with his unfavorable criticisms on my legends, and poor Mrs. Pringle, too-would all turn to smoke, and go whisking up the funnel! Our neighbor in the red house is a harmless sort of person enough, for aught I know, as concerns the rest of the world; but something whispers me that he has a terrible power

²⁸ There has been speculation that the unnamed female author may have been Catherine Maria Sedgwick.

over ourselves, extending to nothing short of annihilation” (254).²⁹ In another interesting break in narrative authority, similar to the Author hiding behind the bush, Hawthorne quirkily allows Eustace to acknowledge that he, and the other children, are merely fictions of the Author’s imagination, able to be materially erased from his book. The Author has a “terrible power” over the children, thwarting their agency and existence, but Eustace’s passionate description of such undercuts the actual threat. In this way, Hawthorne as Author establishes an omnipotent presence above the framing narrative, moving even further beyond hiding from the children to record Eustace’s tale, but in such a way that mitigates that power through the delightful exchange of Primrose and Eustace. Hawthorne simultaneously exists outside and within the narrative frame, acting as both its creator and its character, and thereby controls its thematic elements and internal audience, while succumbing to the distinct charm of the story he has written. In the end, his role as Author feels frivolous and less consequential than the musings of Eustace, who will grow up to be a “mighty Poet” (250).

Eustace, the naïve aspiring writer, hopes that publication of his stories will be simple, and similarly predicts the actual publication of Hawthorne’s book: “Mr. J. T. Fields...will see their uncommon merit, at a glance. He will get them illustrated, I hope, by Billings, and will before the world under the very best of auspices, through the eminent house of Ticknor & Co” (255). In a way, Hawthorne vicariously plays publisher and editor here, transcribing and having Eustace’s stories published for an American readership as the Author. Similarly in *Tanglewood Tales*, Eustace asks the Hawthorne-esque writer in the preface: “Mr. Bright condescended to avail himself of my literary

²⁹ Again, this relates to Hawthorne’s acute awareness of the physicality of the book and manuscript reflected in his own destruction of *Fanshawe*.

experience by constituting me editor of the Wonder Book. As he had no reason to complain of the reception of that erudite work, by the public, he was now disposed to retain me in a similar position, with respect to the present volume” (11-12).

Having established his intentions and audience, Hawthorne leaves the majority of this complicated and engaging framing element of Eustace Bright behind in his sequel, *Tanglewood Tales*. Written in 1853, *Tanglewood Tales* was Hawthorne’s final children’s book and, although equally successful in terms of profit, lacks the charm and optimism of *A Wonder-Book*. As Laffrado suggests, life events, such as a family move and the death of his sister, may have impacted Hawthorne’s tone and worldview (Laffrado 100). Eustace appears briefly in the short introduction prior to the six Tanglewood tales, none of which mention Eustace or any framing narrator again. Following *Tanglewood Tales*, however, Hawthorne sails for Europe and writes his aesthetically-charged novel, *The Marble Faun*, while abroad. This clash of aesthetic cultures present in *A Wonder Book* returns in full force within this novel of monument, sculpture and culture, indicating a more involved move towards engagement with aesthetic criticism.³⁰ In both of these works, reinventing classical materiality echoes Hawthorne’s continual refashioning of the Pygmalion myth in numerous sketches, including “The Snow-Image.” Like Pygmalion, Hawthorne sculpts a new mythology for his juvenile audience in *A Wonder-Book* - one better suited than the original European tales.³¹

³⁰ *The Marble Faun*, published in England under the title *Transformations*, follows the complicated interchange and relationships between an artistic American couple, Keyon and Hilda, and a European couple, Miriam and Donatello. The novel moves through various monuments in Italy, enabling Hawthorne to further comment on the clash of American and European aesthetics as he initially does in *A Wonder-Book*.

³¹ Takes on the Pygmalion myth appear in a number of Hawthorne sketches, including “Drowne’s Wooden Image,” “The Artist of the Beautiful,” “The Birth-Mark,” “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” and, importantly for this analysis, “The Snow-Image.”

Having established himself as a moderately successful author, and having challenged the didactic foundation of American writings for children, Hawthorne bids a bittersweet farewell to Eustace, and to children's literature, at the end of *Tanglewood Tales*:

I wish there were any likelihood of my soon seeing Primrose, Periwinkle, Dandelion, Sweet Fern, Clover, Plantain, Huckleberry, Milkweed, Cowslip, Butter-cup, Blue Eye, and Squash Blossom, again. But as I do not know when I shall re-visit Tanglewood, and as Eustace Bright probably will not ask me to edit a third Wonder Book, the public of little folks must not expect to hear any more about those dear children, from me. Heaven bless them, and everybody else, whether grown people or children!" (181-82)

Laffrado sees this as Hawthorne's beginning of old age that "marks his entrance into the world of rationalism and materialism (the world that he had always seen as deathly for the artist) and his exit from the prime of his literary career" (130). His children's books had "enriched his publisher's lists, his bank account, and his reputation," but he leaves Liverpool to travel abroad and to write *The Marble Faun*, his last published novel (Laffrado 137).

By this time, the mid-1860s, a noticeable shift in children's literature has occurred. As one reviewer from the *Overland Monthly* notes: "The old-fashioned stories, with a moral or pious reflection impending at the close of every sentence, or the clumsily adjusted mixture of didactic truth and saccharine rhetoric administered like sulphur and treacle for the moral health of the unhappy infant, are happily long since abandoned" (qtd

in Darling 8). *Putnam's Magazine* applauds, "Verily there is a new era in this country in the literature for children" (qtd in Darling

9).³² Hawthorne can claim a part in this abandonment of "didactic truth and saccharine rhetoric." By rejecting traditional moralistic content and by embracing fantastic and fanciful entertainment for children in works like *A Wonder-Book* and "The Snow-Image," which remain read and published to this day, Hawthorne achieves his aim in helping to revolutionize American children's literature.³³

³² In his study of children's book reviewing in America from 1865-1881, Richard Darling examined thirty-six periodicals that printed reviews and notices of over 2,500 books, and editions of books, with more than 4,000 separate reviews. Darling argues that serious reviews of children's books began much earlier than scholars had claimed, even stating that "the reviewing of children's books immediately after the Civil War was superior to that of our own time" (10).

³³ "The Snow-Image" was published as an illustrated stand-alone children's book in 1864 and continues to be published today. *A Wonder-Book* has remained popular since its first publication, particularly with the illustrated editions by well-known artists Walter Crane (1893) and Arthur Rackham (1922) entering the market. It is currently available in various editions in book stores and libraries nationwide.

CHAPTER TWO

Fame and Fortune: Alcott and the Rising Juvenile Consumer

Ednah Dow Cheney begins her 1889 introduction to *Louisa May Alcott: Her Life Letters, and Journals* with the following: “Louisa May Alcott is universally recognized as the greatest and most popular story-teller for children in her generation” (iii). In her 1989 introduction to *The Journals of Louisa May Alcott*, Madeleine Stern calls Alcott “America’s best-loved author of juvenile fiction” at the height of her popularity in 1874 and “acknowledged as the most popular American writer for the young” by her death in 1888 (7, 30). Evidenced by the fan clubs and societies who celebrate her even today, such as the Louisa May Alcott Fan Club and the Louisa May Alcott Society, Alcott’s reputation and the continued nostalgia generated by her classic books, most notably *Little Women*, hold a firm position in the history and canon of American children’s literature. Yet Alcott’s fame did not come easily. Her notoriety began slowly, primarily via her relationship with the families of Concord neighbors Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Her journals and letters implicitly state her financial duress under which she feverishly wrote. Her highest success occurred because Alcott aimed to meet her publisher’s demand for a “girl’s book” despite her own initial repudiation of such writing. And her reputation solidified as she actively wrote in response to a juvenile audience that often revealed a conservative and domestic bias not always in line with Alcott’s own ways of thinking. By the height of Alcott’s career, the power of that juvenile public was in full swing, with young readers writing letters to authors pleading for certain outcomes in books, or begging for more writings along a particular theme. Despite this ongoing influence of the juvenile reader to which she, often begrudgingly, acquiesced, Alcott

found ways to subvert that same conservatism all the while creating a literary product that met marketplace demands and ensured her own reputation as “the children’s friend” (Cheney).¹

Alcott begins her writing career in the realm of fantasy and fairy tales. Like Hawthorne, Alcott was a “pioneer in American fantasy fiction” with the 1854 publication of her first book *Flower Fables* (Shealy xv). The tales, written in 1838 when she was sixteen and dedicated to Ellen Emerson, illustrate both a younger person’s desire to write fanciful tales, as well as Alcott’s understanding that an even younger audience such as Ellen would want to read them.² Reflecting on the statement made by Alcott in a letter to her sister Abigail written shortly after the publication of *Flower Fables* – “I hope to pass in time from fairies and fables to men and realities” – Sarah Wadsworth notes that the statement “indicates a course through children’s literature that runs counter to that pursued by her Concord neighbor Nathaniel Hawthorne: it reflects Alcott’s greater commitment to literary realism; it suggests a primary interest in writing for adults; and, finally, it signals a writer with little predisposition to write solely for the young” (48). Wadsworth’s observation echoes Alcott’s ambivalence about children’s writing observable throughout her literary career. For her, children’s literature was, she hoped, a gateway to writing for adults. Although she did write thrillers under the pseudonym A.M. Barnard and a select number of novels aimed at an adult audience, the lucrative nature of her juvenile works, and the market’s constant demand for children’s writings from

¹ The first biography of Alcott, written by Ednah Dow Cheney, was titled *Louisa May Alcott: The Children’s Friend*. Published in 1888, the biography’s color frontispiece romantically depicts a grown Alcott reading a story to dozens of angelic children surrounding her.

² Ellen Emerson (b. 1839) is the daughter of Lidian and Ralph Waldo Emerson. R.W. Emerson was both a neighbor and close friend of the Alcott family. Influential both in her life and in her works, Alcott called Emerson “the god of her idolatry” (*Journals* 99).

women like her, required a continuous commitment to the children's literature genre throughout her life.

Part of Alcott's early success was also due to her well-connected neighbors, Sophia and Nathaniel Hawthorne, although Alcott amusingly writes in her journal, "Mr. H is as queer as ever and we catch glimpses of a dark mysterious looking man in a big hat and red slippers darting over the hills or skimming by as if he expected the house of Alcott were about to rush out and clutch him" (*Letters* 57). Although Hawthorne often worked tediously to cement his "well-connected" reputation, as shown in the first chapter, Alcott benefitted from the quiet man's solid relationships with publishers and editors. The circumstances surrounding the publication of her poem "Thoreau's Flute" illustrate this interdependent relationship. In a letter to Annie Fields, the wife of publisher James T. Fields, dated June 24, 1863, Alcott notes: "Poetry is not my forte & the lines were never meant to go beyond my scrap book...[they] were forgotten till father found them among my papers, read them like a partial parent as he is, to neighbor Hawthorne, who asked for them the other day & without telling me their destination sent them to sit in high places where they hardly belong" (*Letters* 84). In her own journal, Alcott remarks in a less self-deprecating fashion: "Had a fresh feather in my cap for Mrs Hawthorne showed Fields 'Thoreau's Flute,' & he desired it for the Atlantic. Of course I didn't say No. It was printed, copied, praised & glorified – also *paid* for, & being a mercenary creature I liked the \$10 as well as the honor of being 'a new star' & 'a literary celebrity'" (*Journals* 119). Interestingly, Alcott's letter and journal entry presume that Sophia Hawthorne shared the poem directly with James Fields, but Sophia's letter addressed to Annie Fields indicates her strong push for Alcott's publication:

I have obtained from Louisa Alcott the poem about Mr. Thoreau, of which I spoke to Mr. Fields. He thought Mr Alcott's reading might have bed _____d me so much that I could not tell quite whether it were good or no. But upon quietly reading it to myself, I find it really eminently beautiful in form, expression and thought and I wish you would read it to yourself, and then to your husband aloud in our own exquisite way – so that the full beauty of it may strike him. I am sure you will both agree with me that it is worthy the best place it can be put into, and so I hope Mr. Fields will let it go into the Atlantic that Louisa may have the honor as well as the pecuniary benefit. I will copy it upon the opposite leaf. It is altogether in a superior tone to anything I have ever seen of her – so sweet, majestic and calm and desirous. She never wrote it down till after recovering from her severe illness...³ (mss. BPL 1.34)

The fact that the correspondence resulting in the poem's publication comes from the two women, not the author-husband or publisher-husband themselves, indicates the degree to which women played a role in the literary marketplace. Here, it is the persuasive techniques of Sophia Hawthorne and Annie Fields that result in the poem's publication, requiring a shift in thinking about the "Gentleman Publisher."⁴ Sophia asks Annie to read the poem in "*our* own exquisite way" [emphasis added], intimating that the way in which a woman, particularly a wife, could influence the manner in which a work is received. In

³ Part of Sophia Hawthorne's concern for Louisa extends from a terrible sickness that Louisa endured, mentioned in her letter to Annie Fields. Sophia's lengthy letter, again to Annie Fields, details this illness, including her daughter Una's carrying of Louisa home from the train and various details about Louisa wild manner during the ill episode (mss. BPL 1.28B).

⁴ Susan McQuin's *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (1990) constructs an image of the nineteenth-century "Gentleman Publisher" and successfully argues for an inherent "paternalism" of that role. McQuin notes: "The concept, Gentleman Publisher, alluded to another popular Victorian ideal, that of 'Christian Gentleman,' the complement of a True Woman" (38). While male publishers like Fields certainly fall under this category, these letters make clear that his "True Woman" wife Annie Fields influenced his choice of what to publish.

short, Alcott's initial publications were a matter of "who you know," with the "who" often being the female member of the established author-publisher partnerships.

The Alcotts, however, had financial difficulties beyond that of the Hawthornes and the Emersons. Louisa's father, Bronson Alcott, was a teacher, writer and philosopher who sought to create a "New Eden," called Fruitlands, on the outskirts of Boston. Described by Sophia Hawthorne as having a "moonshiny, vague way," Bronson was never able to secure a position that allowed financial security for his family (mss. BPL 1.28B). Louisa's mother, Abigail "Abba" May Alcott, recorded her struggles with poverty to such a degree in her journals that Louisa destroyed most them after her death. Madeleine Stern notes Alcott's "conflicting attitude" toward her father: "pride in his abstract philosophy and the wish to shield him from mundane responsibilities coupled with exasperation at his inability to support the family – that Louisa became the Alcott paterfamilias" (*Journals* 11). Although the Emersons and Hawthornes offered some financial assistance to the Alcotts, the burden of financial responsibility for the family fell almost exclusively on Louisa.

So while Alcott wrote out of a genuine love and talent for writing, she also wrote out of financial necessity. This financial strain affected her choices in both content and style. In January 1868, a financially-stressed Alcott notes: "Mr. B lured me to write 'one column of Advice to Young Women,' as Mrs. Shaw and others were doing. If he had asked me for a Greek oration I would have said 'yes'" (*Journals* 164).⁵ In a struggle to keep up with publishers' demands, Alcott continued to write quickly to meet deadlines

⁵ Interestingly, the column was titled "Happy Women" and detailed all of the "busy, useful, independent spinsters I know, for liberty is a better husband than love to many of us" (*Journals* 165).

and keep income steady: “It always takes exigency to spur me up and wring out a book. Never have time to go slowly and do my best” (*Journals* 205). Alcott kept meticulous notes in her journals about each publication and, importantly, what that publication earned. Finances run through her journals as the common thread of importance. At the end of each year, Alcott tallied her writings and their earnings in list form. Unlike Hawthorne’s more vague ruminations about financial troubles, Alcott’s personal papers deal with financial difficulties and financial successes in a straight-forward manner. But despite her pragmatic ability to meet market demands, Alcott, like Hawthorne, struggled with the balance between creativity and profitability. Despite that struggle, Alcott, also like Hawthorne, found ways within her works to refashion expectations and subvert traditional content.

I. THE STRUGGLE OF FEMALE CREATIVITY

Alcott knew the trials of catering to a public marketplace and she explores these anxieties in her short story “Fancy’s Friend.” As “The Snow-Image” was published just before Hawthorne’s successful *The Scarlet Letter*, so “Fancy’s Friend” was published just prior to the writing and publication of Alcott’s most enduring work, *Little Women*.⁶ The 1868 story is remarkably similar to Hawthorne’s “The Snow-Image,” and while the parallels may be due to her support of Hawthorne’s aesthetic and creative concerns evident in his story, it must be acknowledged that the numerous narrative similarities may simply be a function of efficiency. Alcott wrote stories, namely girls’ stories, for financial means and often not for pleasure, as seen in her oft-quoted remark, “I plod away, though

⁶ “Fancy’s Friend” was first published in *Morning Glories* on January 1, 1868. Alcott writes *Little Women* Part I from May until July of that same year and the volume was published on October 1, 1868. Alcott begins to write *Little Women* Part II shortly thereafter in November, and that volume was published on April 14, 1869 (*Journals*).

I don't enjoy this sort of thing. Never liked girls, or knew many, except my sisters" (Cheney, 198). Hawthorne's tale may have been a means to end - a story that Alcott could easily adapt for publication and payment. But no matter the motive, the choices within her adaptation reflect particular late nineteenth-century concerns about creativity, gender and materiality that build on those same explorations found in "The Snow-Image."

Numerous biographers and critics comment on the close relationship between the Alcotts and the Hawthornes, and we can presume that Alcott was familiar with "The Snow-Image." Belle Moses notes that Hawthorne's "life and writings greatly influenced Louisa" and she "pored over his books" (Moses, 49). Edna Cheney notes that Alcott was "fond of Hawthorne's books," and the Hawthorne's were among the "constant companions of her childhood and youth" (290, 388). Alcott herself remarks in 1850, "Reading Miss Bremmer and Hawthorne. 'The Scarlet Letter' is my favorite" (Cheney, 63). In addition, Alcott wrote a poem in honor of Hawthorne around her thirtieth birthday in 1862, titled "The Hawthorne," in which she uses terms found within these stories as allusions to Hawthorne, here symbolized by a tree. This "gracious tree" sends gifts that "flutter in with snow flakes at a neighbor's door" (Hawthorne was not only Alcott's next-door neighbor, but also sent gifts for her November 29th birthday) and "every gift in Fancy's stage Already plays its little part" (Cheney x). The images of snow flakes and the name Fancy may allude to both Hawthorne's earlier story, as well as Alcott's future tale.

Furthermore, Alcott references a snow-image in many instances of her writing, including “Countess Varazoff” and “A Marble Woman.”⁷

As Daniel Shealy notes in his introduction to the collection of her fairy tales, Alcott never left fairies and fables behind even though her domestic novels helped ensure her “prominent niche in the American tradition of realistic fiction, especially fiction for juveniles” (*Fairy* xv). Like “The Snow-Image,” the fairy tale “Fancy’s Friend” was published multiple times. First published in the book *Morning-Glories and Other Stories* in 1868, the story was then republished in 1882 within *Aunt Jo’s Scrap Bag, Volume VI*, with the coveted position of being both the last story in the volume, and therefore the last story in the entire *Scrap Bag* series.

According to Greg Eiselein and Anne Phillips, “Fancy’s Friend” is “one of the most important stories for youth that LMA published...LMA succinctly conveys her attitudes about fantasy and fiction within this short work. Although fantasy and fiction are enjoyable, fact and reality must be given the greater attention in life” (*Encyclopedia* 244).

“Fancy’s Friend” follows a parallel trajectory as “The Snow-Image” of female imagination, creation and destruction. In the story, the protagonist, aptly named Fancy for her mind full of fancies and mermaids, spends her days at the seashore with her governess. Clearly, Fancy has been told that mermaids do not exist, but “It was of no use to tell her that there were no mermaids; Fancy firmly believed in them” (208). Like Violet and Peony, Fancy refuses to surrender her imagination. While she waits for a

⁷ “Countess Varazoff,” published in 1868 in *Frank Leslie’s Lady’s Magazine*, depicts a struggle between a Polish exile and a Russian prince. One passage states, “the prince was beginning to believe that he had married a snowimage, not a mortal woman, when the pale statue suddenly woke and warmed” (*Lost Stories* 33). “A Marble Woman” (1865), one of Alcott’s thrillers, tells the story of an artist, Basil Yorke, who adopts a child, Cecilia, and proceeds to turn her into his “marble woman.” Basil states, “none for myself or my snow image” in the story.

mermaid to arrive, Fancy tends her garden of sea-weed, shells and water-creatures. After a long time without spying a mermaid, Fancy claps her hands and announces, “I’ll make a mermaid myself, since none will come to me” (210).

Rather than wait for a whimsical companion and fancied ideal image of a young girl to appear, Fancy artistically creates her own, using her carefully cultivated garden as material. She draws the mermaid outline into the sand, decorating it carefully and ornately with all of the shells, pebbles and sea-weed from her garden. Sculpting from nature and the feminine space of the garden, Fancy replaces the typical mermaid’s tail with legs, so that the young girl will be more beautiful, but also more like herself. Alcott regularly features the woman artist in her writings, from the famous authoress Jo March and visual artist Amy in *Little Women* to the community of independent female artists in *An Old-Fashioned Girl* discussed later in this chapter. Here, like those other heroines, the young artist creates full of passionate optimism, although her creation’s fate undergoes similar destruction, much like Jo’s manuscript. While fashioning the girl, Fancy breaks from the literary whiteness pervading Hawthorne’s tale. The ideal child in the form of the snow-girl is pristine white with golden ringlets and lightly blushing cheeks. Alcott’s little mermaid exists in a more diverse space. Owing to the difference in natural materials, pure white snow versus a variety of sand, shell and sea-weed, Lorelei is a compilation of Fancy’s creativity, with little pearls as teeth, multi-colored garments and long brown hair blowing about. Perhaps not as idyllic as the ethereal image of the snow-girl, the mermaid-girl at least displays a variety of appearance, while still earning the title “pretty.” The first book printing of “Fancy’s Friend” includes one illustration for the story that emphasizes

the differences between Fancy and Lorelei. Fancy appears boyish in appearance, heavily clothed with short hair, while Lorelei looks more feminine and carefree.

The water-child comes to life and announces to Fancy that the sea has granted her wish for believing in mermaids and shaping one from her “dearest treasures” (213). Asking to be called by her German name, Lorelei, the mermaid speaks and acts like a real child, further distancing Alcott’s creation from the silent and otherworldly image of Hawthorne’s story. Lorelei’s presence comes with a price, however, as she warns Fancy, if “you betray me, or lose your faith and fondness, I shall vanish, never to come back again” (214). Fancy must promise to never reveal Lorelei’s true origin and to always love and believe in her. Fancy’s questions why this must be so, and Lorelei answers that other people are not like Fancy and “have not your power of seeing beauty in all things, or enjoying invisible delights” (214). Additionally, Lorelei fears that they would “put me in a cage, and make a show of me” as a spectacle of non-conformity (227). So Lorelei’s survival, like that of the snow-image, remains a question of faith. Not only must Fancy believe in the mermaid, but ultimately her guardians, like Mr. Lindsey, must as well. The creations’ livelihoods in both stories rest on the faith of children versus the unfaith of adult, particularly male, sensibilities. The masculine is the material, not the faithful or fanciful, and such organic creations which fail to fit into a defined, classifiable category challenge that materialism, resulting in their destruction.

Similar to Violet’s prediction of her parents’ reactions, Lorelei states simply, “Your Aunt Fiction will like me; but your Uncle Fact won’t” (215). Fancy lives with the married couple Aunt Fiction and Uncle Fact, whose names directly represent the same stereotypical gendering of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey. Aunt Fiction, a “graceful, picturesque

woman; who told stories charmingly, wrote poetry and novels, was very beloved by young folks,” contrasts with Uncle Fact, “a grim, grave, decided man; whom it was impossible to bend or change...He didn’t like romance, loved the truth, and wanted to get to the bottom of everything. He was always trying to make little Fancy more sober, well-behaved, and learned” (218). Elizabeth Lennox Keyser sees Uncle Fact as “form of father, publisher, and public,” furthering the reading of this story as one grappling with masculine posturing and marketplace demands (189). Alcott creates the dialectical structure of the creative, flexible woman and the staid, common-sense man, but she simultaneously acknowledges the benefits of both, thereby supporting such gendering, unlike Hawthorne’s apparent disapproval of practical men of the marketplace. She notes that “the lessons of both were necessary to her [Fancy], as to all of us,” reminding readers that they require the influence of both a feminine creativity and a masculine education (218). As Joy Marsella notes, “As Fact is married to Fiction, reality is wedded to the imagination” (14).

Alcott, always the Aunt and never the mother, fictionalizes a version of herself in characters like “Aunt Jo” and “Aunt Fiction,” in a similar fashion as Hawthorne’s author-neighbor in *A Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*. Unlike Hawthorne, Alcott makes her adult woman character progressive, active and independent: rather than the “angel of the house” embodiment of Mrs. Lindsey, Alcott’s Aunt Fiction, like Alcott herself, writes stories and novels for publication and leaves the home to pursue those interests during the story. Hawthorne’s feeling towards, and frequent derogatory comments about, women writers, exemplified in his famous “d---d mob of scribbling women,” would have precluded him from allowing Mrs. Lindsey to pursue a similar occupation. In fact, few, if

any, of his female protagonists in his short stories have work outside of the home. For Gillian Brown, Hawthorne's comment about women writers signifies a greater fear not only of professional jealousy, but "his sense of aesthetic violation: the conspicuousness of exertion, the public sight of women's productivity and corporeality" (80). Hawthorne recreates the cult of true womanhood, where women are ethereal angels and separate from masculine commercial culture. Women writers not only threaten his financial success in the literary marketplace, but they intrude upon his vision of woman as angelic and illusory. Alcott harbors no such qualms when creating her adult female character. For Alcott, the fear inherent in the tale may be less anti-materialist and anti-corporeal, as in Hawthorne, but specifically center of the fear of a creative femininity that falls outside of society's established norms.

Despite her more progressive position, Aunt Fiction nevertheless romantically assumes that Lorelei is a shipwrecked child suffering from memory loss, whose beauty, accents and ornaments indicate that she is clearly "some foreign child" (219). Uncle Fact begins with the statement frequently employed by Mr. Lindsey, "Nonsense!," and proceeds to examine her scientifically (219). Both adults then ask gender-appropriate questions of the child; Uncle Fact inquires, "Can you write and cipher?" as Aunt Fiction asks, "Can you sew, or tend babies?" (220). These short questions solidify gendered roles and share the same gendered narrative strain of Hawthorne's story, regardless of Aunt Fiction's career as a writer. Even at such a young age, Lorelei is assumed to have the necessary skills of basic education and domestic and maternal duties.

Rather than situating the story entirely within the immediate family circle in an isolated setting of domesticity, however, Alcott introduces other child characters whose

reaction to Lorelei re-establish these gender binaries. One boy, “who had been taught that to be poor was a very dreadful thing” and “didn’t like bare feet,” writes her off as a “beggar,” so they “mustn’t play with her” (215). The “vain” little girl “thought a great deal of her dress” and repeatedly remarks on the beauty of her earrings, bracelets and other pretty adornments (215). Masculine concerns of wealth and class status reverberate through the boy’s prejudices, while the young girl worships vanity and ornamentation. These children can be seen as precursors to the standardized adult roles of class-oriented men and fashion-focused women. Furthermore, Alcott’s narrator states that it was curious to see the people that liked both Fancy and Lorelei – “poets, artists; delicate, thoughtful children; and a few old people, who had kept their hearts young in spite of care and time and trouble. Dashing young gentlemen, fine young ladies, worldly-minded and money-loving men and women, and artificial, unchildlike children...either made fun of them, neglected them entirely, or seemed to be unconscious that they were alive” (222). Alcott tempers the binarism of Aunt Fiction and Uncle Fact by intimating that people of both genders may either retain their childish imagination or fall under the spell of materialism and vanity. Those unconcerned with material goods and wealth appreciate the non-conformity of the pair; therefore, writers and artists, like Alcott presumably, separate from “money-loving men and women” of the marketplace.

As in Hawthorne’s story, imagination is tempered by the intrusion of the real. After overhearing the two girls chatting about Lorelei coming to life as a mermaid, Uncle Fact declares that Fancy is a fool and Aunt Fiction has let her read far too many “fairy tales and wonder-books” (228).⁸ He decides to put a stop to all of this nonsense, while

⁸ Alcott may be alluding to Hawthorne’s *A Wonder-Book* here that similarly broke the rules and encouraged fanciful stories above didacticism.

Aunt Fiction has left the home to visit her publishers. Pulling Fancy aside, he was “so angry and talked so loud,” asking Fancy to give up such “rubbish” about mermaids. Fancy refuses, and Uncle Fact proceeds to “prove” that Lorelei isn’t good and Fancy doesn’t love her with a series of questions, to all of which Fancy answers, “Yes, sir” because “When Uncle Fact talked in that way, she always got confused and gave up; for she didn’t know how to argue” (230). Uncle Fact utilizes masculine deductive logic to pressure Fancy into giving up her friend, but Fancy still wavers, so he finally asks in a more mild tone, “I don’t like this girl, and I want you to give her up for my sake. Will you, Fancy?” (232). Here, Uncle Fact uses “feminine” emotion and sentiments as the final recourse to sway the young girl, and he succeeds in temporarily changing her position entirely. Fancy not only gives up Lorelei, but, by the end of the conversation, mermaids have become “treacherous, unlovely, unreal creatures; and Lorelei seemed like a naughty, selfish child, who deceived her, and made her do wrong things” (232). Like Professor Bhaer and Bazil Yorke, Uncle Fact succeeds in “denying the female artist access to the source of her creativity” (Keyser 186).⁹

In spite of Fancy’s ultimate submission to Uncle Fact’s desire, her heart still clings to her friend and it seemed “impossible to give up the shadow, even though the substance was gone” (233). Uncle Fact has forced materiality onto Fancy’s fantasy. Lorelei and other imaginative fancies lack material substance to men of common-sense and they are nothing more than a shadow darkening what would otherwise be intelligent and rational capabilities in children’s minds. Once Fancy states that she will give her

⁹ Professor Bhaer marries Jo March in *Little Women* and many scholars view his relationship as the catalyst which stops Jo from continuing her career as a writer. Bazil Yorke, as mentioned previously, controls Cecilia in “A Marble Woman” and keeps her from following her artistic pursuits.

mermaid up, Lorelei runs to the shore and falls apart, leaving behind scattered pebbles, shells and sea-weed of which she had been composed, much like the pile of snow left behind by the melted snow-girl. Bitterly, Fancy turns to her uncle, just as Violet and Peony had turned on their father, weeping and cries out that he should now believe her, but, of course, he does not, as the mystery of the child's disappearance "will be cleared up in a natural way sometime or other" (233). But the mystery is never solved, and lonely Fancy returns to the sea-shore every year thereafter, stretching open her arms and begging, "Oh my little friend! come back to me" (234). Lorelei never returns. This sad ending reflects Alcott's own ambivalence about sacrificing what she wishes to write in order to meet the desires of her juvenile audience and the literary market. Although she appears to advocate for the balance of both fiction and reality throughout the story, her character's acquiescence to the realities of Uncle Fact and the resulting sorrow indicate a reluctance, or least an acknowledgment, about what is lost when facts and figures remain the driving force.

Despite her indirect criticism of the literary marketplace in "Fancy's Friend" and her direct criticism of publishers and reader demands in her personal writings, children's literature enabled Alcott to obtain financial success. Furthermore, Alcott's personal writings that reflect on her next projects reveal the persistence of both editors and readers to request specific content. Alcott writes in September 1867: "Niles, partner of Roberts, asked me to write a girls book. Said I'd try. Fuller asked me to be the Editor of 'Merry's Museum.' Said I'd try. Began at once on both new jobs, but didn't like either" (*Journals* 158).¹⁰ The resulting editorship allowed Alcott to rent a room in Boston and earn \$500

¹⁰ The publisher's request yet again validates the assumed role of women as "natural" writers of children's literature, particularly the girls' book.

per year, while the “girls book” *Little Women* brought her more permanent financial ease, as well as cemented her image as “the most popular American writer for the young” (*Journals* 30).

The genesis of *Little Women* reflects this relationship between writer, publisher and market desires. Alcott’s journal entry from May 1868 states: “Father saw Mr. Niles about a fairy book. Mr. N. wants a *girls’ story*, and I begin ‘Little Women.’ Marmee, Anna, and May all approve my plan. So I plod away, though I don’t enjoy this sort of thing. Never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters, but our queer plays and experiences may prove interesting, though I doubt it” (*Journals* 165). At the onset, a domestic girl’s bildungsroman does not come naturally to the willful and unconventional Alcott. In June, 1868, Alcott notes, “Sent twelve chapters of ‘L.W.’ to Mr. N. He thought it *dull*, so do I. But work away and mean to try the experiment, for lively, simple books are very much needed for girls, and perhaps I can supply the need” (*Journals* 166). This not only continues her ambivalence about writing a girl’s book, but it shows Alcott’s desire to meet market desires. *Little Women* is initially an economic case of supply and demand.

By the completion of the novel, Alcott’s spirits have improved as reflected in her journal entry in August 1868: “Proof of whole book came out. It reads better than I expected. Not a bit sensational, but simple and true, for we really lived most of it, and if it succeeds that will be the reason of it. Mr. N. likes it better now, and says some girls who have read the manuscripts say it is ‘splendid!’ As it is for them, they are the best critics, so I should be satisfied” (*Journals* 166). This illustrates that juvenile readers become the judge and jury for the book, indicating an increase in their market power.

Ironically, although the juvenile middle-class readership drives demand, Anne MacLeod argues that the most insistent drive in children's fiction was "to counter the growing materialism and the rampant competitiveness of American society" (96). Children's literature therefore emphasized self-lessness and living for others. Further, MacLeod notes that materialism equates with the sins of pride and vanity: "The material ambition that all observers, foreign and American, saw as the hallmark of the Jacksonian age was steadily repudiated in children's fiction: fame was ephemeral, success might be reversed overnight, wealth could never insure contentment. Not the rich but the good were happy, children's stories said, not personal attainment but cooperation and responsibility toward others were worthy goals in human life" (96). These lessons appear throughout Alcott's fiction, most notably in *Little Women* and *An Old-Fashioned Girl*. At age eighteen as a self-described "willful, moody girl," Alcott herself struggled with this Protestant rhetoric of simplicity and non-materialism: "If I look in my glass, I try to keep down vanity about my long hair, my well-shaped head, and my good nose. In the street I try not to covet fine things. My quick tongue is always getting me into trouble, and my moodiness makes it hard to be cheerful when I think how poor we are, how much worry it is to live, and how many things I long to do I never can" (*Journals* 61).

While she may personally struggle with vanity and material goods, or lack thereof, Alcott's characters fight the same battles. MacLeod claims that Alcott's characters are essentially "rounded versions of the flat characters in earlier fiction...Any reader of *Little Women* can name the March girls' characteristic faults: Jo's temper, Amy's selfishness, Meg's false pride, Beth's shyness" (149). The little women must struggle to overcome these faults surrounded by a family system of "love and reason"

(149). Yet, *Little Women* heralded a new age of children's literature full of personality, humor and real life. Joy Marsella argues that "Ultimately, what follows Alcott's works are imitations, such as MSL's Five Little Peppers and How They Grew series, and variation, such as Laura Ingalls W's Little House series" (145).¹¹ Critics position Alcott's novel as the start of the lengthy trend of the domestic novel in American children's fiction.

This sentimentalization of poverty and romanticization of Alcott's little women reflects the shift towards a more romantic notion of childhood in general. These novels, such as *Little Women*, *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Sidney's *Five Little Peppers*, and other future novels like those of Wilder, help recreate late nineteenth-century children's literature. By the 1870's the view of children within their own literature has changed. Writers no longer wrote "at" children, but "for" them. Authors' works resisted purely didactic lessons that told children what to do, and tried to couch those lessons, if present, in entertaining and exciting stories. Yet these stories that romanticize poverty and promote a sentimental ideal of goodness require an underscored middle-class system. Alcott's novels, as well as those of her near-contemporaries like Sidney, often depict a clash of cultures between working-class and middle-class families, where the gentrified characters "learn" from their poor counterparts and the less fortunate characters gain wealth or social respectability. The "poor" family already has an inherent respectability due to its Christian nature of helping other despite their lack. From *Little Women* to *Ragged Dick* to *Five Little Peppers*, mid to late nineteenth century children's authors

¹¹ Chapter Three discusses Margaret Sidney's *Five Little Pepper* series in relation to *Little Women*. While it can be seen, in part, as an "imitation," Sidney moves beyond Alcott in furthering the romanticizing of childhood and poverty in her novels.

both embraced and critiqued the socialization agendas of the class system. They attack capitalistic practices while also enabling their characters to benefit from those same practices. Monika Elbert emphasizes this tension in Alcott's own childhood, being the child "of a dreamy impractical father, the Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott, and of a practical breadwinner (and early social worker) mother, Abigail" (19). Although financial lack continually burdened the Alcott family, Louisa Alcott uses the middle class to both her and her characters' advantage.¹²

Caught between these tensions and the demands of her readers, Alcott still found ways to subvert the desires of her audience. Initially claiming on November 1, 1868 that "Girls write to ask who the little women will marry, as if that was the only end and aim of a woman's life. I *won't* marry Jo to Laurie to please any one," Alcott confesses to Elizabeth Powell on March 20, 1869: "'Jo' should have remained a literary spinster but so many enthusiastic young ladies wrote to me clamorously demanding that she should marry Laurie, *or* somebody, that I didn't dare to refuse & out of perversity went & made a funny match for her" (*Journals* 22).¹³ Here again we see the juvenile readers forcing a demand which Alcott, albeit subversively, supplies. Alcott does in deed marry Jo off, but to the quirky and unromantic Professor Bhaer.

The power of the juvenile readership appears later in her career as well when an older Alcott turns to children for inspiration. In an 1881 letter to Mary Mapes Dodge, Alcott details having asked young children themselves about what they would like to read

¹² As the wealthy neighbors, Laurie and his grandfather, financial aid the March family in *Little Women*. In *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Polly benefits from the wealthy status of the Fanny Shaw and her family.

¹³ Jo's match, Professor Bhaer, is an expatriate German professor who is older and unattractive with poor manners.

in an effort to supply stories that meet their demand. Some “twenty boys & girls...suggest many plans. None seem to think that a Revolutionary one would be interesting, & I fear that patriotism is not natural to the youthful soul” (*Letters* 254).¹⁴

Alcott could also relate to her readership in terms of adapting to changing gender roles in society and changing literary styles for children. In February 1862, Alcott bemoans the same charms that her female protagonists are supposed to “naturally” enjoy: “Hate to visit people who ask me to help amuse others, and often longed for a crust in a garrett with freedom and a pen. I never knew before what insolent things a hostess can do, nor what false positions poverty can push one into” (*Journals* 108). Elbert argues that Alcott found herself “caught between antebellum and postbellum culture, between the age of True Women and New Women, and between sentimentalism and realism” (21). One particular novel, *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, illustrated the tensions between meeting audience desires and overturning that same audience’s domestic conservatism.

II. THE DREAM OF AN INDEPENDENT WOMANHOOD

An Old-Fashioned Girl offers a late-nineteenth-century American version of the classic tale of the country mouse and the city mouse, where fourteen-year-old Polly Milton travels to the city and joins her fashionable and wealthy urbanite friend, Fanny Shaw. Despite her rejection by other sophisticated characters, Polly’s charming and warm personality wins over the Shaw family. The preface demonstrates the power of the juvenile consumer, the tensions regarding changing roles for women, and the shifts towards entertaining literature that introduces morals in a more subtle fashion. In the preface to the first book edition in 1870, Alcott states:

¹⁴ Mary Mapes Dodge, the editor of the popular children’s periodical *St. Nicholas*, had requested a “Revolutionary tale” in 1879.

As the first part on ‘An Old-Fashioned Girl’ was written in 1869, *the demand for a sequel, in beseeching little letters that made refusal impossible, rendered it necessary* to carry my heroine boldly forward some six or seven years into the future. The domestic nature of the story makes such proceedings possible; while the lively fancies of my young readers will supply all deficiencies, and overlook all discrepancies...

The ‘Old-Fashioned Girl’ is not intended as a perfect model, but as a *possible improvement upon the Girl of the Period*, who seems sorrowfully ignorant or ashamed of the good old fashions which make woman truly beautiful and honored, and, through her, render home what it should be, - a happy place, where parents and children, brothers and sisters, learn to love and know and help one another.

If the history of Polly’s girlish experiences suggest a hint or insinuates a lesson, I shall feel that, in spite of many obstacles, *I have not entirely neglected my duty toward the little men and women, for whom it is an honor and a pleasure to write, since in them I have always found my kindest patrons, gentlest critics, warmest friends.*

L.M.A. [emphasis added]

Here, Alcott contends that her audience demanded a sequel via fan letters begging the author to continue the story.¹⁵ Their “beseeching” being such that a sequel was “necessary” to appease her young readers, although as it is a preface, the truth behind the

¹⁵ *An Old-Fashioned Girl* was first published serially in *Merry’s Museum* in July and August of 1869 and consisted of only six chapters. Alcott continued the story from the chapter “Six Years Afterwards” when an older Polly returns to the city.

letters is not readily apparent. Furthermore, the preface states that Alcott will offer an alternative to the “Girl of the Period,” which the posh Fanny Shaw presumably represents, indicating Alcott’s critique of fashionable middle-class girls of the late nineteenth-century. Finally, Alcott ends with gratitude towards the “little men and women” who have become the ultimate patrons and critics of the children’s literature genre.

Despite its subversive and progressive “The Sunny Side” chapter, *An Old-Fashioned Girl* is otherwise a conservative domestic tale that caters to its traditional audience. The illustrations from the first edition of the book also visually reflect this conservatism. Two portrait drawings appear prior to the title page: Tom on the left and Polly on the right. Here, Tom is featured first, although the story, and its title, primarily involve Polly. The pair is emphasized, letting the reader know that this story is “really” about a boy and a girl, rather than focusing on the potentially influential aspects of Polly herself as the title figure of the text. Flipping from the front to the back of the book, the final chapter is titled “Tom’s Success,” his success in both his career and engagement to Polly. The accompanying illustration for this chapter illustrates a rather pathetic looking Polly clinging to Tom. No illustrations exist for “The Sunny Side,” of course. In fact, the first, and only, illustration of this scene does not appear until Jessie Willcox Smith’s edition of 1904, perhaps because male illustrators were unsure of what to do with this subversive chapter of female community.¹⁶ But even Smith’s edition has images for the frontispiece and title page suggesting that the goal of the novel is male and female companionship. The frontispiece depicts a solitary Polly, walking down the street, a soft

¹⁶ Chapter Four details the circumstances surrounding Smith’s illustrations for this novel, and connects her own life to the characters in this scene.

expression on her face, hands bundled up in a large muff. The title page vignette illustrates Polly with her hand extended, making the acquaintance of Tom, her future husband.

“The Sunny Side” chapter in which Polly introduces “real” women artists whose lives and work impact the sheltered sensibilities of fashionable Fanny, however, illustrates Alcott’s dismissal of such traditional conformity. Six years after her initial visit in the novel, Polly returns to the city to pursue a career as a music teacher and reunites with Fanny, whose family now teeters on the brink of bankruptcy. Her friend’s precarious financial situation allows Polly to introduce Fanny to a world outside wealth and fashion. In this scene, we encounter a circle of five muses who embody the arts: Rebecca, the sculptor, Elizabeth, the engraver, Kate, the writer, Polly, the musician, and Fanny, the embodiment of high society charms. Here, Alcott celebrates the value of feminine community and incorporates symbols of women’s rights and autonomy. This circle of imaginary women artists foretells of real women’s artist groups who successfully navigate the male-dominated American art scene in the later nineteenth century and beyond. At the same time, Alcott creates a complex, ambiguous masculine/feminine dichotomy through the characters Becky and Bess. These women illustrate Alcott’s view of women as artistic and independent, in both their attractive freedoms and their harsh realities. They (nearly) function independently of men, although their feminine agency remains tempered by Alcott’s necessary reminders of propriety and domesticity in a text that must meet the demands of a conservative readership.

The scene appears in the chapter entitled “The Sunny Side,” suggesting that readers will encounter a positive, hopeful message within its text. Like Jo’s subversive

maneuvers amid traditional trappings in *Little Women*, Polly's embrace of this atypical community remains within an otherwise traditional tale of girlhood. Couching the scene in the safe space of a domestic girl's book that exalts the "old-fashioned" virtues of hard work and selflessness enables Alcott to envision an artistic, communal womanhood in which she herself may have desired to belong. Parallels emerge between other novels, such as *Moods* (1864) and *Work* (1873), where Alcott's heroine steps outside of the conventional and accepted confines of young adult life.¹⁷ Polly becomes our guide to this world of subversive and creative femininity.

Before formal introductions to the characters Rebecca and Elizabeth, the protagonist Polly gives us a description of the pair as the embodiment of Damon and Pythias, symbols of loyal friendship in Greek legend. The two artists live in their studio and go "halves in everything" (239). Polly notes that the women are "all alone in the world, but happy and independent as birds – real friends, whom nothing will part" (239). Fanny contends that a lover will come between the women at some point and their partnership will not last. Polly answers, "Take a look at them and you'll change your mind" (239). What readers then see is a vision of an unbreakable but unconventional relationship between two female characters. It is not until the latter part of this scene that we discover Bess is going to be married, and Becky will also live with the couple, an arrangement with its own suggestive subversiveness. When asked if the two are going to "dissolve partnership," Bess quickly retorts, "Never! George knows he can't have one without the other, and has not suggested such a thing as parting us" (245).

¹⁷ *Moods* follows the trials of protagonist Sylvia Yule as she grapples with choosing the wrong man between two suitors, as Alcott explores issues of womanhood in the nineteenth century. *Work: A Story of Experience* depicts the changes of women's work during the industrial era and follows the struggles of main character Christine Devon to support herself.

Polly describes Rebecca Jeffrey, or Becky, as a “regularly splendid girl, full of talent” who she believes will be famous one day (238). The use of the masculine surname “Jeffrey” is indicative of Rebecca’s appearance and personality. She is described as being “tall, with a strong face, keen eyes, short curly hair, and a fine head” (239). This physical description could be easily read as one of many male figures in nineteenth-century texts. At first glance, she is also a “great clay figure,” dominant, powerful and also non-human, a woman who perhaps could not exist in reality but must be fashioned into clay herself (239). Alcott’s descriptors entangle Becky with her current project, the clay sculpture of a woman. Both are literally covered in clay, as well as metaphorically covered in an aesthetic material that distances them from the reality of the average woman in Alcott’s culture. Becky represents all that can be thought of as masculine, strong and dominant, juxtaposed with her partner, Elizabeth.

A “dreamy, absorbed little person” with large eyes, pale hair and a wan face, Becky’s cohort, Elizabeth Small, also known as Bess or Lizzie, sits at a table by the window (239). Bess is the epitome of idealized femininity: small (in surname and stature), weak, pale, and talented in creating dainty artworks. Her looks and meek personality provide a feminine complement to Rebecca’s masculine persona, just as Rebecca’s powerful sculptures contrast with Lizzie’s “delightful little pictures” (239). In this scene, “feminine” creations are figured as tiny delights, lacking the depth, strength and literal large size of masculine creations. Bess speaks quietly and rarely, reinforcing her idealized femininity. Alcott treats the pair with warmth and optimism, however, and the reader remains confident in their mutual affection and partnership.

Nineteenth-century fiction romanticized same-sex female friendships as both socially acceptable and emblematic of virtuous conventionality.¹⁸ This positioning does a disservice to the subversive and novel illustrations of female partnerships within Alcott's works, such as *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, *Little Women* (1868), *Diana and Persis* (1879), and *Work* (1873), all of which contain same-sex relationships that have undertones of feminine eroticism. Jo and Beth March from *Little Women* echo the relationship of Becky and Bess, particularly in physical descriptions and loving endearments. The unpublished and unfinished *Diana and Persis* illustrates a similar relationship between two women, the sculptor Diana and her sensual partner Percy. We see this relationship yet again in *Work*, where working-class Christie woos the fallen woman Rachel. Marylynne Diggs argues that the typical "romantic friendship model," a model often seen in Alcott's works, continually "overlooks both the pathologizing and the resistant discourses that emerged in the United States well before the turn of the century" (320). In particular, Diggs uses this scene from *An Old-Fashioned Girl* as an example of how female friendships could be viewed as problematic by contemporaries. She quotes Fanny, who states that the circle of women artists is a "different race of creatures," a quote used in her article's title, to illustrate the unconventional nature of the women surrounding her (321).

The continued use of these same-sex relationships demonstrates Alcott's familiarity and reliance on such female partnership tropes, although Alcott adds an underlying element of sensuality. Gregory Eiselein claims that Alcott uses "sentimental discourses to eroticize the representation of women workers and the romantic-erotic

¹⁸ While Smith-Rosenberg brought same-sex female relationships into the critical conversation, scholars continue to research the subject. Many, like Diggs, argue that relying on these models as mere tropes of friendship fails to fully explore or understand the complexities that an author, such as Alcott, may have been trying to achieve.

possibilities opened up by work” (204). In similar fashion, *An Old-Fashioned Girl* eroticizes the female artist and even art itself. Aside from the tired-looking Kate, the other Sunny Side muses are portrayed as attractive, each in their own way. More telling, Fanny also notes that “men must respect such girls as these ... and love them, too, for in spite of their independence, they are womanly” (244). Her thoughts demonstrate Fanny’s reliance on male validation, despite the independence the three have achieved, but Fanny also sees that women can work according to their own desires and still attract men with their feminine virtues. This consoles Fanny and allows her to cherish her experience in the studio. As Eiselein suggests, sentimental fiction allows readers to identify with non-traditional characters and become more comfortable with progressive ideologies. By encouraging identification with the characters, Alcott makes such alternative choices attractive and accessible to readers.

Upon the entrance of Polly and Fanny, Becky asks Polly to pose for her, indicating the interdependence of these women. They are each other’s models and muses and an outlet for camaraderie and creativity, echoing Alcott’s own use of her female family members as models for her characters. Becky proceeds to lift the veil off the head of her current statue; a move that excites a cry from Fanny, “How beautiful it is!” (240). Rebecca immediately turns her “keen” eyes to Fanny and asks a question wrought with emotional and aesthetic significance: “What does it mean to you?” (240). Here stands a sculpture of a woman that defies the current aesthetics of femininity that link women with the diminutive, the small, the sexualized and the passive. Even Fanny, the likeable yet snobbish socialite, sees its brilliance, remarking, “I don’t know whether it is meant for a saint or a muse, a goddess or a fate, but to me it is only a beautiful woman, bigger,

lovelier, and more imposing than any woman I ever saw” (240). This clay woman treads on the ground. She is no saint, muse, or goddess, but rather a representation of Alcott’s idealized “real” woman, large and commanding yet lovely and attractive. The women approve of Fanny’s assessment with smiles, nods, and hand clapping. Despite her lack of arts education and her shallow notions of fashion and class, Fanny has recognized that which is normally lacking in artistic depictions of women. After acknowledging her incorrect assumption that Fanny would fail to recognize the sculpture’s value, Polly proudly states that Fanny has paid Rebecca “the compliment of understanding her work” (240).

Polly elaborates on this womanly representation, echoing Fanny’s adjectives and adding that “she is a true woman...the mouth is both firm and tender, as if it could say strong, wise things as well as teach children and kiss babies” (240). This is Alcott’s ideal woman as reflected in her juvenile texts, dedicated to domesticity and motherhood, but also educated and robust. As Rebecca explains, “strength and beauty must go together” (241). It is not enough for a woman to be strong, wise, or talented. She must also be beautiful. This mantra tempers Alcott’s feminism. In part, Alcott caters to a readership of young middle-class women brought up in a culture defined by beauty and domesticity. To ignore the role of femininity and motherhood would alienate her readers, potentially resulting in a novel that fares less successfully in the literary marketplace – an unacceptable outcome for Alcott whose family depended on the financial success of her writing.¹⁹

¹⁹ Indeed, *An Old-Fashioned Girl* was successful. In an 1877 letter, Alcott writes: “I am thinking of a new book like Old Fashioned Girl, as my publisher tells me that sells better than any other of my immortal tales” (*Letters* 220).

Alcott returns to Greek allusions with this sculpture to subvert Pygmalion's statue myth. The myth arises in Alcott's works directly, as in *Jo's Boys* where "Laurie, looking at his tall girl as *Pygmalion* might have looked at Galatea" (29), and indirectly, as in "A Marble Woman." In the original myth, Pygmalion, disenchanted with the promiscuous women surrounding him, fashions his ideal woman out of ivory and prays for the goddess Venus to grant him a woman as perfect as his statue. The goddess bestows the breath of life into his ivory maiden and the pair marry, living happily ever after. Alcott's women are not so fortunate.

These American women know the ancient Greek mythology their European cohorts cherish, but, living in the New World with its own history and mythologies, they often overturn or reshape those Old World myths. Perhaps Alcott had grown weary with the neo-classicism popular in mid-century aesthetics. Perhaps she wanted to create a new work of art, a visual work embedded in her own literary text that went beyond the traditional historical and mythological narrative. In Alcott's *Psyche's Art*, the heroine Psyche comments on the "genius" statue of sculptor Paul Gage, "It was neither a mythological nor historical character, Psyche thought, and was glad of it, being tired to death of gods and heroes" (6). Like Psyche's awareness of Paul's sculpture's new intentions, Alcott's sculptor in *An Old-Fashioned Girl* breaks new ground, birthing a woman from American clay, one grounded in new freedoms and ideologies.

Nineteenth-century male artists, European or American, often re-created classical mythology in its original context. Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones's painting *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1878) and Jean-Léon Gérôme's sculpture *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1890) were each visual recreations of the myth. But American women artists often felt the need

to create their own foundations and re-envision continental mythology in a way that reflected the reality of their lives. For example, Harriet Hosmer, the Boston-born sculptor who inspired Alcott, created a bust of *Medusa* (1854) that defies neoclassical style and reveals a tender, beautiful version that highlights the dual nature of her existence as both victim and vehicle. The American woman artist embodies the hopes and desires of a “New Woman,” a term made popular by nineteenth-century American author Henry James, indicating a woman who advocated equality and freedom while exercising the right of social and economic independence. Hosmer herself, like many of James’ expatriate female characters, moved from Boston to Rome to further her own artistic career and thereby inspired many young American female artists to pursue their own independence.²⁰ Like Hosmer’s *Medusa*, Alcott’s statuesque woman does not rely on a male artist to design her according to his desires, and the woman artist does not call on a supernatural source to bestow gifts. No goddess will bring Becky’s statue to life; Alcott’s women must do this themselves.

The most telling moment comes when the four women decide what to put in the hands of this new woman. Rebecca denounces Fanny’s suggestion of a scepter and Polly’s suggestion of a man’s hand, saying “my woman is to stand alone and help herself...strong-minded, strong-hearted, strong-souled, and strong-bodied” (241). Quiet, feminine Bess suggests a child be put in her arms, but Rebecca refuses. A new voice from an “odd-looking woman” behind them calls out, “Give her a ballot box” (241).

The new voice belongs to Kate King, a writer with some degree of notoriety, confirmed by Fanny’s adoration and Polly’s addressing her as “my King” (242), although

²⁰ For further reading on Hosmer, see Kate Culkin’s *Harriet Hosmer: A Cultural Biography* (2010).

Alcott moderates the allusions to royalty by stating that the “shabby” Kate wrote “a successful book by accident and happened to be the fashion just then” (242). The comment downplays Kate’s talent and writes off her book as a passing fad. Then Kate vigorously denounces her fame herself, exclaiming, “My children, beware of popularity; it is a delusion and a snare; it puffeth up the heart of man, and especially the woman; it blindeth the eye to faults; it exalteth unduly the humble powers of the victim” (245).²¹ We are told that Kate’s life has not been easy and Fanny wonders if women will ever be able to achieve success or financial benefit “without paying such a heavy price for them, for Kate looked sick, tired and too early old” (246). This description illustrates Alcott’s ambivalence towards successful women artists. If they do achieve notoriety and fame, like Kate King, then their feminine beauty seems also to diminish.

Kate’s story echoes Alcott’s own life, as she had to work exceptionally hard, at the expense of her personal life and health, to provide for her family.²² Janice Alberghene highlights these commonalities, noting that Alcott often described herself as ill and exhausted from work and quoting Alcott’s own description of writing *An Old-Fashioned Girl*: “I wrote it with left hand in a sling, one foot up, head aching, and no voice...I certainly earn my living by the sweat of my brow” (qtd. 42). Alberghene contends that Kate, and the other artists, are present in this one chapter only because the hardships of their lives were too dreary for young readers. More likely, the subversive nature of their lives could not feature too prominently in a traditional juvenile novel. Another of her

²¹ Kate’s comments echo those written by Alcott in her personal letters after her rise to fame with *Little Women*. Examples of these can be seen towards the end of this chapter.

²² Biographers such as Cheney and Stern emphasize the difficulties Alcott faced to support her family financially through writing. In addition to financial strain, Alcott frequently acknowledged her declining health (*Journals* 171; 184).

artists, Psyche from *Psyche's Art*, echoes Alcott's difficult trial of trying to "serve both masters at once" (8). Like Alcott, she must support and care for her family, often at the expense of her artistic pursuits. The narrator laments this continuous obstacle, noting "Sculpture and sewing, calls and crayons, Ruskin and receipt-books, didn't work well together, and poor Psyche found duties and desires desperately antagonistic" (8). Alcott deliberately creates this parallel between necessity and desire to emphasize the complicated relationship between domestic obligations and extracurricular pursuits for nineteenth-century women.

Kate then announces she will use Polly as a model for her next novel, just as Alcott often used women in her own life as inspiration for her characters. Polly appears shocked, "Me! Why there never was such a humdrum, unromantic thing as I am" (246). This self-deprecating announcement fails to deter Kate from her decision to include Polly. The move also illustrates the value of the "ordinary" girl, demonstrating that even the common young woman may become involved in an uncommon and entertaining story. Kate doesn't wish to create a character from an unrealistic and imaginary ideal, such as Pygmalion, but desires to shape the actual woman who exists in her lifetime. Furthermore, their creative partnership illustrates that Alcott's women must use a multi-layered aesthetic to enact social change through interdependence on each other. Through visual arts, musical arts and writing arts, the women join in a united front of artistic expression to produce public works that inform young women at large of the possibilities available to them, although these possibilities function successfully in the text due to their supportive community.

Although Rebecca has yet to decide what will be placed in her clay woman's hands, she does add Kate's suggestion of the ballot box to her list of symbols at the statue's feet. The stated symbols, "needle, pen, palette, broom" and now ballot box, prove quite telling, embodying the mitigated feminism of Alcott's women (241). They may be writers and artists, but they still wield the traditionally domestic feminine tools of the needle and broom. To proclaim the woman's right to vote is certainly a forward step, especially when we remember that the nineteenth amendment guaranteeing this right isn't ratified until nearly fifty years later. Nevertheless, insisting on the right to vote and to work and live as independent artists does not liberate these women from "necessary" domestic obligations.

Alcott's own childhood was steeped in suffrage movements. As Stern details in her article "Louisa Alcott's Feminist Letters," Alcott's father, Bronson Alcott, attended the First National Woman's Rights Convention of 1850 and supported suffrage and women's rights throughout his life, stating publicly in 1881, "Not until the women of our nation have been granted every privilege would the liberty of our republic be assured" (qtd. in Stern 430). Alcott herself was undoubtedly influenced by her parents' reform work, but she did not participate directly in women's suffrage until the 1870s. Beginning in 1874, she wrote several letters for the women's suffrage paper, *Woman's Journal*. In her journal for July 1879, she notes that she "was the first woman to register my name as a voter" after the Act to Give Women the Right to Vote for Members of the School Committees was approved in Massachusetts (216). Stern includes many of Alcott's *Woman's Journal* letters in her article, but one in particular directly relates to the ideas in

An Old-Fashioned Girl written thirteen years earlier. In this 1883 letter, Alcott argues against the assumption that suffragists and motherhood are mutually exclusive:

The assertion that suffragists do not care for children, and prefer notoriety to the joys of maternity, is so fully contradicted by the lives of the women who are trying to make the world a safer and a better place for both sons and daughters, that no defense is needed. Having spent my own life, from fifteen to fifty, loving and laboring for children, as teacher, nurse, story-teller and guardian, I know whereof I speak, and value their respect and confidence so highly that for their sakes, if for no other reason, I desire them to know that their old friend never deserts her flag. (*Letters* 269)

Like Becky, Alcott argues that womanhood and motherhood go hand in hand. A woman may fight for women's rights, including the right to vote, without sacrificing her own desires for a "traditional" and stable family life. Women must stand together, support each other and pursue freedoms, thereby honoring their families and children by making the world "a better place." Alcott values domestic labor, a labor that is routinely trivialized or dismissed as not "real" work. According to Beverly Lyon Clark, Alcott is a "domestic feminist," who espouses women's rights personally and values loyalty to family above all else in her books (93). This ambivalence can be seen in the empty hands of Rebecca's statue and in the positive examples of independent women who remain minor characters in a novel that otherwise upholds conservative values. Clark argues that "though Alcott gives some play to subversive ideas of self-expression, her overt message is that girls should subordinate themselves and their language to others," citing the

example of Jo being forced to forgive Amy for burning the manuscript of her book (81). Such ambivalence seems to shape not only this scene but also the remainder of *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, although this ambivalence may also reflect Alcott's wish to deliver what her traditional audience wanted to read.

Returning to the scene following Kate's entrance, the five women in Alcott's chapter pull together a variety of foods and snacks for an impromptu picnic, during which Fanny muses upon the impact this "different race of creatures" has upon her (244). The artists have opened up a new world to her, one in which shows her that a woman's life can exist beyond those "spent in dress, gossip, pleasure or *ennui*." Going further, Fanny realizes that these women "were still girls still, full of spirits, fun, and purpose, which seemed to ennoble her womanhood, to give her a certain power, a sustaining satisfaction, a daily stimulus that led her on to daily effort and in time to some success in circumstance or character" (244). Fanny calls her own worth into question, pondering with "sincerest emotion" whether her life is aimless and stating, "I wish I had a talent to live for, if it would do as much for me as it does for them...Money can't buy these things for me, and I want them very much" (244). Until this point, wealth and social status have supported Fanny and directed her ambitions. For the first time, she experiences a desire that lies beyond money. One cannot buy talent. Talent must be developed and encouraged, and artistic talents are not the kind the high society Shaws seem to value.²³

²³Alcott personally helped support her sister's artistic talent, noting in 1876: "She (M.) is doing finely, and says, 'I am getting on, and I feel as if it was not all a mistake, for I have some talent, and will prove it.' Modesty is a sign of genius, and I think our girl has both. The money I invest in her pays the sort of interest I like. I am proud to have her show what she can do, and have her depend upon no one but me. Success to little Raphael! My dull winter is cheered by her happiness and success" (*Journals* 201).

The focus of the scene then swings back to the female statue, as Fanny impulsively states that Rebecca should “put that in marble and show us what we ought to be” (246). Fanny’s statement echoes Alcott’s use of Michelangelo’s famous quotation in *Jo’s Boys*, “Clay represents life; plaster, death; marble, immortality” (82). This clay woman represents life, possibility and hope. She is not ready to be fixed and immortalized in marble, and she may never be, as the role of women in their contemporary society exists in a precarious, ever-changing position. Yet following Fanny’s declaration, there is a pause. All five women sit in silence, “looking up at the beautiful, strong figure before them, each longing to see it done and each unconscious that she was helping, by her individual effort and experience, to bring the day when their noblest ideal of womanhood should be embodied in flesh and blood, not clay” (246). The stillness of the moment invites the reader to participate in contemplating this figure. It also highlights their genuine, internal reflections and their shared kinship in making this woman a reality. Nina Auerbach notes that Alcott seeks to communicate “a community of new women whose sisterhood is not an apprenticeship making them worthy of appropriation by father-husbands, but a bond whose value is itself” (22). She aptly calls Becky’s statue the “collective daughter” of the artistic group, emphasizing the communal nature of this piece and pointing implicitly to the lack of female artistic communities at the time.

In this scene, Alcott champions the creation of female-supported artistic communities. Counterparts to traditional male artist groups, such as the Boston Artists’ Association or the New England Art Union, simply didn’t exist until the mid to late nineteenth century in America. The growing public presence of women artists slowly

emerged during the same time period of Alcott's novel. Julie Graham traces the nineteenth-century American women's art scene, noting that groups such as the Women's Art School of the Cooper Union and the Philadelphia School of Design for Women opened mid-century. Despite such communities, the predominant attitude toward women and the arts saw the arts as merely a hobby of pleasure for women, as opposed to an actual independent career. Graham cites a report from the 1868 feminist paper *The Revolution* that states of the 160 women enrolled at Cooper Union, only 20 planned professional careers (8). Alcott's own characters from other works, such as Psyche from *Psyche's Art* or May from *Little Women*, exemplify the woman artist as hobbyist economically dependent on outside sources. The Sunny Side artists fall into the minority category of women striving to make a self-sustaining career from their artistic works. The newly formed art schools and groups were not, for the most part, ready to provide the kind of support and exposure female artists like those in Alcott's fictional circle would have needed to enter the overwhelmingly male-dominated world of the arts.

One particular organization, The Ladies' Art Association (LAA) was founded in 1867 and epitomized the traditional role of women in the arts. The LAA failed to challenge the current status of women in the arts and their exhibitions catered to stereotypical female artistic representations as seen in a *New York Times* review of their 1877 annual show, which reported numerous flower paintings "for which women have a constitutional fondness" (qtd. in Graham 9). Twelve years later, however, The National Association of Women Artists arose in 1889 under similar circumstances as those represented in *An Old-Fashioned Girl*. Five young women, like Alcott's group of five women, met in a Washington Square studio on January 31, 1889. The women agreed

“that since there was strong discrimination against the work of women in existing exhibitions, something must be done to secure opportunities for them to show their work in dignified, professional auspices” (qtd. in Graham 10). The women of the National Association succeeded in making their vision a reality. These organizations produced few renowned artists, however, leaving these successful women artists to develop within an art world dominated by a masculine majority.²⁴ To counter this economic and gender dependence, Alcott’s Sunny Side muses encourage a female artistic community that has the potential to be self-supporting, and they seek to rectify the lack of support for independent women artists. Captivatingly, the famous American illustrator Jessie Willcox Smith, who illustrated the 1902 edition of Alcott’s *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, lived in a similar arrangement as the Sunny Side muses. Collectively called “The Red Rose Girls,” Smith and her artistic sisterhood obtained financial independence and fostered creativity amongst themselves, illustrating how Alcott’s fictional desire for an independent female artistic partnership could be a reality.²⁵

The Sunny Side scene ends with the women parting by shaking hands, unlike the goodbye kisses that Fanny is accustomed to, and with Fanny asking Polly if she may return again and visit these new “creatures,” in the hopes that they might make her “better.” These foreign “creatures,” not quite “women” yet to her, have disrupted Fanny’s comfort and reliance on dominant feminine ideals. She wants to grow, a desire that reveals a timid optimism on Alcott’s part as well as an awareness of how more

²⁴ Exceptions, particularly in Boston, can be found in Erica Hirshler’s book, *A Studio of Her Own: Women Artists in Boston 1870-1940* (2001) that complemented an exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston with the same title.

²⁵ Chapter Four centers on Smith’s life and artwork in relation to this novel.

“conventional” women can often respond to more “unconventional” women. Fanny reiterates her earlier fears to Polly after leaving, confessing, “I like your friends very much, Polly. I was afraid I should find them mannish and rough, or sentimental and conceited. But they are simple, sensible creatures full of talent and all sorts of fine things” (247). Polly beams in response, for Fanny “stood the test better than [she] expected,” and she hopes that Fanny can learn “what helpful friends girls may be to one another,” again reaffirming the importance of a communal sisterhood (247).

Poor Fanny never has the chance to explore her artistic side or meet with the lovely creatures again, as her family’s fall in status and wealth requires her to “wrestle with housekeeping, ‘help,’ and heartache” (320). Fanny eventually attracts the attention of a long pined for suitor, Arthur Sydney, but only because he is a “domestic man and admired housewifely accomplishments” (329). In fact, Fanny hardly believes his declarations of affection and marriage proposal, stating that she is too “weak and poor and silly” (332). Although the visit to the “Sunny Side” may inspire a transformative effect on Fanny’s outlook, it fails to alter the traditional trajectory of marriage in Alcott’s storyline. The brief interlude does, however, offer readers a glimpse of an alternate life, one that rests on creativity and communal womanhood. Polly declares to Fanny that “‘Help one another’ is part of the religion of our sisterhood” and that sisterhood exists, even if it remains a small one nearly hidden, nestled amidst a traditional society and story (246).

We never know what Rebecca places in the hands of the statue. Perhaps Alcott herself remained uncertain about which symbol should represent modern femininity. The pen, palette, needle, broom and ballot box all remain at the clay woman’s feet while the

space in her hands remains empty, echoing Alcott's own reluctance to embrace, or to portray, a womanly ideal entirely free from the domestic sphere. The resulting ideal reflects Alcott's dedication to her traditional readership. As so many female readers begged of her *Little Women*, a novel is not complete without the marrying off of the female characters.²⁶ Alcott's awareness of her audience may be the stultifying force behind her reluctance to fully identify the modern woman developing in Becky's studio with a more radical feminism. But although her female characters remain entrenched in the call of domesticity, Alcott does make a case for female self-sufficiency and interdependence. As Becky stated, her woman must "stand alone and help herself" (241). Alcott's artists rely on one another for inspiration and support, fostering a female community of artistry and (mitigated) freedom outside of the patriarchal sphere. As the narrator of *An Old-Fashioned Girl* notes, "the 'women who dare' are few, the women who 'stand and wait' are many" (332). Outside of the space in Alcott's novel, women artists in the later nineteenth-century will dare and complete the dream of a fulfilling, independent womanhood.²⁷

This submersion of her subversive "The Sunny Side" chapter in such a traditional tale can be linked to the rise of the juvenile consumer as a powerful force in shaping market desires and literary content. In order for a latter nineteenth-century author of children's writing to be successful, that author must listen to the demands of his or her audience and those demands most often took the form of fan letters written from young

²⁶ As noted previously, Alcott bemoans her readers' requests for the March girls to marry: "Girls write to ask who the little women marry, as if that was the only aim and end of a woman's life. I won't marry Jo to Laurie to please anyone" (*Journals* 167).

²⁷ Chapter Four examines how the "Red Rose Girls" managed to do just this. An important component of their success, like that of the Sunny Side artists, is their community of support.

people directly to the authors or publishers. Following the success of *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Alcott and her sister May traveled abroad to Europe. Personal letters and her journal during this trip not only illustrate the enormous popularity of Alcott in terms of fan mail, but also reflect new struggles with publishers after her reputation had solidified with *Little Women* and *An Old-Fashioned Girl*. While traveling on the steamer leaving New York, girls carrying copies of *An Old-Fashioned Girl* “came in a party to call on me, very seasick in my berth, done up like a mummy” (*Abroad* 174). While traveling in Europe, her publisher Roberts Brothers would forward the floods of fan letters to her until she finally told her editor Thomas Niles, “please send all letters to me that come to my care to my family in Concord...Most of them are enthusiastic little bursts from boys and girls who want auto- or photographs which I can’t send them; so they may as well go to Concord and be kept for future settlement...[T]he dears must wait til I come back, or take it out in looking at the damp and earwigly ‘Home of the great authoress’” (*Abroad* 179). Louisa often called her fans “lion hunters” and she was their prey.²⁸ Her sister May remarked that, while in Switzerland, “a New York lady and her two stylish daughters were quite excited on looking over the hotel-book to see Miss Alcotts name, and immediately enquired if it was the Miss Alcott who wrote ‘Little Women,’ and were much impressed when they found it was the lion” (*Abroad* 144).

²⁸ Alcott includes the same metaphor in *Jo’s Boys* when Ted bemoans his own fame and declares “Lion hunters are awful when in search of their prey. If they could change places for a while it would do them good; and they’d see what bores they are when they ‘do themselves the honour of calling to express their admiration of our charming work’” (49). Mrs. Jo – often thought of as a surrogate for Alcott herself – agrees and decided to stop answering some of the letters, stating “Emerson and Whittier put these things in the waste-paper basket; and though only a literary nursery-maid who provides moral pap for the young, I will follow their illustrious example; for I shall have no time to eat or sleep if I try to satisfy these dear unreasonable children” (50).

In addition to her growing public, Alcott had to now struggle with the impertinence of publishers after her rise to popularity. While abroad and having learned that her former publisher A.K. Loring republished *Moods* in an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of *Little Women* and *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, Alcott seethed in a letter to her parents: “I am so mad at Loring’s doings...The dreadful man says that *he has a right to publish as many editions as likes for fourteen years!* What rights has an author then I beg to know? and where does the ‘courtesy’ of a publisher come in? ...if the law gives over an author and her work to such slavery as L. says, I shall write no more books but take in washing and say adieu to glory” (qtd in Saxton 305).²⁹ She writes to her sister Anna shortly thereafter, “Don’t have “Flower Fables” printed, for God’s sake, or any old thing – and if Loring writes lies about “*Moods*,” put a notice in the Transcript contradicting him. I have fears that Fuller will “bust” out, so keep an eye on him. I forbid any book of little tales, and have a *right* to do it Niles says. O dear, what a bother fame is, aint it?” (*Abroad* 85).³⁰

A frustrated and slightly resentful Alcott writes to Niles while in Bex on August 7, 1870: “I keep receiving requests from editors to write for their papers or magazines. I am duly grateful, but having come abroad for rest, I am not inclined to try the treadmill until my year’s vacation is over. So, to appease these worthy gentlemen and excuse my seeming idleness I send you a trifle in rhyme which you can (if you think it worth the trouble) set going as a general answer to everybody” (*Abroad* 173). This “trifle” was a

²⁹ Loring actually did own the rights to *Moods*, which he sold to Alcott in 1881 upon the closing of his publishing business.

³⁰ Horace B. Fuller was the publisher of the children’s periodical *Merry’s Museum*, for which Alcott edited and contributed from 1868-1869. He also published her book of tales *Morning-Glories and Other Stories*.

poem titled “The Lay of a Golden Goose,” an autobiographic poem that metaphorically describes Alcott’s childhood and rise to fame, while additionally chastising those “gentlemen” critics and publishers who had initially belittled her writing talent.³¹ In the poem, the cock-a-doodle reminds her – the goose – every day to “‘Stay in the puddle, foolish bird, That is your proper sphere,’” as wise owls counter that “‘Rare birds have always been evoked, From transcendental nests!’” Perhaps thankfully, Niles persuaded Alcott to not print the poem.³² But the poem reflects the ambivalence that surrounded most of Alcott’s life.

While she was confident in her writing talent, she lamented having to write so frequently and furiously to support her family financially. While she enjoyed children and became a surrogate mother to her niece Lulu upon her sister May’s death, she simultaneously criticized her “crazed” admirers and grew weary of writing “moral pap for the young” (*Jo’s Boys* 40). Glimpses of Alcott’s personal writings and stories like “Fancy’s Friend” and “The Sunny Side” chapter offer a personal view of this struggle to be creative and progressive while clamoring to obtain financial security for herself and her family. Alcott, however remained ever conscious of what it took to become a financially-successful writer. She acknowledged the power of her juvenile audience and sought to provide stories that met their demand, even if that meant marrying off female

³¹ The full text of the poem is printed at the end of this chapter.

³² “The Lay of a Golden Goose” was not published for sixteen years, presumably because Niles urged Alcott not to have it printed: “I enjoyed ‘The Lay’ hugely & blush while I think of & thank you for the compliment *laid* to me. But pray dont print it. I would rather give you ten times its pecuniary value than have it published. Its effect would be very prejudicial I am sure. It is best to forget the neglect and ‘outrageous fortune’ of past years and you can well afford to do so; pocket the insults & the dollars & do nothing which will ‘damn up the waters of the Nile’” (qtd in *Abroad* 178).

characters that she would have preferred to have remained independent women. Despite a challenging path to fame and fortune, Alcott successfully navigated the literary marketplace and adapted her writing to suit her juvenile audience. As her career ended with her death on March 6, 1888 at the age of fifty-five, *The New York Times* recalled her life in her joint obituary with her father printed the following day. Summarizing the difficult journey of this complicated and ambitious writer who was Louisa May Alcott: “Miss Alcott's life was in its beginning one of poverty, struggles, vicissitudes, and discouraging experiences. Fame, honor, and a comfortable fortune came in its later years. There was probably no writer among women better loved by the young than she” (NYT).³³

³³ Bronson Alcott died just two days before, on March 4, 1888.

CHAPTER THREE

Margaret Sidney: Capitalizing on Conservatism

Critics of children's literature in the latter nineteenth century, like Horace Scudder, sought to bridge the ever-growing chasm between children's and adult literature endorsed by the literary marketplace. As he argues in 1895, "The distinction between books for the young and books for the old is a somewhat arbitrary one, and many have discovered for themselves and their children that instead of one poor corner of literature being fenced off for the lamb...the whole wide pasture is their native home" (482). Scudder belongs to the circle that promotes a romantic and idealized view of childhood as being the ideal form of literature, while simultaneously arguing for a broadening of what is "suitable" literature for children akin to earlier decades before the literary marketplace sought to section off the swiftly growing genre.¹ The romanticized child pervades American, and British, children's literature in the nineteenth century, evidenced by popular novels like *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Water-Babies*, *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, and *The Treasure Seekers*. But, by the turn of the century, such idealization of childhood had become "passé." Later nineteenth-century critics, like the influential Henry James, dismissed the fiction audience in general as juvenile and feminine. As Beverly Clark notes, James "consistently used metaphors of juvenility – 'puerile,' 'infantine,' 'jejune' – to disparage" (Clark 35). If turn-of-the-century children were viewed as a "separate sphere" due to changing notions of childhood, so was children's literature. Divided from its adult counterpart, children's literature inherited pejorative stereotypes of being simplistic, childish, and silly.

¹ In *Kiddie Lit*, Beverly Clark traces Scudder's career and reputation to illustrate the shifts in conceptions of childhood and children's literature from the mid-nineteenth century to the turn of the century.

Part of this stigma associated with children's literature, and the writers of such literature, derives from the early twentieth-century influence of college-educated cultural authorities, both academic and nonacademic, and the professoriate, who were white men seeking to "raise the bar" on what was considered worthy literature in America. Clark notes Elizabeth Renken's argument that achieving "institutional maturity" relied on "shedding juvenility," which buys into the same elevation of one literature over another (Clark 58). Ven Wyck Brooks' 1915 manifesto that coined the terms *highbrow* and *lowbrow* fostered further separation between children's and adults' literature. Clark summarizes: "If nineteenth-century America was pervaded by the metaphor of America as child, then the nation's emergence as a world power in the twentieth century was marked by a desire to put away childish things. [...] Or at least the desire to put away childish things was urgent for the white male critics" (58-9). This reflects yet another crisis – namely the necessity of a "mature" material content for American literature in the eyes of academia and the global public. Critics may have felt that saccharine and traditional novels, like Margaret Sidney's popular *Five Little Peppers* series, offered little in terms of worthwhile analysis of progressive, subversive or complex content.

Despite being successful during Sidney's publishing career, the *Five Little Peppers* series has not withstood the test of time as successfully as Alcott's *Little Women* or even Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book*. That said, the series still appears in most libraries and older adults fondly remember the books from their childhood. On the other hand, Sidney has been nearly invisible in academic scholarship: only a scant number of articles on Sidney or her works exist, along with a smattering of short entries in author bibliographies. The sidelining of Sidney is not unique within children's literature. In

contrast to Hawthorne's age when literature was intended for children and adults and the separation between the two literary genres and readerships was minimal, Sidney's career falls along the trajectory of children's literature, like children, being viewed as separate and unequal to adult writings and authors.

Like academic circles, the literary marketplace embraced the separation of adult and children's literature with open arms. More audiences meant more publishing, and more publishing meant more money. At this point in the trajectory of children's literature as a distinct genre, promotional marketing materials directed towards parents, caregivers and booksellers thrive in abundance. D. Lothrop Publishers, Sidney's publishing company, joined the lucrative march towards children's literature sales. One marketing pamphlet states, "Fight interesting bad literature with interesting good literature!" next to a drawing of a soldier boy (HML Mss. 40.10). Another appeals to mothers' fears about raising children properly: "MOTHERS! Do you ever realize what a great responsibility is yours in the proper training and guidance of your children, and to what influences those children are exposed?" (HML Mss. 40.10). A third promotion lists family members and urges buyers to "secure" your gift book today!, as if they are limited commodities that will disappear at any moment. This threat of missing out is evident in Sidney's promotional materials as well: "The Author wishes us to state that this volume will end the 'Pepper Library.' The advance sale of 'Phronsie Pepper' will, therefore, be very large, and dealers are urged to prepare for this and make their orders accordingly" (HML Mss. 40.9). Other advertisements for the Pepper books use phrasing like: "The World's Greatest Juveniles!," "Known and Sold Everywhere," "The Famous Pepper Books" (HML Mss. 40.9). This advertising sought to boost demand for children's literature by

appealing to both economic and emotional fears, thereby increasing the power of marketing to manipulate its audience.

A particularly interesting marketing piece written by Sidney herself, but presumably unpublished, emphasizes Sidney's desire to help boost her readership among both male and female young audiences. The passage narrates a discussion between fictitious readers. Although telling about Sidney's ideas regarding gendered readers and assumptions about male and female audiences, the piece primarily reads as a promotional story to boost readership across gender lines. The passage simultaneously highlights the character Phronsie Pepper as the ultimate female figure of romanticized femininity.

"It's too bad that Polly Pepper has got to be finished off," sighed a feminine Pepper enthusiast closing the last *Wide Awake*, "though of course I wanted her to marry Jasper, only I was afraid Margaret Sidney wouldn't write it that way; but would make her marry Jack Loughead,"

"Well, I'm perfectly relieved to get through the serial" said another voice, "and not have anything happen to Phronsie. She's too sweet for anything; I should have cried my eyes out to have any harm come to that child" –

The two male members of our family circle around the fireside burst into a hearty laugh.

"You needn't kill yourself with amusement," retorted Phronsie's admirer, "for I saw the *Wide Awake* on your table yesterday – well thumbed, and opened wise at "The Peppers" – Excuse me for prying, but I couldn't find it anywhere else though I searched the house for it."

The accused one coughed slightly, and pretended to poke the fire –
“Of course every one glances at “The Peppers” said the other man
carelessly, “but for being so violently in love with them that’s another thing –
we’ll leave that for you women – Phronsie’s well enough – but”

Jack gave another dig at a lazy log and pushed it into active
service, “Well enough?” he cried “I should think so! She’s the dearest little bit
of femininity that ever pranced over a page!” (HML 19.26)

As the voices of the children come from Sidney herself, we can assume that she reflects this Romantic child model through her “dearest little bit of femininity” Phronsie Pepper. Marah Gubar, however, argues against this model, criticizing the fact that scholars still assume that Victorian-era adults “avidly latched onto, simplified, and sentimentalized Romantic discourse about childhood” (viii). Gubar further discounts George Boas’ 1966 *The Cult of Childhood* and its subsequent popular theory of a transnational, transhistorical cult of childhood as inadequate. Gubar argues that the Victorians are “frequently taken to task for whole-heartedly embracing the image of the child as an innocent Other and drenching it in nostalgic desire” (14). She refers to this as a sort of “primitivism” and contends that Golden Age, particularly British male, authors were both inconsistent and often oppositional to this notion (14). Gubar gives great weight to the desire and ability of Golden Age authors to blur the line between childhood and adulthood, and argues that these authors recognize the potential of children to have agency beyond the cultural limitations imparted by adults.

I argue that Sidney, unlike the British authors discussed in Gubar’s analysis, fails to accept this blurring and remains an author who does, in fact, elevate the romanticized

child. While Gubar provides convincing examples, her chosen texts still position themselves opposite to Sidney's sugary-sweet writings in which children themselves seem to be symbolic of ideals, specifically the ideals of a conservative, Christian rhetoric. In this way, the ground-breaking, but now seen as perhaps dated, *The Case of Peter Pan* by Jacqueline Rose still proves helpful in an assessment of Sidney's characterization of children. For Rose, Golden Age children's authors must necessarily downplay the issues of address. Adult writers are creating literature for children, but they want their childhood readers to remain unaware of the agency and power of the adult author. We see this in Sidney's own promotional writings in which she repeatedly states that the stories just "appear" and that the Peppers "share" them with her. She downplays her role as the author and the child reader is meant to identify with the fictional child protagonist instead, mainly to imitate their positive qualities. American middle-class child readers should want to be like the domestic Polly, the hard-working Ben, and the sweet Phronsie. In this way, Sidney hearkens back to earlier didactic moralism, yet she manages to couch that didacticism in an entertaining story of American family and domesticity that hides direct moralistic influence.

It is because of this entertainment and clear popularity of the stories, however, that I disagree with Rose's claim that young readers are relegated to victims of the powerful adult author. Gubar and I agree on this point. Gubar views children as having agency and the ability to manipulate their circumstances in Golden Age Literature. I also argue that Golden Age childhood readers had a similar agency in pushing authors to shape their stories in certain directions. Sidney may deliberately remove herself from the context of her books' creation, and she may want her books to be "positive" influences on

American childhood readers, but, in the end, her stories were popular, widely read, and beloved by late nineteenth and early-twentieth century children. In fact, childhood readers of the series directly influenced their continual production, as they did for Alcott's *Little Women* books. Fan letters and pressure from children to continue the Peppers' story, to have Phronsie grow up, and to hear more of the boys' adventures led Sidney to keep writing these books. She makes this clear in both personal writings and public prefaces to her novels. Here the power of the juvenile reader and consumer directly influences the writing and production of children's literature by participating in its production. These children have agency and power in shaping children's literature both as a genre and as a driving force of social and capital gain.

By the turn of the century, separating childhood from adulthood, and separating children's literature from other writings, may result in the negative aspects of dismissing the child as a romanticized other by authors or relegating children's literature to a lower status in the eyes of academia. At the same time, it results in the elevation of the child as an active participant in the literary marketplace through their fan letters, purchases and reading choices. Golden Age juveniles have become more than readers. They are practicing consumers, critics and manipulators of the very genre that has been divvied up and set aside for them.

I. SENTIMENTAL POVERTY AND HIDDEN GENTILITY

Born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1844, Harriett Mulford Stone was a well-educated and creative young woman who wrote avidly throughout her childhood and early adulthood. It wasn't until the age of thirty-four, however, that Lothrop began her literary career by sending short stories to the Boston-based juvenile magazine *Wide-*

Awake. Due to her family's conservative beliefs regarding women and the public sphere, her career was launched under a new pseudonym, Margaret Sidney, the name for which she is best known in literary circles.² *Wide Awake* published her first stories about the famous Peppers: "Polly Pepper's Chicken Pie" (1877) and "Phronsie Pepper's New Shoes" (1878). Sidney hesitated when asked to produce a series of twelve stories about the Peppers, but she accepted the challenge and the first chapter of *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* appeared in January 1880 with the full book form came out by the end of the year. Daniel Lothrop, founder of D. Lothrop & Company and publisher of *Wide-Awake*, found the real "Margaret Sidney" quite charming and they were married on October 4, 1881. The couple bought the famous Wayside home in Concord, Massachusetts, the former home of both Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott.³ They had one daughter, Margaret, and appeared to enjoy a stable and loving home until Daniel's death in 1892.

Having earned the title "the children's friend," a moniker also shared by Alcott, Daniel Lothrop's legacy in terms of children's literature is apparent not only in his company's successful publication of numerous children's periodicals and books, but also in the abundant letters written both to and from Sidney following his death. One letter from Sidney to Miss Annette Edson remarks: "How many write me, and send the newspaper cuttings expressing the same thought:

² In her article "Margaret Sidney vs. Harriet [sic] Lothrop" in the *Horn Book Magazine*, Elizabeth Johnson notes: "In deference to her father, a 'gentleman of the old school' who disapproved of women writing for publication, she used a pen name--her favorite name, Margaret, combined with her father's first name" (139). This deferment to her father's conservative wishes falls in line with Sidney's continued traditional conservatism evident in all of her writings.

³ Sidney was determined to preserve the homes of the authors. When the Alcott's Orchard House home was to be torn down in 1902, Sidney purchased and preserved the home for over a decade until the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association took it over (HML Mss.).

‘He was the *creator* of a new literature for young people’ ‘He was the *founder* of the children’s literature; that gave an uplift to the quality of their mental food’ ‘He was a *pioneer* in the field that is now worked for our young people’s reading matter’ ‘He worked for the children’s literature when it was an unpopular thing to do; ‘anybody can write for children’ was the cry, Mr. D. Lothrop determined to change popular opinion, and to induce famous authors it was worth their while & mite for our children; *and he did it.*’ – Oh, how many of them come to me every day!” (HML Mss. 16.2.8)

Encouraged to take on his legacy, Sidney was solicited to give a speech at an annual women’s exhibition by Annie Fields, wife of publisher James T. Fields, to which Sidney replied that she was unable to attend herself due to her recent bereavement, but she would send forth her paper: “I have been given “Children’s Literature” for my subject, and my paper (which will be read) will take about ten minutes of ‘Author’s Day’” (HML Mss. 16.2.10). Sidney attempted to uphold Daniel’s reputation and continue his success by running D. Lothrop & Company for two years following his passing, until financial difficulties resulted in the sale of the publishing company to other interested parties.

Part of running the company included promoting her own popular books. Having established herself as the author of the Pepper series, Sidney’s promotional materials frequently capitalized on the thematic and narrative similarities to Alcott’s highly successful *Little Women*. Contemporary critic Sandra Burr connects the two works in her recent 2015 essay comparing Jo March and Polly Pepper in terms of the cult of domesticity, stating that *Little Women* and *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* “are two of the most successful American children’s novels of the later nineteenth century”

(Burr 143). Burr also acknowledges that *Five Little Peppers* has not enjoyed the same legacy as *Little Women* and has remained in “relative cultural obscurity” despite D. Lothrop Publishing having sold over two million copies before Sidney’s death in 1924 (Burr 143). The connections between Sidney’s *Five Little Peppers* and Alcott’s *Little Women*, and Burr’s acknowledgement of Sidney’s later cultural obscurity, embody the main arguments within this analysis.

For one, Sidney follows Alcott’s lead in creating sentimental domestic novels about a family in poverty that emphasize inherent goodness above all else. Unlike Alcott, Sidney does not include progressive or subversive ideas within her conservative and traditional novels. This is most apparent through her development – or lack thereof – of the favored character Phronsie Pepper. Sidney’s “Pepper” novels are important to consider precisely because they don’t break the rules or challenge status quo gender roles. Her novels exemplify the sentimental and conservative nature of the popular American domestic novel and illustrate the oft-challenged, but nevertheless present, cult of the Romantic child. These characteristics may have led to failings in her critical legacy, but they provide significant examples of the very criticism that so many scholars aim to analyze against, but rarely explore in full. Therefore, the purpose is not to examine Sidney because her novels are well-written, but rather because the content of her novels provides a compelling example of the lingering cult of the Romantic Child, the marketing and promotion of her novels demonstrate ways in which the publishing companies appealed to both juvenile and adult consumers, and her personal writings and novels embody the conservative nature of children’s literature in terms of gender roles and responsibilities. Finally, Burr’s observation about the contemporary popularity of the

Pepper novels versus their lack of subsequent critical attention also as a form not written by “real” authors or only dabbled in by “real” authors illustrates that, at the same time that American “authors” are created, the children’s literary marketplace develops. This encourages a discussion of the descent of children’s literature in terms of serious scholarly consideration and the simultaneous rise of the juvenile consumer as a driving force in the literary marketplace.

The Pepper novels consist of twelve books written and published between 1881 and 1916. The first four novels – *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* (1881), *Five Little Peppers Midway* (1890), *Five Little Peppers Grown Up* (1892), and *Phronsie Pepper* (1897) – complete the narrative chronologically and Sidney felt that she had completed the series. Pressure from readers and publicists led to the writing of the latter eight novels, which all take place within the narrative timeline of the first four novels. The central figures include: Mrs. Pepper (later Mrs. Fisher), a struggling widow; Ben (Ebenezer), the eldest of the five children; Polly (Mary), the eldest girl of the family; Joel, the middle Pepper boy; Davie (David), the youngest and quietest of the boys; and Phronsie (Sophronia), the (perpetual) baby of the family. The first novel traces the rags to riches story of the poor Peppers, who become adopted into the household of Mr. J. Horatio King, Senior and his son, Jasper. The subsequent novels follow the family as the children grow up, go to school, and get married. Overall, the novels are overly sweet stories that exude a conservative, yet cheery, tone.

As “a kind of Horatio Alger story in which the whole family goes from rags to riches,” what becomes crucial for both Alger and Sidney is the distinction between poverty, as in “dirt and rags,” and breeding (Hager 2). This inherently exposes a paradox

in which the Peppers tell a Cinderella story “disguised as a celebration of Yankee grit and determination” (Hager 2). Building on the romantic and sentimental story of the poor March sisters in *Little Women*, Sidney creates another romanticized version of a poor, but happy, family with the *Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*. A promotional publication for *Phronsie Pepper* takes advantage of the commonalities between Sidney and Alcott. The pamphlet reads, in part: “Margaret Sidney shares with Louisa M. Alcott the power to make swift, dramatic pictures out of the domestic realism of the chimney corner and the home. This is genius, and this genius made the ‘Five Little Peppers and How They Grew’ the children’s classic...Since ‘Little Women,’ no book has so appealed to the popular fancy and secured popular approval as this series of stories by Margaret Sidney, devoted to the doings and experiences of a delightful group of children, known all over the world as the ‘Five Little Peppers.’” (HML Mss. 40.9).

While critics contend that the rise of the domestic novel in the mid-nineteenth century was a uniquely American phenomenon, not every critic effuses praise in favor of Alcott’s genre-launching book of domestic fiction. Humphrey Carpenter goes so far as to suggest: “It might have been better for American popular fiction had the March family never existed, so many were the second-rate girls’ novels in the Alcott mode that followed the appearance of *Little Women*” (98).⁴ But despite Carpenter’s criticism, Sidney’s novels sustained Alcott’s formula of “realistic” portrayals of the American Protestant family. The narrative connections between *Little Women* and *Five Little*

⁴In *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature*, Carpenter argues that Alcott creates an “Arcadian family novel” prior to her British counterparts. In an otherwise British study of children’s Golden Age literature, Carpenter uses Alcott to transition between writers like Carroll and Kingsley to what he calls “The Arcadians” – Grahame, Nesbit, Barrie and others. Although Carpenter does praise Alcott for predating British writers in her attempt to envision an ideal domestic family, he simultaneously criticizes the proliferation of similar books following *Little Women* that are less engaging and well-written.

Peppers are many, including similar characters and themes. The presence of poverty for both the March and Pepper families, however, remains the most important connecting theme in terms of American children's fiction and the late-nineteenth century romanticism of genteel poverty. Genteel poverty refers to temporary poverty affecting a previously financially-stable family. In both Alcott and Sidney, their fictitious families have "good breeding," proper manners and an underlying strain of the middle class in their background. This separates them from "real" poverty, in terms of an Otherness often associated with immigrants, such as the Hummel family in *Little Women*. While Diana Chlebek argues that the *Five Little Peppers* shows the first "real scrutiny of economic want" where the poor are portrayed "with some sociological and psychological depth, and are given a voice of their own, although it is heard within the limits of a safe, tightly-knit community," she exposes Alcott's characters in *Little Women* who still separate from a family like the immigrant Hummels, the "true" poor remaining a class apart (78). Monika Elbert argues that two movements towards the end of the nineteenth century solidified the dehumanization of poverty, namely Social Darwinism and "scientific charity" (22). These movements enabled the financially secure individual to further distance themselves from those actually living in poverty. Through Social Darwinism, the poor were seen as being responsible for their situation through their low morals and flawed character. Corporatized charitable organizations dealt more with the collecting of data and records concerning the poor, rather than actual interaction. Sentimentalism was shunned in favor of rationality. As Elbert concludes: "This shift from sentimental sympathy to a distancing reappraisal of the poor characterizes many adult views of the poor from the antebellum to the postbellum period" (23). Philanthropic visits around

Christmastime were common for the fashionable middle-class; therefore, Phronsie and the Peppers' Christmas visits allude to their own new – or reclaimed - social status. Sidney follows Alcott's same formula by using the legitimately poor orphans that pervade her novels as charitable opportunities for the Peppers.

The Pepper family illustrates the fallen middle class, having been left financially insecure after the death of Mr. Pepper. The family consists of Mrs. Pepper, the widow of Mr. Pepper who died while the youngest child was a baby, and her five children: Ben, Polly, Joel, Davie and Phronsie. Mrs. Pepper works as a seamstress to “scrape together money enough to put bread into her children's mouths, and to pay the rent of the little brown house” (*FLPG* 1). Like Alcott's Marmie, Mrs. Pepper, or Mamsie, works tirelessly “with a stout heart and a cheery face” and “‘To help Mother,’ was the great ambition of all the children” (*FLPG* 1-2). These overly sentimental phrases and images pervade the opening of the novel. The children's dreams, fantasies, and pretend play highlight their lack of material goods. The novel opens with the children wishing for candles so that they could always have enough light. They often fantasize about food, like plum pudding, roast beef, and huckleberry pie, as they eat nothing but brown bread and the occasional potatoes. Davie wishes for candy, as little Phronsie innocently asks, “What's candy?” - a question which would no doubt horrify Sidney's young middle-class readers in a similar fashion to Jasper King's horrified discovery that they children have never had a proper Thanksgiving or Christmas (*FLPG* 26).

The early chapters center on the children overcoming obstacles to bring happiness to the home. The old, cracked stove and lack of baking ingredients prove a challenge to Polly and Ben's plans to bake a cake for Mamsie's birthday; Ben succeeds in temporarily

filling the crack, old Mrs. Bascom gives Polly some raisins, Mrs. Beebe brings some posies and the resulting cake surprises and delights Mamsie. The poor children, of course, have never had a birthday cake, causing eight-year-old Joel to ask, “Why can’t I ever have a birthday?” (*FLPG* 23). Then trouble strikes the little brown house as Phronsie, then Ben, and then Polly succumb to the measles. Never fear, they all recover entirely, unlike Alcott’s character Beth and her scarlet fever episode. Polly subsequently has a blindness scare because of her frequent sewing to help Mamsie make ends meet, but that illness endears Polly to Dr. Fisher, who ends up secretly purchasing a new stove for Polly and the little brown household (*FLPG* 44). So within the first several chapters, readers see the ups and downs of an impoverished, but spiritually and morally sound, family, whose story always has a happy ending.

Happiness becomes conflated with goodness from the onset of the novel. When the children dream of having enough candles to light the home and fantasize about being rich in order to provide Mamsie with a proper birthday, Mrs. Pepper responds: “Mother’s rich enough...if we can only keep together, dears, and grow up good, so that the little brown house won’t be ashamed of us, that’s all I ask” (*FLPG* 5). The “little brown house” personified becomes a symbol of goodness, happiness and Christianity in the face of material lack. Often capitalized in nostalgic remembrance within later Pepper novels, the little brown house itself represents the possibility of retaining propriety and spiritual health regardless of financial situations. It also represents a happiness that other wealthy children, like Jasper King and his nephews, dream of experiencing.

The little brown house would not be complete without a healthy dose of Christian rhetoric that further instills the concept of “goodness.” Mrs. Pepper and the children often

thank the Lord for their blessings, as Mrs. Pepper reminds them that “we ought to be very good and please Him, for He’s been so good to us” (*FLPG* 53). During her eye illness, Polly prays, “Dear God...*make* me will to have anything...yes, *anything* happen; to be blind forever, and to have Joey sick, only make me good” (*FLPG* 61). This focus on “goodness” diminishes the importance of wealth and material security. The Peppers may remain poor and have their setbacks, but as long as the family members remain “good” – which, for Sidney, means following Christian values and traditional gender roles – then life will always be happy.

Sidney herself romanticized poverty as a child, reflected in her recollections on how she began to create stories of the Peppers. Sidney remembers:

It was a great calamity – I was [sic] that my father was a successful architect and not a poor man living in the country. I always stipulated while sitting things in my own mind that we should live in a little brown house, quite old and run down, while we, the family, had to scratch for a living...So, naturally when taken from the big city where we dwelt, on occasional drives to the country, I was ever eagerly searching for such a little brown house as the one perfectly outlined in my mind, as the most desirable residence. I scorned the white-pillar, cupola-french roof-domicile, of the ambitious urbanite and I tormented every body, unfortunate enough to take me on the drive, by importunate and incessant questions ‘When is the little brown house coming?’... I came to the conclusion that I would make my own little Brown House. And so I did. (HML Mss. 29.2)

Even as a child, the solidly middle-class Sidney dreamed of scratching out a living in the poor country. In her novels, it is through Jasper that Sidney best emphasizes this romanticization of poverty. Like Laurie from *Little Women*, the wealthy, but lonely, Jasper King and his dog Prince become a part of the Pepper family and he and his father slowly begin to support the family financially before finally adopting them. In this way, Sidney and Alcott both explore poverty from a safe distance. The Peppers, while claiming to be “poor,” swiftly become middle-upper class thanks to their generous benefactors. Then, after acclimating to the King household, the Peppers turn their attentions to the “real” poor, such as the lonely orphans at the home begun by Phronsie, echoing the relationship of the genteel poor Marches and the Hummel family. In the opening scene of the later novel *Phronsie Pepper*, Phronsie mentions to her little niece that “we were very poor in those days,” to which Barby asks what “poor” means. Her young cousin Elyot pipes up: “it’s wearing rags like the ashman. Oh, I wish I could!” (23). A shocked Phronsie immediately counters, “Oh no!,” “that isn’t poor; that’s shiftless, Mamsie always used to say. Oh, we were just as nice! Well, you can’t think, children, how spick and span everything was!” (23). Here Phronsie reiterates the claim that to be “poor” is acceptable in terms of being white and once middle-class, versus “shiftless,” which insinuates a lack of moral fiber and proper hygiene. The Peppers were poor, but they were clean in body and spirit, emphasizing their inherent goodness and respectability despite temporary hard times.

It takes a harrowing ordeal – the kidnapping of Phronsie Pepper and her rescue by Jasper King – for Mr. King to accept the Peppers as proper people. Mr. King - “a large, handsome old gentleman, whose whole bearing showed plainly that personal comfort had

always been his” – has an initial discussion about the Pepper family with Jasper in their luxurious corner hotel room (*FLPG* 80). Irritated by having to listen to his son’s tale of rescuing little Phronsie, Mr. King is appalled at the thought of Jasper bringing the child to his hotel: “Dear me! ...you needn’t ever bring such people here, Jasper! I don’t know what to do with them, I’m sure!” (*FLPG* 81). Even their family name seems below the elitist Mr. King: “Pepper!...no nice family ever had the name of *Pepper!*” (*FLPG* 82). Of course, the cherubic figure of Phronsie Pepper wins over the cranky Mr. King in no time.⁵ Mr. King plans to give money to the poor Peppers, but thinks twice, remarking to himself that Mrs. Pepper “isn’t the kind of woman to whom one could offer money” (*FLPG* 115). Instead, he slowly begins to adopt the Peppers, one family member at a time.

For Jasper, the “little brown house” is a symbolic representation of his own fantasy of being part of a large family that loves each other. Upon his first visit to the home, as the Pepper children frantically scramble to clean and cook, Jasper naively exclaims “Isn’t this fun, though!” and “Oh, I should think you’d have real good times!” (*FLPG* 86-87). And, having lost his own mother, Jasper immediately becomes enamored with Mrs. Pepper. The Romantic nature becomes reciprocated as Jasper discusses holidays. An aghast Jasper exclaims, “Not keep Thanksgiving! ...never had Thanksgiving!” and tells them to “try Christmas,” to which Polly replies, “Oh, that’s always worse” (*FLPG* 108). The children then gather around Jasper as he regales them with tales of his own Christmases until “they felt as if fairy land were nothing to it!” (*FLPG* 111). In short, a proper Christmas includes the giving of material goods, bright

⁵ The problematic relationship between Mr. King and Phronsie is discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

decorations, and hearty feasts that replace the wonders of a fictitious fairy tale land for the Pepper children; the King's lifestyle, rather, becomes their romanticized fairyland.

Encouraged by Jasper, Ben and Polly decide to have a Christmas for "the children." With next to nothing to complete this surprise, they round up some corn kernels, hickory nuts, bright bits of paper and a few candle stubs to decorate a small tree that Ben plans to cut down from the woods. Ben carves windmills and whistles for the boys and Polly makes paper dolls for Phronsie out of the rest of the bits of bright paper. Mrs. Pepper knits some mittens for Joel and David, along with a bonnet for Phronsie's babydoll, Seraphina. They hang worn stockings for the three youngest and fill them with the homemade gifts. On Christmas morning, the children are utterly thrilled. Polly declares that "Even Jappy's isn't better, I don't believe" when thinking about how wonderful their small Christmas has been in comparison to the wondrous tales from Jasper about his holidays (*FLPG* 129). Having never had a "proper" Christmas, the Pepper children embrace their meager one, completely content and overwhelmingly happy. But during the weeks planning this grand surprise, Mrs. Pepper has kept a secret. Jasper has already contacted her to deliver a "real" Christmas to the family.

Already satisfied and pleased with their homemade Christmas, Mrs. Pepper leads the brood into the Provision room where the Parson and his wife and sons, Dr. Fisher and Grandma Bascom welcome them. The tree has been decorated with bright fruits and lights while gifts from the Kings "came flying thick and fast" (*FLPG* 133). Jasper and his father have sent a multitude of presents: a bird in a brass cage, work-basket, cookbook and flowers for Polly, a new suit for Ben, a shawl for Mrs. Pepper, tops, balls and fishing poles for the younger boys, a large wax doll for Phronsie, and boxes upon boxes of

candy. The children's expectations have been forever altered. As Phronsie states after Christmas, while looking at her new bird Cherry, it would be impossible to properly thank Jasper and Mr. King for all of the gifts: "We can't do it, mammy...No, not if we tried a thousand years!" (*FLPG* 135). The thrill of their homemade Christmas has been forgotten and a real Christmas now necessitates lavish gifts and a splendid tree. This "lesson" affects not only the Pepper children in the novel, but presumably Sidney's child reader as well. No matter how quaint and wholesome Ben and Polly's Christmas might have been, a "poor" Christmas fails to compare to a true middle-class holiday.

Mr. King then takes a further step by asking if Polly may come live with them to entertain Jasper and receive the best education that he can afford. Mrs. Pepper kindly turns down the invitation, much to Mr. King's frustration. Marian, Mr. King's daughter and Jasper's older, married sister, writes to beg for Polly to come. Mrs. Pepper refuses again. Finally, Mr. King resorts to stating that Jasper "being in such failing health, really depended on Polly to cheer him up" and Mrs. Pepper finally acquiesces to his request (*FLPG* 138). Although Jasper doesn't have a houseful of brothers and sisters, we learn that his older sister Marian has three boys herself - Percy, Van, and Dick - who can surely keep him entertained. Moreover, his health seems perfectly fine upon Polly's arrival, furthering Mr. King's manipulation of the Pepper family to achieve what he wants, namely the Pepper girls themselves. Of course, Polly doesn't want to leave Mamsie with all of the work and can't bring herself to leave, despite the urgings from Ben, Mrs. Henderson and other town folk. It isn't until Mrs. Pepper bursts into tears stating that her heart will break if Polly doesn't go that Polly agrees to leave. Mrs. Pepper declares that Polly will "be the making of us" and Polly promises to be worthy of them

all (*FLPG* 140). Encouraging Polly to live with the Kings exposes Mamsie's recognition of the benefits afforded a wealthy lifestyle. This recognition, and her continual references to manners, goodness, and finances, add to the argument that Mrs. Pepper, and therefore her children, are merely displaced from their true social position of a proper middle class family. Sandra Burr reiterates this argument, noting that Polly's "scrupulousness points to a middle-class fondness for etiquette and manners" while Mamsie's "belief in the value of education and in saving money for the future signals her own middle-class background" (Burr 153).⁶ This necessary nature of their temporary poverty illustrates Sidney's desire to demonstrate that good breeding and moral virtuousness are naturally inherent qualities.

A nervous Polly arrives at the King's residence, blushing furiously at the thought that this home – "like one of the castles of Ben's famous stories" – belonged to the Kings (*FLPG* 142). Polly felt herself floating "fast to the Fairyland of her dreams" (*FLPG* 143). When the French piano teacher Monsieur Tourtelotte arrives for the first day of Polly's lessons, "he was simply the Fairy (an ugly little one, it is true, but still a most powerful being) who was to unlock its mysteries, and conduct her into Fairyland itself" (*FLPG* 147). As with the connection between Jasper's Christmases and fairyland, here the wealthy lifestyle of the Kings substitutes for unreal, imaginative worlds of fairy tales. The Pepper children use these analogies and metaphors to help describe their highly romanticized view of wealth, echoing Jasper's own romanticized view of poverty. Hager deems this "fetishizing of their former life of poverty" as part of the novel's treatment of

⁶ American children's fiction often imitated British literature featuring "an Anglo, genteel, domestic scene designed consciously to socialize American children into particular middle-class mores" (Murray 117). Polly's move to the King's household, and her adjustment to living in their social class, serves as a prime example of this indoctrination.

both lives in the little brown house and the Kings' mansion as joyous (4). Both are only joyous, however, if the family remains together.

Despite this fairyland, Polly is homesick. Only the piano or the greenhouse have the power to soothe her. She grew “more silent and pale, moved around with a little droop to the small figure that had only been wont to fly through the wide halls and spacious rooms with gay and springing step” (*FLPG* 151). Like Heidi who falls ill and despondent upon moving to the city from the country, so does Polly. Mr. King, of course, knows just what to do: he visits the little brown house and persuades Mrs. Pepper to let him bring Phronsie back to his home, adding to his collection of Pepper children. Mr. King then announces that he will have all of the Peppers come stay at his house, for fear that Mamsie will soon want her daughters home, “and, of course you know, Marian, we couldn't allow *that*” (*FLPG* 170).

Reunited, all of the children – the Peppers and the Whitneys – gather around Mamsie as she begins to tell them of the little brown house. She remembers, “the little brown house had *got to be*, you know, so we made up our minds to make it just the nicest brown house that ever was!” (*FLPG* 190). Jasper immediately pipes up, exclaiming, “The *very nicest place in the whole world!*” (*FLPG* 190). Dicky cries to his mother, Marian, “The *dearest* little house mamma! I wish I could live in one!” (*FLPG* 191). As the reality of leaving the little brown house looms on the horizon, even Mamsie has begun to embrace its symbolic representation of Romantic poverty. Mr. King walks in with a headache and Phronsie immediately crawls into his lap and begins to stroke his head, since “My poor sick man wants me, he *does*” (*FLPG* 192). He proceeds to tell Mrs. Pepper that she and the children just need to move in with him. She can keep house,

immediately relegating Mamsie to the level of a servant, and he states, “Don’t you see it’s for the children’s advantage? They’ll get such educations, Mrs. Pepper, as you want for them. And it accommodates me immensely. What obstacle can there be to it?” (*FLPG* 194). With the matter settled, he stands up and marches out with Phronsie on his shoulder.

The novel remains determined to treat the Pepper children and Jasper as equals. The fact that the Peppers are so quickly made a part of the King’s household highlights the novel’s acceptance of them as “good” (read well-bred) despite their former poverty. But, at the same time, Mrs. Pepper does the mending and Polly does the babysitting of Jasper’s nephews when the Peppers move in with the Kings. The novel’s last chapter reveals that the Peppers are actually related to the Kings through marriage (Mr. King’s son-in-law is related to Mrs. Pepper). So ultimately, as Kelly Hager correctly argues, the Peppers are merely “reinstated in the appropriate environment when their true class origins are intuited (and later uncovered)” (7).

Like Alcott, Sidney has created an impoverished facade to elicit sympathy and romantic notions of the simple, happy poor life in her young readers. She successfully capitalizes on conservatism in this popular rags to riches tale that does its part to remind her middle-class audience that theirs is, in the end, the proper social class. In tandem with this romanticization of poverty, Sidney takes advantage of nineteenth-century notions of the romanticized child. This second layer of idealization furthers Sidney’s inherent conservatism in her texts, as well as continues the trope of the child as a separate innocent being inhabiting its own sphere.

II. THE AMERICAN ROMANTIC CHILD

Although critics like Phillippe Ariés theorize that the concept of childhood autonomy emerged in the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, I argue that certain late nineteenth-century literary representations of romantic, not realistic, children subvert this reality of childhood autonomy. Chlebek summarizes Phillippe Aries' argument: "the value of the child as an economic being became apparent as increasing social mobility and industrialization disintegrated the traditional bases of community life; the group energy of the smaller family unit was now expended on helping children to rise in the world" (77). Despite Aries' view of the child as now a player on the capitalist and social class stage, authors like Sidney elevate characters, like Phronsie, who lack an awareness and maturity in line with this increasing agency. Chlebek reiterates the message that "the high point of social and psychological consciousness in nineteenth-century children's literature was at the turn of the century, with its growing focus on the child as child, rather than as a miniature adult" (79). Certainly the child in the late nineteenth-century is viewed as a child due to previously mentioned changes in economics and the family/labor structure, however, the sentimentalized Romantic child becomes trapped in a symbolic form, unable to mature and break free from the constructed world of idealized childhood.

Unlike writers such as Hawthorne and Alcott who resist gendered social roles and capitalistic practices in their children's fiction, Sidney maintains those paradigms in her Pepper novels. Presumably these same paradigms were passed down to Sidney from her parents, as evidenced by her use of a pseudonym in response to her father's criticism that writing publicly was unfitting for a proper woman. As Elbert argues, "'model'

children of the nineteenth century, the entitled children adored and praised in juvenile fiction, create a marginalization (based primarily on class and race, and on capitalist notions of success) that replicates the world view of their middle-class parents” (Elbert xxii). Sidney similarly inserts her own conservatism into her novels. She has no Jo March who challenges notions of femininity, or subversive didacticism directed at adults. Instead, her Pepper novels reinforce traditional views of gender and social and economic classes. Polly remains the epitome of womanly duties. Jasper declares that she is so “smart” to be able to bake little cakes, to which Ben proudly replies that “She knows how to do everything, Jasper King!” (*FLPG* 106). Ben and Polly serve as surrogate parents and “always called the three younger ones of the flock “the children” (*FLPG* 116). Mr. Henderson, the Parson, offers to teach Ben “so that he’ll be a big man right off!,” and, although Polly worries that she won’t know anything and Ben will be ashamed of her, Mrs. Pepper replies, “come fly at your sewing; that’s *your* learning now” (*FLPG* 136-7). Burr argues that, unlike Alcott, Sidney believed whole-heartedly in the domestic ideology of separate spheres and created stories of happy children participating in gender-appropriate activities. To illustrate these points, Burr focuses on the character of Polly Pepper, “an adult thrust into a child’s body” (Burr 149). Assuming nearly all of the domestic activities in the household, Polly is indeed the least child-like of the Peppers, along with Ben, the eldest boy. A model of the exemplar wife, Polly succeeds in cheerfully offering domestic help throughout the novel and exists as a precursor to the Angel of the House marriage that awaits her in later novels.

Sidney wrote a lengthy manuscript of some fifty pages revealing this conservative view of the family and woman's duties.⁷ In this work, Sidney separates the genders, noting that a boy will experience "a restless desire within his small, but mighty soul, for a chance to express his utter detestation of girls and quiet domestic tastes. He wants nothing so much as to bang something; for a stick to crack ~~somebody's head~~ with his sister's dolls with, and he would be glad to turn the whole nursery into an arena where he might prance and roar, and make havoc generally with all order and beauty" (HML Mss. 30.11). She refers to the boy as a "prisoner" and a "caged animal" who detests "horrid girls." In a similar manuscript directed to young women, Sidney remarks, "I would first of all, advise any young woman who is watching for her opportunity to 'search the scriptures' and make of them a daily guide, counselor and friend," and then follows this statement with a story of Saint Theresa. This conservatism additionally reflects Sidney's adherence to the latter nineteenth century view of children as a separate class from adults. For Sidney, and many other nineteenth century writers, childhood becomes emblematic of Romantic innocence and otherness.⁸

A miscellaneous fragment about children and childhood, which includes numbered pages perhaps indicating that it was meant to be a published article, reflects Sidney's belief in the perfect innocence and otherworldly nature of children as existing in a sphere separate from adults. In describing this "white_life_period," Sidney states, "There is no innocence so perfect as the innocence of childhood. This is undisputed. The

⁷ The purpose, and whether or not this manuscript was published, are unclear. The printed text was found among Sidney's private papers in her family archive with no notations regarding publication.

⁸ Critics, such as Anne MacLeod and Humphrey Carpenter, identify Wordsworth, Blake, Alcott, Stowe, and Burnett as some examples of writers whose fiction illustrates this Romantic child.

innocence of childhood is at the same time its best weapon, and its most complete defence [sic]. Again undisputed.” (HML Mss. 26.1). Yet another typescript about children’s nature depicts the child as unknowable, separate, and confusing. Sidney states directly at the opening of this piece: “Child-nature is complex and confusing. Who can define rightly the heart and mind of a child? The animus of a creation fresh from the hand of the creator? on which He has stamped His image, and into which He has breathed a soul? Children cannot be the chronicles of their own soul-awakenings. It must necessarily devolve on older people to observe, to record and to study different phases of the subject.” (HML Mss. 26.3). Adults have forgotten their childhood and can therefore not relate to a child, yet they also must be the ones to study and observe in order to chronicle the “subject.” Here, children are removed from adults, and childhood becomes a separate object, an Other, to be studied and observed like a scientific experiment. Here, Sidney differentiates from the more straightforward idealization of characters in her stories; the child in these philosophical writings is no longer an infantilized child, but rather a separate entity to be studied in and of itself. Both forms, however, emphasize the separateness of the child and childhood from the world and understanding of the adult.

Finally, Sidney wrote another story, “Marjorie Fleming: the child friend of Sir Walter Scott” that illustrates a relationship between a young girl and an older gentleman that not only echoes Sidney’s writings about child-nature, but re-envision a similar bond between Phronsie and Mr. King: “A divine call is sent to every soul, when the eternal freshness of a child-nature is brought to bear upon it. Then, if ever, can the man stand up and avow himself a believer in all things true and great. Bathed in a sweetness lost sight of in the years receding from his own childhood, he lives once more in its innocence.

Dropping his personality, by contrast with the sordid and vulgar struggle with the crowd, he steps out into the fresh air and riots among the daisies and buttercups again, forgetting the past he has played” (HML Mss. 28.1). This opening passage implies that the Romantic child will invigorate the adult, particularly the adult male, by remembering the sweet natural innocence of youth through his child companion. It creates an otherworldly paradise in which grown men can revisit childhood through a young female child, endorsing the same relationship between Marjorie and Scott as that of Phronsie and Mr. King.

Importantly, it is the young girl Phronsie who becomes an idyllic representation of childhood. The boys in the Pepper novels have a great deal of freedom and independence. This unspoiled representation also depends on Phronsie remaining immature and sexually pure.⁹ This analysis unpacks the complicated relationship between Phronsie Pepper and Mr. King to argue for the use of Phronsie as a symbolic representation of late nineteenth-century romanticized childhood. In contrast to Polly as a miniature adult, Phronsie Pepper is the child who can never grow up. Like a forced version of Peter Pan, Sidney stunts the maturity of Phronsie, relegating

⁹ In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Dr. Krafft-Ebing contends that “The child is of the neuter gender” and remains imbued with “sexual neutrality” (186). But as James Kincaid argues in *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, “By insisting so loudly on the innocence, purity, and asexuality of the child, we have created a subversive echo: experience, corruption, eroticism. More than that, by attributing to the child the central features of desirability in our culture—purity, innocence, emptiness, Otherness—we have made absolutely essential figures who would enact this desire” (4-5). Kincaid’s observation aligns with the relationship between Phronsie Pepper and Mr. King throughout the Pepper novels.

her to a symbolic Romantic child.¹⁰

Phronsie exists as a lingering representation of Victorian sentimentalism in an age rushing towards the turn of the century and its many social changes. A number of real life occurrences help create the chasm between the world of the child and the world of the adult. No longer necessary participants in the production of family income, children spent more time in school and therefore separated from adults. Other reasons for the lavish attention now bestowed on young children include: the falling birth rate with a consistent mortality rate and the uncertainty of the public and adult world which encouraged people to turn inwards toward their own families and look to their children for security (Carpenter 18-19). In tandem with the middle-class child being afforded more time to create and enjoy their own culture, advances in printing technology increased the availability and affordability of literature written for that young audience so that even their literature becomes more separate from writings for adults. All of these factors contribute to the idea of the child existing apart from the adult, but also existing in a space of innocence and optimism that might also bring happiness to the home. So, “rather than being viewed as economic assets in the household, children became valued for their social and emotional contribution to the family” (Murray 82).

In some ways, Sophronia “Phronsie” Pepper resembles the child redeemer Little Eva from Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, but instead of death cementing her innocence

¹⁰ James Kincaid uses the examples of Peter Pan and Alice to illustrate the desire to not grow-up: “Yet the tensions in each story are the same: an urgent need for the child, the elusive child-forever, is played off against all the sensible, Freudian-ironic, and undesirable powers that would erase distance, make the child manageable, catchable, and thus just another grown-up-soon-to-be...Barrie’s play is usually received as a bittersweet piece of nostalgia, a self-protective lament for the remoteness of the child that creates that very distance” (279). Phronsie Pepper illustrates this Peter Pan phenomenon in that she becomes that urgent central symbol of perfect childhood that all surrounding characters react towards and against in every novel.

forever, Sidney's treatment of Phronsie's character achieves the same result.¹¹ She operates at a presexual and juvenile level throughout Sidney's series, seemingly ignoring her climbing age and presumed physical maturity. The first novel introduces Phronsie as the picture-perfect little girl. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed, chubby, toddling and full of whimsy, little Phronsie has clearly won over the hearts of her family members and, later, those of all who meet her.

She also begins as the little damsel in distress, which becomes a recurring trope in the Pepper novels. As a catalyst to bring together the Peppers and Jasper King, Sidney creates a disturbing scene in which a mean, older traveling organ player with a pet monkey steals Phronsie Pepper. Jasper and his dog Prince come across the strange trio and rescue Phronsie. Although this ends the frightful scare of Phronsie being lost, the implications of what would have happened to the pretty young child in the hands of the male stranger are brushed aside as the focus turns to the family's new friend, Jasper. But even Jasper conflates the increasingly problematic relationship of a pure child and sexuality. Jasper kisses Phronsie upon seeing her again, and again when he visits the little brown house, he says, "Now Phronsie, give me a kiss" (*FLPG* 107).¹²

¹¹ In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eva is an idealized, redemptive child whose deathbed scene uses her as a "suitably sentimental weapon" to change the hearts of Stowe's readers in the hopes of furthering abolitionist goals (Thacker 42). Eva changes the hearts and minds of the adults around her, demonstrating the power of the Victorian romantic child as redeemer, like Phronsie Pepper.

¹² In yet another damsel in distress moment, Phronsie proceeds to leave the house to mail a letter to Mamsie, becomes lost and is nearly killed by swiftly driving carriages when Mr. King sweeps her up and delivers her home safely. Completely beside himself, Mr. King proceeds to rip off Phronsie's boots after she complains of aching feet from her long trek, exclaiming "Poor little lamb!" (*FLPG* 164). Perilous situations involve this symbol of childhood perfection. It is little Phronsie who is kidnapped, nearly run over on the street, and stumbles upon burglars. The thought of such idyllic childhood beauty being destroyed creates tension for the reader who has invested their emotions in the idealized figure.

Part of Phronsie's power lies in her ability to "transform" curmudgeon adults, similar to other popular characters like Heidi, Anne of Green Gables and Pollyanna. As Murray explains, these late nineteenth century romantic notions of childhood innocence "presumed that the child would convert adults to higher moral behavior and more lofty social goals" (82).¹³ After Jasper writes a letter that his return visit to the little brown house has been delayed due to his father's illness, Phronsie declares, "I'm a-goin' to bake something for my sick man, I *am*," and she proceeds to bake a gingerbread boy – "a particularly ugly looking specimen of a cake figure" (*FLPG* 94, 97). The Pepper family is horrified that grand Mr. King will be angry at such a meager gift, but Jasper states that his father laughed as he had never heard him laugh before: "the room shook all over; and he ate a big dinner, and all that afternoon he felt as good as could be" (*FLPG* 107). Mr. King's reaction to the gingerbread boy seems out of character for one so dismissive of the poor Pepper family previously. In fact, Mr. King changes positions entirely and declares that he must go visit little Phronsie to thank her. When he reaches the house, little Phronsie "clean as a pink" eagerly perches upon his knee (*FLPG* 113). After a lovely visit that fills the old man with cheer, he asks Phronsie, "there, my little girl, will you give me a kiss?" (*FLPG* 114).

This idealization of Phronsie as a symbolic representation of the Romantic child continues in the second novel in the series, *Five Little Peppers Midway*, which opens with a scene with Phronsie Pepper, now age eight, and Jefferson, the African-American cook of the King household. Much like Uncle Tom and Eva, Phronsie has formed a close attachment to Jefferson, who leads her downstairs to bake a pie with her "surrendering

¹³ Murray mentions William Wordsworth and William Blake as writers who immortalized the innocence of childhood, influencing later writers to take up the same charge.

her hand to his big black palm” (*FLPM* 3). Before baking, Jefferson ties an apron on Phronsie, exclaiming, “they’re as fine, and big, and white, and I’ll just put you in one of ‘em and tie you up as snug; you’ll come our as clean and sweet when we’re through” (*FLPM* 3). Phronsie then declares that she just loves Jefferson so, to which he replies, “No, Miss, I’m big and black, and just fit to stay downstairs” (*FLPM* 3). Phronsie replies that she likes him even better because he is black and different than everyone else, although an uncomfortable Jefferson again replies, “Well, Miss, I ain’t fit for a lily to touch and that’s the truth” extending his hand, while saying, “It’s clean, Miss, but it’s awful black” (*FLPM* 3). Here Sidney openly participates in the problematic racial stereotyping and “benign paternalism towards nonwhite groups,” in her depiction of the Kings’ servants and the little black girl in the orphanage scene and uses these scenarios to contrast the lily-white Phronsie with the darkness of the African-American characters (Murray 117).

Not everyone is as taken with Jefferson. Mr. King scolds him for bringing Phronsie down into the kitchens and, when Jefferson attempts to help Phronsie with her pie and she sadly says that it is no longer hers having had his help, Mr. King exclaims: “Leave your fingers off from it, can’t you? Goodness! This pie isn’t to have a professional touch about it. Get some more flour and stuff, whatever it is that you make a pie of, and let her begin again” (*FLPM* 5). Phronsie then has a change of heart about the first pie and Mr. King orders Jefferson to put away the flour and things because “Phronsie doesn’t want them” (*FLPM* 5). This quick change of heart would no doubt fluster the cook Jefferson, but Mr. King remains oblivious to his own inconsistent manners. Phronsie hears her sister Polly calling her and throws her arms around Jefferson for him

to take off her apron, to which Mr. King cries, “Stop!...I’ll take off the apron myself” (*FLPM* 6). Perhaps Mr. King fears that her being “handled” physically by a large African-American man impinges on his ownership and control of the little girl.

A similarly uncomfortable and discriminatory scene involving the African-American shop owner Candace reiterates Sidney’s use of Phronsie as the favored child, with the other characters reacting in a similar poor fashion as Mr. King. Candace has made a doll for Phronsie, proudly stating “I done made her all myself fer de little Miss” (*FLPM* 89). The rag doll has “surprising” black bead eyes and a crop of Candace’s own hair on her head. Polly offers to take the doll to Phronsie, but Candace adamantly refuses: “I’d never sleep a week o’ nights ef I didn’t put dat yere doll into dat bressed child’s arms” (*FLPM* 89). When Candace delivers the doll to the King’s mansion, Polly’s friend Alexia bursts out laughing to the point of tears at the sight: “if it had been-a-respectable doll, but that-horror! O dear me!” (*FLPM* 131). An embarrassed Polly tries to quiet her friend to save Candace’s feelings. Later in the novel, Phronsie gives away her dolls to poor orphan children, but we never know what becomes of Candace’s doll after its uncomfortable delivery.

Although now eight years old, Phronsie still speaks like a mere toddler. Her elementary phrasing and vernacular are unchanged from the first novel, illustrating yet another indication that, despite aging, Phronsie does not grow up. Only at one point when Jasper declares that she will be Princess Clotilde in the family play and attempts to prance with her does Phronsie allude to some degree of maturity, “Oh, Jasper! I’m eight years old” to which Jasper replies, “Nonsense! What of it – you are the baby of the household” (*FLPM* 12). Mrs. Pepper continues to call Phronsie “Baby” and her siblings

refer to her as “Pet.” These nicknames reinforce the view of Phronsie as an immature child. Despite being nearly the age when Polly ran the Pepper household to help her mother, Phronsie shows no signs of being capable of being of cooking, cleaning, sewing and tending to younger siblings. Of course, this complete lack of capability and ineffectual domestic skills would emphasize both the increasingly separate and removed world of childhood, as well as the increased life of luxury that fails to necessitate such skills while servants are continually underfoot.

Phronsie continues to sit on Grandpapa King’s lap and snuggle into his chest throughout the second novel as well. At one point, the eight-year-old girl raises her arms to Mr. King, who easily picks her up and raises her to his shoulder. Assuming he is at least sixty years old, this seems quite a feat, and again blurs the reality between Phronsie’s real age and maturity and the actions of a very small child. Later in the novel, Mr. King beckons to Phronsie as he “suggestively touched his knee” and Phronsie scurries over to him and he swings her into his lap (*FLPM* 120). Phronsie furthermore falls asleep on a whim like a baby – on the couch while getting dressed for the play, in Mr. King’s lap while Polly tells a story and so forth. Polly or Jasper, little more than children themselves, often carry her up to bed. These actions further her positioning as a small child, incapable of caring for herself.

At one point in the novel, Phronsie muses about Polly’s blossoming music talent, Ben’s business future and Davie’s reading habits, then droops into her apron asking herself what she can do: “Nothing,” mourned Phronsie, “just nothing at all; not even the wee-est teeniest bit of anything do I know how to do. O, dear!” (*FLPM* 82). Mr. King’s snobby, wealthy and widowed cousin Mrs. Chatterton tells Phronsie a secret that she

plans to adopt her so that she will be taken care of financially, and presumably, that Phronsie also take care of Mrs. Chatterton in her old age. Even Mrs. Chatterton agrees that “You will never earn a cent of money in all this world, unless you do exactly as I say; for you are a child who hasn’t it in her to learn anything” (*FLPM* 85).

At the beginning of the third novel, *Five Little Peppers Grown Up* (*FLPGU*), we learn that Mrs. Pepper, now wife to the good doctor and Mrs. Fisher, has a new baby, fondly referred to as “Baby” or “The Baby.” Phronsie is no longer the baby of the household, although Polly continues to refer to her as “Pet.” The novel opens at Christmastime, when Phronsie has used some of Mrs. Chatterton’s money to support orphaned children at Dunraven Hall. The King-Fisher family decorates Dunraven with a large Christmas tree and Polly organizes a concert for the children.¹⁴ Unfortunately, one “little colored child” – the only African-America child at the home - won’t stop crying and Phronsie picks up the child and tries to placate her with stories about the Christmas tree. At this, “the little creature sat straight in Phronsie’s white lap. ‘May I have some of it, if I am black?’ she begged, her beady eyes running with tears” (*FLPG* 19). Of course, Phronsie tells the child that she has tied a doll on the tree just for her, as the lonely “dark” child continues to cling to Phronsie’s white gown. As with Jefferson’s hand and Candace’s doll, the small child exists as a contrast to the angelic “white” Phronsie, dressed in a white apron or a white gown at nearly all times.

Now age thirteen, Phronsie continues to behave in a childish and immature manner, particularly when it comes to Mr. King. When Phronsie visits Mr. King in his room, he welcomes her and remarks: “Now, then, Phronsie, you are never going to be too

¹⁴ This reiterates earlier criticism that supports the idea of charity at Christmas time being a proper and respectable means of interacting and helping those less fortunate.

big, you know, to sit on my knee,” to which Phronsie cries “in a rapture, ‘I could never be too big for that’” (*FLPGU* 53). Here, as emblematic of her constant giving spirit, Phronsie asks Grandpapa if she may give some of her inheritance from Lady Chatterton to help support Mrs. Chatterton’s less financially fortunate niece, Charlotte. After shedding tears, Mr. King agrees to think about allowing Phronsie to share her fortune as she departs after “putting up her lips in a kiss” (*FLPGU* 55).

Perhaps the relationship between Phronsie and Mr. King would not read quite as uncomfortable to contemporary readers, who generally have a more nuanced view of adult-child relationships, if the references to their physical interactions and affections were not constantly on display by Sidney. Each book, and indeed nearly each scene in those books, reinforces a visual image of Phronsie as innocent young child unable to mature and Mr. King as an obsessively doting guardian. These examples show an eight, thirteen, and then twenty-year old Phronsie effectively stuck as a romanticized version of young girlhood contrasted with Polly, who even in the first book at ten years old runs the household and acts every bit the adult. Indeed, as the title suggests, all of the Peppers have “grown up” with the exception of Phronsie. Polly, now twenty, continues work as a music teacher and becomes engaged to Jasper King, Ben works for Mr. Cabot, and the other two boys, Joel and Dave, have been sent off to school for a proper education. Phronsie alone remains in the household having undergone no such maturity or transformation. Aside from small suggestions that she has aged, such as mentions of her writing a letter or statements of her age itself, Phronsie acts nearly the same in all three of the Pepper books reinforcing her as a fixed symbol of Romantic idealism. The novel ends with Phronsie stating after Jasper has proposed to Polly, “And you will really and truly be

my very own brother, Jasper” (*FLPGU* 126). The Peppers have now completely assimilated with the Kings and, as far as Sidney was concerned, the series had come to its rightful end.

Badgering from fans, and presumably financial necessity, led to Sidney to write a fourth book, *Phronsie Pepper: The Last of the “Five Little Peppers,”* published in 1897 by Lothrop Publishing Company. As Sidney explains in the preface, readers complained that Phronsie was the only one who was unable to become “grown-up” in the Pepper Library. She continues, “The author has had so many letters from the elders, as well as the children, presenting this view of the case, that she has been brought over to that opinion herself” (vii). The fans urging could be only their desire to read more of a favorite series, but it may indicate that her audience failed to completely buy into the notion of Phronsie as a separate figure of perfect childhood. Although Sidney created the character in line with many other nineteenth-century authors who supported this Romantic child image, and although those novels were popular and well-received by their audiences, her readers may not have felt that the Pepper series was “complete” until Phronsie moved on herself. This echoes the earlier insistence of Alcott’s readers that the March girls all must be married off. But, unlike Alcott, there is no recorded evidence of Sidney’s frustration about marrying off Phronsie. In fact, for Sidney, this is the logical next step as every one of the Pepper series’ female characters, Mamsie included, has already been married off before this novel.

Regardless of the impetus behind the book’s writing and publication, Sidney clearly views *Phronsie Pepper* as the final installment of the series. She concludes the preface: “And now the closing volume, that shuts the door of the little brown house

forever” (ix). Of course, Sidney later goes on to write eight more novels about the Peppers, but she seems to genuinely feel that this volume will be the last, and those subsequent novels fall chronologically within the time frame of the first four novels.

Emphasizing her view, an 1897 hand-written note by Sidney reads:

June 5th 1897 I have just_2.30 oclock_finished correcting the proof of the last chapter XXVIII of “Phronsie Pepper” and have added these words. End of “The Five Little Peppers” Books.

But they will live with me forever!

Bless their dear hearts!

Sitting room at Wayside

Concord Mass.

This novel opens with a frantic Phronsie babysitting the three youngest King-Fisher babies: King, Elyot and Barby. Although Barby is still “number two” according to Grandpapa King, she has superseded Phronsie as the baby girl of the extended family. Yet, after the younger children are settled, the twenty year old Phronsie sits down on Mr. King’s knee in “her usual place” as he strokes her golden waves of hair (*PP* 16). Mr. King goes on to tell Phronsie how he ran into Roslyn May, a handsome and eligible young man, who had been asking to see Phronsie. Mr. King told Roslyn that he wouldn’t allow it, “And that’s all out of the question. Besides being decidedly unpleasant for you, it would kill me....I shouldn’t live a month if you went off and got married, Phronsie” (*PP* 19). As Phronsie reassures Grandpapa King that she will never leave him, he continues “patting her on the back as if she were a child of three” as his real fears are exposed: “You’d belong to somebody else besides me, and that would be the same as

being a thousand miles away” (*PP* 19-20). As in the previous three novels, Mr. King discloses his sense of ownership of Phronsie, and his inability to process her affection for others.

As with the previous novels, the dress of other characters is rarely mentioned, yet Sidney repeatedly notes that Phronsie wears a “soft white gown,” a “beautiful white gown,” and later a “soft white wrapper” (38, 95, 379). When Polly offers Phronsie a cup of coffee, she remarks, “No, I’ll just have a glass of milk, the same as every day, Polly” (145). Further, when the group returns to the Little Brown House, Phronsie carefully draws her two dolls out of a drawer and carries them into the kitchen. The accompanying illustration from the first edition shows a grown Phronsie carrying the little dolls illustrating the incongruity between Phronsie’s age and her apparent maturity level. Neighbors, via Sidney as author, remark that Phronsie is “a raving, tearing beauty...and worth going miles to see” and “all the rage,” but Sidney’s other descriptions of Phronsie remain at odds with these assessments (67-8).

It isn’t until Mr. Marlowe, Jasper’s employer, reminds Mr. King that Phronsie is now twenty years old that the fact seems to sink in: “as if a wholly new idea had struck him, he kept repeating to himself at intervals as the waiter brought luncheon, ‘Phronsie is twenty years old. Phronsie is twenty years old!’” (253). Marlowe intimates that Phronsie loves the young sculptor Roslyn May and Mr. King should consider her future, at which Mr. King stomps about “fuming like a caged animal” and leaves Jasper and Mr. Marlowe to their lunch (255). Jasper states, “Oh Mr. Marlowe! you do know, because you’ve seen it, how he just worships Phronsie. We all do for that matter; but father – well, that’s different. She’s just everything to him” (256). But in Chapter XVIII “Grandpapa Does

The Right Thing,” Mr. King draws Phronsie onto his knee as usual (mind you, she is twenty years old), and explains that he has written to Roslyn May and wants to see Phronsie happily settled down.

Phronsie battles her affections for the young man. At one point, Phronsie has a conversation with Mamsie’s rocking chair as if she was there, asking, “is it very wicked for me to *want* to see Roslyn? I will stay with Grandpapa; but oh, I want so to just see Roslyn” (245). She repeats, “But oh! I cannot help thinking of him; and it is very wicked, Mamsie, just to think of him?” (246). This fictitious conversation reveals the complicated relationship that Phronsie has with maturity. Perhaps from a position of Christian sinfulness, she feels “very wicked” to think of a man and initially resists running to Roslyn’s side, until he falls ill with some horrid fever, in which case she must rush to Italy with Mr. King and tend to him. So yet another scenario involving mortal peril enacts a transformative effect and Phronsie and Roslyn are soon married abroad. Just before their marriage, which is conveyed to the reader in a letter from Polly back home, Roslyn’s illness takes a turn for the worse and Phronsie becomes “just like a shadow – so thin and so white” (410). This is the first signal that Phronsie herself is transforming into a different person – one silent and meek. We never hear from Phronsie during the final chapters of the book. She nurses Roslyn, gets married, travels back home and becomes settled in the Little Brown House with her new husband. All of these events are related through Polly in letters or the narrator and not through Phronsie’s voice.

After returning home a married woman, the Pepper-King-Whitney household holds a reception for the couple and Phronsie, the silent wife, stands sweetly “in her soft white gown trimmed with white orchids” (431). Although standing by his side, Roslyn

speaks for Phronsie at the end of the novel to thank the family beginning with, “My wife wishes me to tell you...” (436). Marriage, and the subsequent maturity associated with consummation, completely silences Phronsie for the remainder of the novel. Despite being the title character, and despite all of the last major events involving her, Phronsie’s voice becomes erased. In this way, Phronsie has become another symbol – one of silent, angelic domesticity.

Sidney’s strict adherence to the idea of the Romantic child through the character of Phronsie Pepper illustrates her conservatism and traditional desire to uphold childhood as a separate chapter of innocence and otherness in a person’s life. Evidenced by the high sales of her Pepper novels, her audience seems to have welcomed her choices and delighted in the narrated lives of all of the Pepper children. This popularity demonstrates a difference between turn of the century readers of children’s literature, where Sidney’s conservatism and traditional writing style would have been the norm. To contemporary readers, and even to early twentieth-century readers are noted previously, Sidney’s novels read as saccharine and simplistic. In addition, her young readers’ insistence on a fourth novel demonstrates an example of the power of the juvenile consumer. This pressure of her adoring readers for more stories about the Peppers displays the agency of the avid child reader. Although idealized in many late nineteenth century writings like Sidney’s, the real child of this period had matured to become an active driving force in the literary marketplace.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Sentimental Companionship”: The Art of Jessie Willcox Smith

Sarah Peter, the founder of The Philadelphia School of Design for Women, told a visitor to the institution soon after its 1844 opening that “as the world now went on, the best service one could do to any new-born female child was to drown it” (qtd in Carter 17). Despite the impetus to found the school and despite its future success, Ms. Peter clearly felt antagonistic towards the state of women in the mid-nineteenth century. Creating institutional spaces for women to pursue the arts proved a challenge. The changing face of the American literary marketplace, however, and its resulting expansion of opportunities for women in the “lesser” arts of illustration, allowed Jessie Willcox Smith to not only attend Peter’s school, but to then carve out an independent artistic career as “the greatest children’s book illustrator” (*NMAI*).

The Golden Age of children’s literature witnessed a flourishing of illustration in which every children’s book was expected to have accompanying colorful images to enhance the text. Bright and detailed covers filled store and nursery shelves, and the literary marketplace promoted illustration as a major selling point. Stemming from the popularity of romanticized child characters in texts, children’s book illustrations of the period reflected the same sentimental purity. Smith’s illustrations famously depict cherubic children in sweet, simple scenes. In this way, her illustrations continue the romanticization of childhood and the relegation of children to a separate sphere of innocence apart from adult life. My analysis examines Smith’s illustrations themselves to demonstrate how the visual representation of the Romantic Child in American children’s

literature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century continued to promote an idealized version of youth. Part of my study requires an examination of Smith's background and lifestyle that display a defiance of convention both during her training and career. As the demand for children's literature and illustration rose, so publishers and editors turned to women to create the supply, as they were more "naturally" suited to depicting motherhood and childhood than male writers and illustrators. While seemingly unfazed by the limitations in subject matter, Smith's unconventional lifestyle, in which she lived with three other women to help support each other financially and emotionally, demonstrates the ability for these women to pursue independent professional careers outside of traditional marriage. Like Alcott and Sidney, Smith depended on her work for her livelihood, but unlike those women, Smith was able to realize Alcott's dream of a self-supporting communal womanhood illustrated in her novel *An Old-Fashioned Girl*. This juxtaposition of a feminization of children's literature and illustration with the progressive advancements in women's potential positions in the literary marketplace and society at large reveals the complexities of pursuing a professional career for women illustrators and writers in the early twentieth century.

As discussed in the second chapter, artistic communities that educated and supported women were few in the nineteenth century. In addition, an interest in the arts beyond a "fashionable education" was thought to compromise a woman's role as wife and mother. Luckily for Smith, as the nineteenth century progressed, so did society's expectations for marriage was no longer a given outcome for all young women and Philadelphia offered opportunities for burgeoning women artists to find a supportive community. Born in Philadelphia on September 6, 1863, Jessie Willcox Smith enjoyed a

comfortable middle-class upbringing as the fourth of four children in the Smith family. Her father, Charles Henry Smith, was a machinery salesman and her mother, Katherine DeWitt Willcox, managed the household. The Smiths supported their children's educations, including their daughters', and Jessie was sent to the Quaker Friends Central School in Philadelphia and then to high school in Cincinnati, Ohio. After graduation, Smith obtained a job as a kindergarten teacher, but it failed to suit her, for, as biographer Carter notes, "she found her charges disarmingly active, frequently obstreperous, and ill-mannered" (12).

Her artistic career began inadvertently when a friend's mother, who was an artist, commented on Smith's drawings. She remembers, "I knew I wanted to do something with children, but never thought of painting them, until an artist friend saw a sketch I had made and insisted I should stop teaching (at which I was an utter failure) and go to art school – which I did" (qtd in Carter 12). She returned to Philadelphia and began working in sculpture, like Alcott's Sunny-Side muse Becky Jeffrey, but she found sculpture work to be difficult and expensive, particularly with no formal training. Smith then turned her attention to the study of painting. Smith began her formal career at the age of twenty-one at The School of Design for Women, but she found the education constricting and inferior. In 1885, Smith enrolled at The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, which was the only school offering serious artistic training for female art students.

Despite this serious training, The Pennsylvania Academy had to make concessions with regards to women artists and societal fears of classical nude representations warping their delicate sensibilities. The Academy, therefore, attached a fig-leaf to the genitalia of all male figures in their exhibitions. After applying these

delicate forms of flora, the school was able to accommodate both sexes. It is important to note, however, that many of the leading institutions in Europe still explicitly prohibited women from attending during this same period. American art institutions, lacking government patronage, depended on female students for financial survival, so making these accommodations was necessary (Swinth 26). American women, therefore, were able to gain access to artistic training less available to their European counterparts due to the privatization of many art institutions. And, once accepted, women artists in America refused to settle for less quality of art education than male artists. They consistently championed for equality in the arts, as in the case of life drawing classes, and demanded to receive the same instruction and degree of professionalism. But, still, communal support was necessary if a woman lacked connections to the art world: “The greatest handicap facing every woman artist was exclusion from the fraternity of male artists, where ideas and philosophies were exchanged and the camaraderie and energetic synergy necessary to sustain a lifetime of creative production was fostered” (Carter 16). Fortunately for Smith, she was able to find the communal support so desperately needed for a professional woman artist. She, along with three other women, became the “Red Rose Girls,” living together and sharing the financial and domestic roles of their household to enable successful artistic careers.

Known as “one of the most popular and best-known artists in America during the first thirty years of [the nineteenth] century,” Smith indeed had a successful career (Darby 38). Like Hawthorne, Alcott and Sidney, Smith started her career with periodicals, where she “began almost at once to draw little things for children’s magazines” (Smith 24). She obtained her first salaried job with *The Ladies’ Home*

Journal in 1889, where she illustrated child-filled Ivory Soap ads and other advertisements. Her work appeared in *Scribner's*, *Collier's*, *Century*, *Journal*, *McClure's* and other journals. *Collier's* offered Smith a two-year, exclusive contract in 1904, which helped to further her reputation. These magazine opportunities bolstered the perception of Smith as the leading illustrator of children, which, in turn, helped lead to her major commissions of children's books, such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, and Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*. Smith illustrated nearly forty children's books during her career. In addition, *Good Housekeeping* offered Smith an exclusive contract to design their covers later in her career, where she continued to work while painting portraits of children until her death in 1935.

Her recognizable illustration style, coupled with the broad range of opportunities open to female illustrators at the turn of the century, solidified her place in the canon of American illustration and her illustrated books remain favorite editions even today. Known as "America's Kate Greenaway," Smith created a childhood world full of sweetness, simplicity and nostalgia (Carter 142).¹ Mitchell notes: Smith "particularly excelled in one subject, and the *subject was children*" and "In Smith's world only children and their mothers seemed to exist" (1, 3). This is apparent when viewing Smith's book illustrations, magazine covers, and portraits. The illustration "Sweet and Low" portrays a loving mother and baby all dressed in white, emblematic of the sweet

¹ One of the foremost British illustrators in the late nineteenth-century, Kate Greenaway illustrated numerous books, calendars, bookplates and postcards during her career. Her style and her depictions of children are recognizable and remain sought after today. The Kate Greenaway Medal for outstanding children's book illustration, begun in 1955, is awarded each year.

innocence of childhood and idealization of motherhood in Smith's work (fig 1). The book illustration color-plate "She Lufs Me - She Lufs Me Not" combines the charming image of a little boy with an equally charming childish mispronunciation (fig 2). The *Good Housekeeping* cover shows a delightful small girl leaning over a bursting bowl of flowers above the article title, "When a Girl Would Marry" (fig 3). These are but a few of the thousands of illustrations representing Smith's famous and sentimental style.

I. INROADS FOR WOMEN ILLUSTRATORS

Demand for illustration skyrocketed after the Civil War due to the implementation of the American Copyright Act, the rise in the literacy rate, and photographic advancements, which assured illustrators that their drawings would be accurately reproduced.² Referred to as the Golden Age of American Illustration, the period between 1885 and 1925 witnessed a flourishing of printed illustrations. Illustrators had unprecedented opportunities open to them in not only periodicals, but also book illustration, advertisements, calendars, posters, and other printed materials. The 1880s, in particular, witnessed a "magazine revolution" when the number of illustrated periodicals rose dramatically, thereby launching illustration into a position of prominence as publishers relied on these illustrations to attract readers and advertisers. It was during this boom that Smith began her illustration career, and the increasing importance of illustrations helped secure her continued success.

The importance of illustrations to consumers can be seen in the example of *Munsey's Magazine*. Frank Munsey produced the first fully illustrated with halftones magazine in 1893. Sold at a low price of only ten cents per issue, his magazine's

² The ACA put a stop to the custom of re-engraving drawings originally created by foreign artists to use in American publications, resulting in an increased demand for American illustrators and their works.



Fig. 1. “Sweet and Low” (1910).
From *A Child’s Book of Old Verses*.



Fig. 2. “She Lufs Me – She Lufs Me Not”
(1907). From *Collier’s*.



Fig. 3. Cover Illustration (1927).
From *Good Housekeeping*.

circulation exceeded half a million copies within a year, more than double of the highbrow journals *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and *Century* (Swinth 103). Munsey mass produced illustrations throughout his magazine, thereby encouraging an even larger relationship between artists and popular print culture. At the same time, magazines like *Munsey's* helped increasingly inflate the relationship between illustration and advertising, as opposed to its more highbrow previous role as arbiter of literary visualization.

Contemporary art directors and editors understood this trend. In his 1902 article about Smith in *The Book Buyer*, Harrison Morris, managing director of the Pennsylvania Academy and Museum from 1892 to 1905, remarks: “As a learned editor remarked to me not long ago, ‘You know I want enough text to carry the pictures.’ Illustration has outstripped its parent and makes the pace.” (202). Prior to technological developments involving photomechanical and photochemical techniques in the latter nineteenth century, the cost of including illustrations in books added considerably to their expense. Nineteenth-century books did include illustrations, of course, ranging from crude woodcuts printed in relief to elegant inserted images reproduced by intaglio or chromolithography, but the development of the halftone technique and photographic color separation, both of which benefitted from photographic methods, resulted in a marked change in the appearance and price of books. It was now economically feasible to have a fully illustrated volume that still bore an affordable purchase price. The increasing affordability of illustration, therefore, also allowed for an increase in demand for illustrators.

Smith was one of these illustrators that reaped the benefits of technological advancements which allowed for books and magazines to expand the number and quality

of images within each text.³ One technological advancement in particular aided Smith's career profoundly: the camera. Although Smith and her artistic housemates contended that they did not use photographs to draw their illustrations, evidence suggests otherwise.⁴ The development of photography meant that photographs swiftly began to replace the expensive and time-consuming wood engravings. While this development produced anxieties for engravers, it allowed artists and illustrators to more freely experiment with style and subjective aspects of their work since they were no longer asked to copy life with such realistic detail. As such, the quality of illustration increased, as well as the importance of the illustration in relation to the text.

The use of photography to produce reference shots for illustrations, in addition to the various technological advancements in the printing arts, resulted in a new place of prominence for the illustration itself. Morris remembers: "You were willing to accept the pictures in most books as a convenient resting-place, scarcely as a help in forming ideals of the characters, never as a needful adjunct to the story. But in such work as this of Miss Smith and of her preceptors and her friends there are sympathy and reality which, apart even from the book, give pleasure, and, in conjunction with the text, are not only an embellishment, but a critical interpretation" (202). Illustrations not only held a certain beauty in and of themselves, but they also offered an additional layer of interpretation of

³ In his detailed overview of manufacturing and book production during the industrial era in the nineteenth century, Michael Winship reminds readers that all of the formerly man-driven processes relating to the printing press – locking text into a chase, attaching the chase to the press, wetting the paper, cranking the bed and so forth – were mechanized during the industrial era of 1840-1880. This mechanization allowed for a more consistent quality and a much larger output of printed volumes. In addition, new processes of lithography and photography during the latter decades of the nineteenth century made incorporating illustrations in books both easier and less expensive.

⁴ Alice Carter produces a number of comparisons between photographs, taken as references by the artists, and the final illustrations, which reflect the photographs in nearly every detail. Smith herself owned a camera, presumably to capture moments as these reference shots.

the text, often bolstering the words with a visual representation that aided in understanding for the reader.⁵

Illustration itself, however, perceived as “practical and commercial,” faced its own stigma of being a “stepchild” among the arts and certainly below “fine art” (Goodman 14). Women were often relegated to being the producers of this “lowbrow” culture – illustrators for mass-produced magazines, writers for children’s stories – while high culture remained part of the masculine domain. Genius in art was not a necessity for mass-produced illustration, according to contemporary art critics and publishers, and, therefore, the serviceable talent was one suitable for women. This commercialism ultimately helped enable women to succeed in illustration. Separated from the “masculine” styles of high art, illustration entwined with popular culture and thereby created a safe space for women to contribute their skills. Women were no longer consumers of culture. Now they were also producers of culture.

Similarly, as industrialization helped spur further demand for skills and labor, a demand for female workers and artists rose simultaneously, prompting Sarah Peters to create The Philadelphia School of Design for Women in 1844, as noted in the introduction. The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts began accepting female students in the same year. But in defiance of the fact that women were still not allowed to draw from live models, three women formed a life study class outside of that Academy in order to further their own skills. With these organizations supporting them, several

⁵ Earlier in the nineteenth century, stock engravings were often used that had little relationship with the actual text. Later in that century, illustrators could create images that directed related to particular scenes and events in the stories. Perry Nodelman elaborates on this relationship in *Words about Pictures: The Narrative Art in Children’s Picture Books*, in which he expounds on this symbiotic relationship: “the words and the pictures in picture books both define and amplify each other, neither is as open-ended as either would be on its own” (viii).

women had established careers as illustrators by the 1870s and 1880s, including Mary Hallock Foote, Georgina A. Davis, Maud Stumm, and Maud Humphrey, among others.

Although Catherine Stryker explains that late nineteenth-century “women were accepted in illustration because drawing and painting were supposedly a natural part of their refined and sympathetic personalities,” that “acceptance” of women as artists came at a price (5). Young women flocked in droves to fashionable art schools, believing an artistic career possible.⁶ While this was possible, it remained difficult, financially and socially, for a woman to work as a professional artist. As Helen Goodman notes, it was “the widely held view that lady artists were dabblers and dilettantes” (13). Women were also assumed to be the protectors civilized culture. Swinth contends that women and culture “appeared to represent values that transcended the increasingly pervasive market, and women began to include the protection and cultivation of art and culture among their duties” (18). To be bearers of culture, however, women had to know and understand genteel culture themselves, hence the emphasis of drawing as a typical “lady’s accomplishment.”⁷ But as these accomplishments became increasingly conflated with actual paid job opportunities, and as mass illustration was demoted to less than the genteel art of drawing, women continued to flood the industry. Similar to Hawthorne’s bemoaning criticizing of the damned mob of scribbling women, so male artists and

⁶ With the rise of the professional woman artist resulting in nearly half of the country’s artists being women by the turn of the century, some critics worried that the presence of women illustrators combined with a female readership would feminize the field in general (Kitch 2).

⁷ Swinth points out the irony that landscape, being so readily available and apart from the concerns regarding life study, was deemed unsuitable for women due to “the strenuous, masculine associations of the romantic mountain sublime” (qtd in Swinth 19).

illustrators bemoaned the increasingly present, and successful, woman illustrator.⁸

According to an 1890 census, nearly 11,000 women artists, sculptors, and teachers of art practiced their profession, versus only 414 in 1870. In addition, although women had been only 10 percent of artists in 1870, they reached nearly one-half of all artists counted in 1890 (Swinth 3).

In her 1900 article “A Letter to Artists: Especially Women Artists,” artist Anna Lea Merritt summarizes the crux of the problem: “The chief obstacle to a woman’s success is that she can never have a wife. Just reflect what a wife does for an artist: Darns the stockings; Keeps his house; Writes his letters; Visits for his benefit; Wards off intruders; Is personally suggestive of beautiful pictures; Always an encouraging and partial critic. It is exceedingly difficult to be an artist without this time-saving help. A husband would be quite useless. He would never do any of these disagreeable things” (467-468).⁹ Merritt’s open letter published in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* warns young women about a career in the arts because “of all businesses *art* is the most popular and fashionable...and excessive number of young ladies with very moderate ability come to art for a living” (464). She reminds her female readers that an artist’s income is fluctuating and insecure, since “what women can least endure is uncertainty about their means of living” (464). And while art education is inexpensive and easy to obtain, these

⁸ Swinth traces these anxieties of male artists in *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (2001). In her analysis, anxieties arose for the male artist as more and more women artists were successful. In response, male artists often sought to develop stronger relationships with their male instructors, bolstered the gallery system that favored “masculine” art, and supported the separation of high and low art in an effort to write of the female artist as a dabbler in commercial art forms.

⁹ Anna Lea Merritt was an American-born artist who spent the majority of her life and career in England. She had lived and worked as a professional painter for twenty-seven years before writing this article (nmwa.org).

young women artists create mere “trash” (465). In fact, the innate qualities of a woman – thriftiness, industry and altruism – are at odds with art and art creation. This is not to say that women cannot be artists. They can, but they must “harden their hearts, and not be at the beck and call of affections or duties or trivial domestic cares” – a lofty goal, indeed, but one that Smith was able to manage with the help of her artistic sisters and Henrietta Cozens (467).

Other critics that same year, however, defended women in the arts. In her 1900 article published in *The Critic*, “Representative American Women Illustrators: The Child Interpreters,” Regina Armstrong opens with a defense of her title as “an involuntary protest against the reminiscent tradition of the uselessness of woman in the greater thought and the larger work of the world; for it cannot be denied that she has been regarded somewhat as the disease of civilization” (417). Illustration has provided an avenue for women “living down that cry” (417). Armstrong supports the woman artist in her article and applauds the efforts of those who were able to establish an independent and successful career. Such an article, then, most likely inspired even more young women to pursue the arts, especially given the burgeoning work prospects.

Commercial illustration was not only fairly well-paid work for women, but it offered various employment opportunities. A 1918 advertisement for the Federal School of Commercial Design promised the potential to earn up to \$75 a week for “ambitious girls” stating, “[i]n this modern profession you are not handicapped: *you are paid as much as a man with the same ability*. Women are naturally fitted for the work” (qtd in Scanlan 6). But, being “naturally fitted” for the work, women illustrators found themselves nearly exclusively illustrating themes of childhood and motherhood.

Armstrong supports this trend, contending that many publishers “hold that certain qualities of pictorial interpretation are distinctly the faculty of woman’s delicacy and insight to portray, and especially is this true of the studies and compositions depicting child life” (418). While Smith never openly complained about her career being dependent exclusively on images of childhood and motherhood, others in her circle felt constrained by the assumption that this was the only subject matter both suitable, and natural, for a woman artist. Her housemate Violet Oakley’s large-scale commission for the Senate Chamber in the Pennsylvania State Capitol is an enduring example of a woman artist’s push against such expectations.¹⁰

Despite pushback from female artists like Oakley, the majority of women artists and illustrators continued to work in the safer, and more acceptable, genres of childhood study and still life. Smith herself consistently portrayed elements of the romantic in her illustrations of women and children throughout her entire career. These apparent differences in desired subject matter did little to dampen the relationship between Oakley, Smith, and their housemates. In fact, the success of their communal arrangement in terms of artistic support and financial stability no doubt helped all of the women to pursue their various areas of interest. As stated previously, women struggled with obtaining the same level of artistic training and respect in the art field. By working together to support one another, the Red Rose Girls defied the stereotypical role of the dabbling female artist and strengthened the position of women in a variety of artistic fields.

II. SENTIMENTAL COMPANIONSHIP

¹⁰ The panels from Oakley’s *The Creation and Preservation of the Union*, and in particular the panel of *Unity*, illustrate a break from these assumptions. *Unity* depicts an enormous woman, symbolic of unity, with smaller images of men – kings, doctors, businessmen and the like - bowing down to her on either side.

By 1894 Smith was employed as an illustrator for *Ladies' Home Journal*, earned extra income for doing freelance work, and many of her drawings had appeared in the nation's most popular juvenile periodicals, including *Harper's Young People* and *Saint Nicholas Magazine*. Despite the beginnings of a solid career, Smith continued her training when the well-known illustrator Howard Pyle selected her to join his first class in 1894 at the Drexel Institute (figs. 4-6). This would begin a career-long relationship between Smith and Pyle that would affect her artistic career and personal life. Studying under Howard Pyle was nothing less than transformative for many of his female students, Smith and her future living partners Elizabeth Green and Violet Oakley, included. The majority of well-known female illustrators during this period sought instruction from Pyle at the Drexel Institute. Pyle was supportive, practical and encouraging of his female students' desire to pursue a professional career. A student recalls: "The sincerity of his own work and his unflagging enthusiasm affected everyone around him and made a deep and lasting impression on his students" (qtd in Scanlan 7). But although Pyle personally supported a woman's right to an independent career, he, like Smith, believed that the role of wife and professional were not easily combined. According to him, once a woman married, "that was the end of her" (qtd in Carter 44). Nevertheless, his progressive philosophies had an impact on Smith and her fellow female artists under his mentorship.¹¹

In addition, Pyle advocated for his art students, often obtaining commissions for them from publishers in New York, Philadelphia or Boston. Smith, along with her partner

¹¹ Smith stated of Pyle: "He taught me, I might say, what philosophy of life I may possess" (qtd in Carter 44).

on the project, Violet Oakley, owed her first major commission to Pyle (the 1897 illustrated edition of Longfellow's *Evangeline*) (19). This project cemented the friendship between Smith and Oakley, as well as helped launch their careers.¹² One critic argues: "Had the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, founded in 1805, been any less advanced, and had Smith not had the later advantage of studies with the forward thinking Howard Pyle, it is quite conceivable that Jessie Willcox Smith would be a name unknown to American illustration" (Schnessel 9).¹³ Smith herself valued her relationship with Pyle, and readily acknowledged his support and aid in her training.

In *The Golden Age of Children's Book Illustration*, Richard Darby contends that Howard Pyle was "the great innovator who revolutionized American book illustration in the late nineteenth century" (35). Pyle was also the founder of the Brandywine school of American illustration, influencing future great book illustrators such as N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish. Prior to the 1880s, most American book illustrations were done by leading painters or artists of the time who "lowered" themselves to create such illustrations, and, even then, they failed to compare to their British counterparts, such as George Cruikshank, Edward Lear, and John Tenniel. Pyle's influence on the field of book illustration was so great that, "[b]ook illustration as an 'honourable' profession scarcely existed before Pyle's crusade to equal the best that Britain could offer" (35).¹⁴ Smith says of Pyle "He seemed to wipe away all the cobwebs and confusions that so beset the path

¹² The *Evangeline* publication was very successful and led to more commissions for both Smith and Oakley.

¹³ Although founded in 1805, the Pennsylvania Academy didn't accept women until 1844.

¹⁴ The "great" British illustrators include the likes of George Cruikshank, Richard Doyle, John Tenniel, the Dalziel Brothers, Walter Crane, Kate Greenaway, and, of course, Randolph Caldecott. Pyle is best remembered for his authored and illustrated *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883) and tales of King Arthur.

of the art-student and with his inspiration and practical help, I was soon in the full tide of book illustration” (qtd in Nudelman 22). This practicality expanded beyond skill and into Smith’s personal life, where the professional and the personal would merge.

Smith moved in with fellow artist Violet Oakley during the *Evangeline* project’s creation, along with Elizabeth Shippen Green and Jessie Dodd, all students of Howard Pyle. 1523 Chesnut Street became the first communal home of the artistic triumvirate of Smith, Oakley and Green. The women supported each other professionally and financially. In 1897, the four women also became active members of the Plastic Club, one of the first successful woman’s art organizations in the nation. As President Blanche Dillaye noted: “We had prejudices to meet and overcome, we had the belittling prejudice against woman’s art clubs, and we had, to justify that, a history of many mediocre organizations against us” (qtd in Carter 50). The Plastic Club defied these odds and continued to provide a full schedule of classes and speakers for its members.¹⁵ Developed as a response to women’s exclusion from men’s clubs in order to obtain the same level of support, idea exchange, and exhibition opportunities, the Club had numerous exhibitions, which they publicized using posters and catalogs, in addition to weekly teas, lectures and evening events (fig. 7). Like Alcott’s Sunny-Side Muses, it is the community of women that helps ensures their success. A photograph of the artists for a poster of the first exhibition of the Plastic Club depicts these “Red Rose Girls” in bloom, literally holding roses in their hands while Cozens pretends to pour water upon them (fig. 8).

¹⁵ The Plastic Club garnered a serious reputation with numerous exhibition catalogs, regular reviews in major newspapers, and, as one commentator noted, the members were “all practical workers, who [were] kept constantly busy with orders for prominent publications” (qtd in Scanlan 16).



Fig. 4. Howard Pyle with daughter Phoebe (c. 1892). From The Howard Pyle Manuscript Collection, Delaware Art Museum.



Fig. 5. Illustration from Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883).



Fig. 6. "Captain Keitt" (1907). From *Harper's Monthly Magazine*.

The opportunity for Smith to live and work with other female artists may have ensured her success, but it also provided an opportunity for friendship and camaraderie.

As Smith wrote in an illustrated calendar that the three women created for their friend Jessie Dodd, who had returned home to Ohio, “After all, say what we will, the one supreme luxury of life is sympathetic companionship” (qtd in Carter 51). This “sympathetic companionship” reflects the communal bond of friendship and support that helped the women sustain their independence by relying on each other for moral and financial support. It was a financial companionship, but also a sympathetic one in which the women artists, because of similar interests and circumstances, could relate to one another with empathy and understanding.

Perhaps influenced by Pyle’s beliefs, Smith echoed his sentiments on the practicalities of combining marriage and a profession: “A woman’s sphere is as sharply defined as a man’s. If she elects to be a housewife and mother – that is her sphere, and no other. Circumstance may, but volition should not, lead her from it. If on the other hand she elects to go into business or the arts, she must sacrifice motherhood in order to fill successfully her chosen sphere” (qtd in Carter 52). Here, Smith buys into the concept of separate spheres wholeheartedly. A woman can be a wife and mother, or she must sacrifice that domestic role to succeed professionally. The two avenues are incompatible. And even with sacrificing motherhood, it takes a community of women to make that success a reality for Smith and her artist friends.

The trio of Smith, Oakley and Green tired of the city and longed for a country retreat in which to work and live. Their dream became a reality in 1901 when they were able to rent the beautiful Red Rose Inn in Villanova, outside of Philadelphia. This move

required a more formal commitment from the women, and all three women, along with Henrietta Cozens, vowed to never marry and to live together for life.¹⁶ Like Alcott's Sunny-Side Muses, the women adopted pet names for each other. Dubbed the "Red Rose Girls" by Pyle, the quartet went a step further and chose a common surname of the "Cogs" family: C for Cozens, O for Oakley, G for Green, and S for Smith. They wrote letters home addressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Cogs and family" and referred to each other in letters as "Red Roses." Oakley viewed their new home as a "white stone on our road from servitude to liberty" (qtd in Carter 74).

This conscious choice to create their own surname reflects the women's confidence and trust in each other. In this way, they function independently of the patriarchy in both lifestyle and name, illustrating the changing attitudes that women held for themselves. In terms of working as earnest artists, photographs of their workshops show a sparseness and a functionality that lend an air of professionalism and seriousness to their art. Rather than creating in ornamental feminine domestic spaces, the women's studio space appeared practical, tidy and functional. Morris describes the communal aspect of the women: "There is so much in common between the members of that group of clever young women... The kind of work with pen and brush they do, the training they have had, the aims they express, are close allied; and they live out their daily artistic lives under one roof in the gentle comradery [sic] of some Old World 'school,' a band of independent partners in talent who have no time for rivalries and who would admit none if they had" (201).

¹⁶ Not an artist, Cozens lived with the artistic trio and managed their household, thereby enabling Smith, Oakley and Green to focus their attention on work.



Fig. 7. The Plastic Club Exhibition Poster (1902). Artist, Violet Oakley. From The Historical Society



Fig. 8. Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith and Henrietta Cozens in their Chestnut Street studio (c. 1901). From the Archives of American Art, Violet Oakley papers, 1841-1981.

Smith perhaps identified her own “Red Rose Girls” as the “Sunny-Side Muses,” as her illustration for the women in Alcott’s *An Old-Fashioned Girl* demonstrates a clear relationship for Smith between the book’s female artists and her own artistic family.¹⁷ Perhaps not surprisingly, Smith is the only illustrator of *An Old-Fashioned Girl* to have depicted that scene.¹⁸ A photograph of Smith and her cohorts eating around a table may likely have even been used as a model (fig. 9). The book illustration bears a strong resemblance to the candid photograph of the Red Rose Girls taken at 1523 Chestnut Street (fig. 10).¹⁹ The informal photograph was taken moments after a more formal reference photograph that Oakley used to paint a cover of *Collier’s Illustrated Weekly* published on June 21, 1902, the same year that Smith’s edition of *An Old-Fashioned Girl* was published.

In the book illustration, the two female characters on the right are nearly identical to Smith and Cozens in the photograph. In addition, the background busts and bookcase, as well as the chair in the foreground, are similar. Kate, Becky, Polly, and Fanny,

¹⁷ Alcott’s *An Old-Fashioned Girl* was a welcome commission for Smith. She recalls her first solo illustrated book being a “regular boy’s book” about Indians, despite the fact that she knew “very little about Indians, and was not particularly interested in them” (Schnessel 4). Her illustrations must have pleased the publishers nonetheless, for she was asked to illustrate a second book about Indians, and then a third. At this point she “felt I must speak or forever after be condemned to paint Indians. So I wrote to the publishers that I did not know much about Indians and that if they had just an every-day book about children, I thought I could do it better. I was immediately rewarded with one of Louisa M. Alcott’s stories, and a letter saying they were glad to know I did other things, as they had supposed Indians were my specialty!” (qtd in Nudelman 14).

¹⁸ Given the subversive nature of this scene, as discussed in Chapter Two, hidden within a conservative and traditional girl’s book, previous illustrators may not have been comfortable with illustrating this chapter. Although even Smith’s illustrated version appears traditional otherwise. Her choice of images for the frontispiece and title page suggest that the goal of the novel is heteronormative companionship. The frontispiece depicts a solitary Polly, walking down the street, a soft expression on her face, hands bundled up in a large muff. The title page vignette illustrates Polly with her hand extended, making the acquaintance of Tom, her future husband.

¹⁹ Although Smith and her cohorts denied using photographs as references for their illustrations, evidence from Carter’s book suggests that they often did use photographic references.

presumably, are depicted in the book illustration – there are only four figures, although five women were present in the text’s scene. Given that Polly and Fanny are central figures to this scene, one would assume that they are the two figures at the table in hats. Standing at the table in an artist’s apron would most likely be the figure of Becky, the sculptor. A pedestal with the bottom portion of a large statue looms in the background. As the figure appears seated, it can be assumed that this statue is not the figure of the woman being sculpted by Becky. It is clear that Smith at the very least felt her own group’s photograph to be a helpful reference image for the illustration. Perhaps she found the commonalities between her group and the fictitious artist group to be more than that.

At the same time, Smith embraced the traditional and conventional nature of the novel in the other illustrations for the volume. The choice of images for the frontispiece and title page suggest that the goal of the novel is heteronormative companionship and, indeed, that is how the novel ends. The frontispiece depicts a solitary Polly, walking down the street, a soft expression on her face, hands bundled up in a large muff. The title page vignette illustrates Polly with her hand extended, making the acquaintance of Tom, her future husband. In the illustration titled “‘Why must you be so fine to go to school?’ asked Polly,” the detailed dress of Fanny Shaw and the response from Fanny in the text - “All the girls do; and it’s proper, for you never know who you may meet. I’m going to walk, after my lessons, so I wish you’d wear your best hat sack” – indicates that Polly’s fashion must step up if she wishes to join Fanny’s level of societal acceptance, although it appears that Polly assumes that school is for learning and education, not fashion. The tone of novel and accompanying illustrations, aside from the subversive “Sunny Side”



Fig. 9. Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, Jessie Willcox Smith and Henrietta Cozens in their Chestnut Street studio (c. 1901). From the Archives of American Art, Violet Oakley papers, 1841-1981.

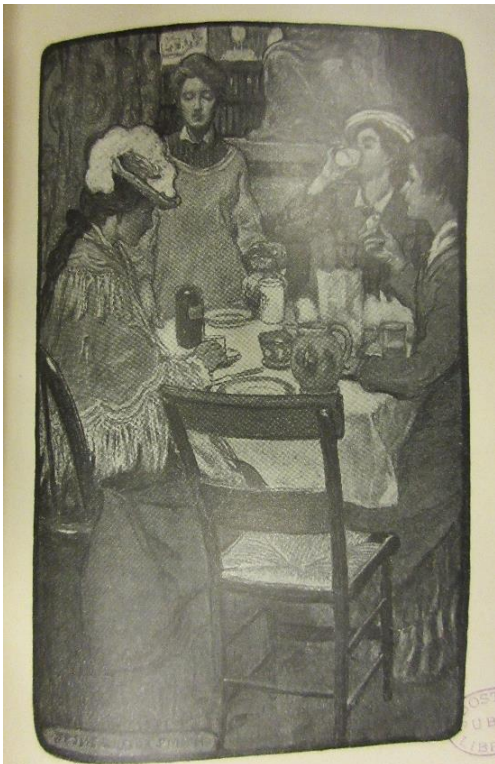


Fig. 10. “Now then, fall to ladies, and help yourselves” (1902). Jessie Willcox Smith. From *An Old-Fashioned Girl*.

chapter, reflect its predictable, conservative plot and focus on marriage as the ultimate goal. So while Smith and her companions lived the life of the progressive muses and she should be recognized as the one illustrator who depicted that scene, her illustrations in general supported the traditional conservatism of the novel.

Unfortunately, the Red Rose happiness of those real muses came to an abrupt end when an eviction notice appeared on their doorstep in 1906. The women were able to lease another charming property in Mt. Airy, naming the new home Cogslea, after their communal surname “Cogs” and “lea” for the home’s topography. Carter notes that, although “a Boston marriage was considered an acceptable alternative for a spinster, it is doubtful that anyone imagined that women would form personal and professional alliances fortuitous enough to give them a viable financial alternative to marriage” (136). In fact, Alcott did imagine these alliances in her novel and Smith and her contemporaries made them a reality.

Although Boston marriages were considered respectable and common in the nineteenth century, changes in respectability occurred in the early twentieth century. With the rise of sexuality studies and new burgeoning labels being placed on “abnormal” relationships, the women became the subject of press scrutiny.²⁰ Even though a friend in later years evaded questions about the women’s sexuality with, “What does it matter if they were orgasmic? The point is that they loved each other,” gossip and changing attitudes towards same-sex relationships surrounded the women (Dixon). When Elizabeth

²⁰ Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s influential *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in 1886, helped to launch the study of sexuality, and, in turn, made the subject of sexuality more openly communicated in general. His work inspired other scientists and doctors to explore sexuality and its “perversions,” such as Sigmund Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905). This newly established field of psychoanalysis and sexuality study placed pejorative labels on relationships that fell outside of conservative, heteronormative behavior.

Green left the group to marry Huger Elliott in 1911, the *Philadelphia Press* ruined the occasion with a headline story, “Trio of Artist Friends Broken by Cupid: Artists Combine Fortune for Life” which insinuated that the women had completely fallen apart upon Green’s defection.²¹ The *Chesnut Hill Herald* publicized that a devastated Oakley had “broken down completely.” Eventually, Oakley invited a young art student, Edith Emerson, to help her in her studio and Emerson stayed with Oakley until the end of her life. Smith and Cozens moved into “Cogshill” in 1914, the home that Smith built for them after leaving Cogslea.²² Henrietta continued to handle all of the domestic duties while Jessie continued her artistic work, including illustrating Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* and Alcott’s *Little Women*, among numerous other books and magazine illustrations.

Regardless of any turbulence surrounding the dissolution of the “Red Rose Girls,” Smith’s career had flourished. She received a bronze medal for paintings exhibited at an international exposition in Charleston, South Carolina in 1902. In 1903 she was awarded the Academy’s Mary Smith Prize for the best painting by a woman. Also in 1903, Charles Scribner’s and Sons commissioned Smith to produce designs for Robert Louis Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, paying her \$3,600 for the project. Smith’s idealized images of children appealed to Scribner and other publishers. Upon completion of the Stevenson project, the art editor at Scribner’s stated, “I have used up all my adjectives in acknowledging your various drawings” (qtd in Carter 99). Nicknamed “the

²¹ Green and Elliott actually built a home on the Cogslea property, so they could visit and stay frequently.

²² Smith’s letters to Cozens during her European trip in 1907 offer enough substantive content to argue that Jessie and Henrietta were long-term lovers and intimate companions beyond the more platonic suggestion of a Boston marriage.

mint” by her friends because of her prosperity, Smith was financially secure thanks to her talent and the literary marketplace’s desire for sentimental illustrations (Stryker 12). The artist Philip Leslie Hale wrote a review of Smith’s paintings at an exhibition in Boston in 1907 headlined, “Women Surpassing Men Illustrators...Jessie Wilcox [sic] Smith an Excellent Example.” That same year, the New York Society of Illustrators elected their first five female members, including Smith, Oakley and Green. By 1910, she was earning an estimated annual income of \$12,000 and she was paid between \$1,500 and \$1,800 per *Good Housekeeping* cover in the 1920s, of which she created nearly 200 during her job there between 1917 and 1933 (Kitch 3). Those fifteen years at *Good Housekeeping* creating every cover of the magazine earned her the large sum of nearly a quarter of a million dollars in the process.

Despite this success, illustration styles were also changing and Smith’s style, although still popular and reprinted to this day, was seen as old-fashioned to more modern sensibilities. As Carter states, “The Red Rose Girls had built their lives around romance not realism,” and Smith’s romanticized illustrations of childhood were no exception (184). For example, Smith’s enormously popular and idealistic images for Kingley’s *The Water-Babies* in 1916 were later seen as “mawkishly sentimental” (Carter 186). Modernism in America had gained traction by the beginning of the twentieth-century and new artistic movements of abstraction and cubism ushered in more complicated interpretations of what art, and illustration, should entail. Smith’s cherubic children seemed to belong in a bygone Victorian era. For although her personal life exhibited an unconventionality, her professional life’s creations exhibited a romanticized and sentimental child, much like Sidney’s characters from *The Five Little Peppers* series

previously discussed. Edith Emerson's 1938 eulogy for Smith further remarks upon this shift: "Nothing morbid or bitter ever came from her brush...Perhaps some citizens of the future, satiated with the morbid, the sensational, the grotesque and the horrible, may look back with nostalgia to those lovelier moments which she chose to record" (346).

III. THE ROMANTIC CHILD IN ILLUSTRATION

Unlike Alcott who complained about having to write "moral pap," Smith did not belittle her sentimental art in her writings. On the contrary, Smith seemed dedicated to the idealization of childhood and motherhood, despite not experiencing marriage or motherhood in her lifetime. She publicly spoke of motherhood and children in positive, romantic and ideal tones. She remembers: "I came into my own, and ever since it has been one long joyous road along which troop delightful children – happy children, sad children, thoughtful children, and above all wonderful, imaginative children, who give to their charmingly original thoughts a delicious quaintness of expression" (Mitchell 5). When asked if she regretted not marrying, she replied, "No... To marry and have children is the ideal life for a woman. What career could ever be as fine? To give the world splendid men and women – isn't that the noblest thing a woman could possibly do?" (qtd in Nudelman 48). So while Alcott bemoaned her role as the "children's friend" in some personal journals and letters and Sidney expressed confusion over "child nature" in articles separate from her fiction, there is no evidence that Smith criticized her subject matter. Granted, few of Smith's personal writings exist, compared to Alcott and Sidney's numerous journals and letters, so a definitive conclusion about Smith's personal thoughts on children and motherhood would be difficult to obtain. Unfortunately for scholars,

Smith was an intensely private person who kept no diaries, no journals, and almost always refused interviews or public appearances.

Although a private person, Smith inspires a heart-warming nostalgia for her readers through her artwork and, as Mitchell argues, she offers “a new and romantic visualization of child life. It’s as if she were appealing to all adults who have forgotten the joys of childhood” (3).²³ To announce her new role as their cover artist, *Good Housekeeping* ran a story titled, “The Secret was about Covers,” in which they applauded Smith’s work and dedication to their magazine’s mission: “Certainly no other artist is so fitted to understand us, and to make for us pictures so truly an index to what we as a magazine are striving for – the holding up to our readers of the highest ideals of the American home, the home with that certain sweet wholesomeness one associates with a sunny living-room – and children” (32). Her illustrations do have a “certain sweet wholesomeness” that undoubtedly has appeal. The article also continues: “Some power as indeed given to Jessie Willcox Smith the gift of seeing little folk as others see them, for her portraits perform the miracle of being all things to all lovers of children” (33). “All things to all lovers of children” sets a high bar for Smith’s work, which her resulting success would seem to reach.

Although later criticized for being overly sentimental, Smith’s work was clearly highly successful and provided imagery that appealed to its middle-class American audience. Further capitalizing on the popularity of her wholesome images, Smith’s illustrations themselves were marketed as stories and education tools in their own right.

²³ Her idealization of children can be seen early on. While studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Smith remembered: “I always wished there were children in the life classes, the men and women were so flabby and fat” (qtd in Carter 21).

The *Good Housekeeping* Print Department advertised and sold prints of Smith's work, with one ad reading, "EVERY JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH PICTURE A STORY Examine the small miniature reproduction carefully and you will find that they are desirable and essential to your child's education" (*GH* 178). And, in terms of their influence on profit, a former art editor at *Collier's*, William Patten, called Smith's illustrations "one of [the magazine's] most popular bids for circulation increase" (qtd in Scanlan 20). These examples further illustrate the avenues by which magazines made a profit. Illustrations within the periodical become sold as individual prints for educational and decorative pleasure. And those same illustrations, rather than simply beautifying the text, become the agent for gaining more subscribers themselves. In short, as Morris concluded, publishers and editors looked to illustration, not just text, as a crucial path to strengthen their increasingly visually-oriented readership.

All in all, Smith's work "fed the fantasies and aspirations of the middle-class society of her day by depicting idyllic, heartwarming images of wholesome family life and secure, happy children" (Goodman 17). An article by fellow artist and partner to Violet Oakley, Edith Emerson, similarly summarizes the charm of Smith's work. To coincide with an exhibition of Smith's portraits of children by the Philadelphia Art Alliance, Emerson wrote "The Age of Innocence: Portraits by Jessie Willcox Smith" published in *The American Magazine of Art* in 1925. Her article characterizes Smith as noble, sympathetic and modest, having illustrated the most famous of "immortal children," such as Alice, Tom, and Hans Brinker, with an essential "moral fibre" in her art (342). She quotes Smith: "Children are like flowers. It seems to me inappropriate to dress them in bizarre colors or to paint them in a bizarre manner" (345). On her style,

Emerson contends that it is “well mannered, clean and graceful, with a generous dash of common-sense.” (346).

But this idealization of a happy middle-class life complete with an equally happy “angel of the house” wife was at odds with the shifting views of women in the early twentieth-century. Critic Carolyn Kitch sees Smith’s domestic and maternal vision as “out of sync with a changing view of womanhood that dominated popular culture in the new century,” where the “girl” had come to dominate media and entertainment (5). Smith wasn’t alone in her depictions of a mature woman, as a contemporary magazine writer noted that “The Gibson and Christie [sic] type is almost wholly absent from the ranks of the woman artist” (qtd in Kitch 6).²⁴ Newspaper critic Philip Hale posited a reason for this in 1907: “Possibly they—ah, malicious sex—don’t find the Gibson girl, with her French doll eyes, her tip-tilted nose, her chin bent to one side, so fascinating as do our guileless men—illustrators and others. Their girls—the ones these women make—have an individuality...which our good men are afraid to inject in their creations, for fear people will say they ‘can’t make a lady’” (qtd in Kitch 6). Kitch’s argument brings to light the chasm between family values and literature versus the swiftly growing entertainment industry and proliferation of the pin-up girl. Smith, and many of her fellow female illustrators, remained firmly entrenched in the family-friendly mass-culture of magazines and children’s books that promoted an idealization of domesticity. And children’s literature, in general, is a conservative genre, often deliberately hearkening back to an idealized traditional era.

²⁴ Kitch argues that Smith and her contemporary female illustrators drew women as mothers to counter-balance the proliferation of “girls” drawn by popular male illustrators. She gives the “Gibson Girl,” “Fisher Girls,” and “Christy Girls” – all named for their illustrator – as examples of the playful, flapper-esque and sexually attractive women gracing the pages of magazines (5).

In addition to her nostalgic scenes of American childhood, Smith helped popular European children's books transform into "American" editions through her delightful illustrations, including: Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* and *The Princess and the Goblin*, Joanna Spyri's *Heidi*, and *Dicken's Children*, along with her famous illustration of *Alice in Wonderland* for the cover of *Boys and Girls in Bookland*. Of all of these illustrated editions, the drawings for the 1916 edition of *The Water-Babies* stand out as her finest work, both in her mind and the mind of many critics alike. Darby lauds her *The Water-Babies* as "one of the most perfect combinations of pictures and prose in the Golden Age of book illustration" (40). Her sweet illustrations of Tom and his adventures won over the hearts of readers, and exemplify Smith's romantic style. Upon her death in 1935, she bequeathed all twelve original illustrations to the Cabinet of American Illustration, a special collection housing almost four thousand original drawings by the nation's most influential illustrators. The original illustrations now reside on the walls of the Library of Congress, with a permanent online exhibition.

Smith was not the first to illustrate the beloved Kingsley novel. Other illustrated editions prior to her 1916 Hodder and Stoughton publication included: J. Noel Paton's two illustrations for the 1863 first edition, Linley Sambourne's one hundred black and white illustrations for an 1885 edition, Warwick Goble's 1909 edition with thirty-two color plates, W. Heath Robinson's 1915 illustrated edition with eight color plates, and Mabel Lucie Attwell's edition, also from 1915, with twelve color plates.

The illustrations from these editions range in style, detail, and tone. Paton and Sambourne's illustrations appear too formal and dated in style, compared with the later

editions, and they, therefore, serve as good reminders of the rapidly changing world of illustration in terms of aesthetics (figs. 11-13). In particular, they show the shift from children-as-adults, where the children in these illustrations seems older and more mature than their years, to the view of children-as-children, evidenced by later drawings. They also demonstrate the shift from black-and-white to full color illustrations, made possible by more cost-effective technological advancements. All of the editions after these two have full-color plates with a more whimsical and youthful quality. Goble and Robinson, two male illustrators, created more modern designs (figs. 14-17). Their illustrations contain numerous Art Deco motifs and recall more modernist sensibilities. Attwell's illustrations, on the other hand, are reminiscent of Rosie O'Neill's Kewpies and show a more exaggerated and comic form of Tom and his fellow water babies (fig. 18). Despite these varying styles and range of attractive illustrations, the majority of critics and collectors consider Smith's illustrated edition to be the most memorable and charming of the group.

Part of the appeal of Smith's illustrations include the physical and lovingly portrayed relationships between Tom and the other characters, particularly female characters. Her illustration depicting Tom and Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby, "the loveliest fairy in the world" and the embodiment of the Golden Rule, emphasizes this emotional connection (fig. 20) (153). Here, a small Tom snuggles against the chest of the moral fairy, her hands holding him carefully, and her face serene. In the novel, the other



Fig. 11. Frontispiece *The Water-Babies* (1863). J. Noel Paton.

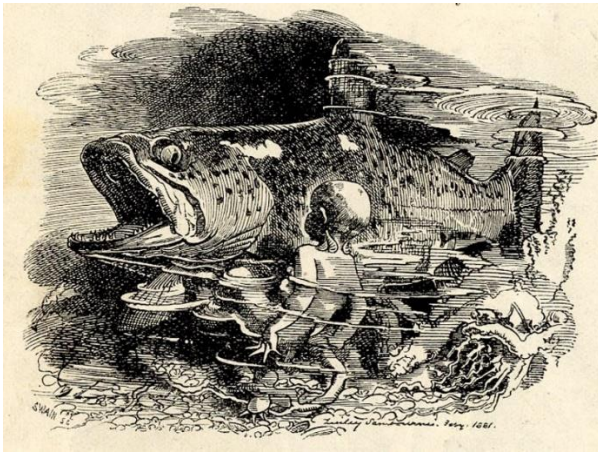


Fig. 12. Illustration from *The Water-Babies* (1885). Linley Sambourne.



Fig. 13. Illustration from *The Water-Babies* (1885). Linley Sambourne.

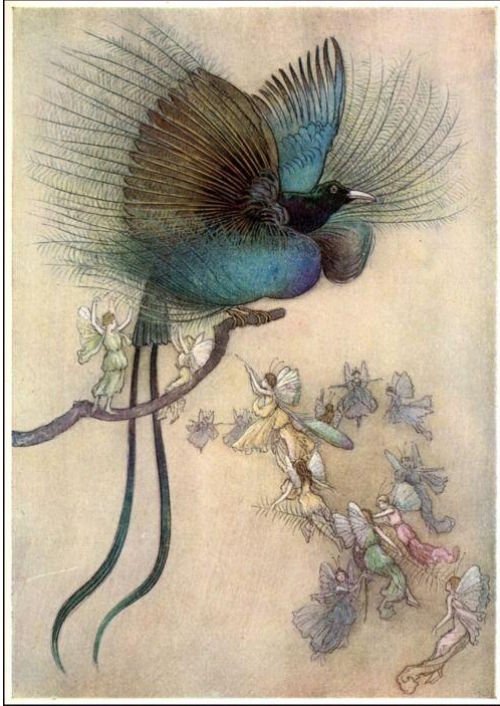


Fig. 14. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1909). Warwick Goble.



Fig. 15. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1909). Warwick Goble.

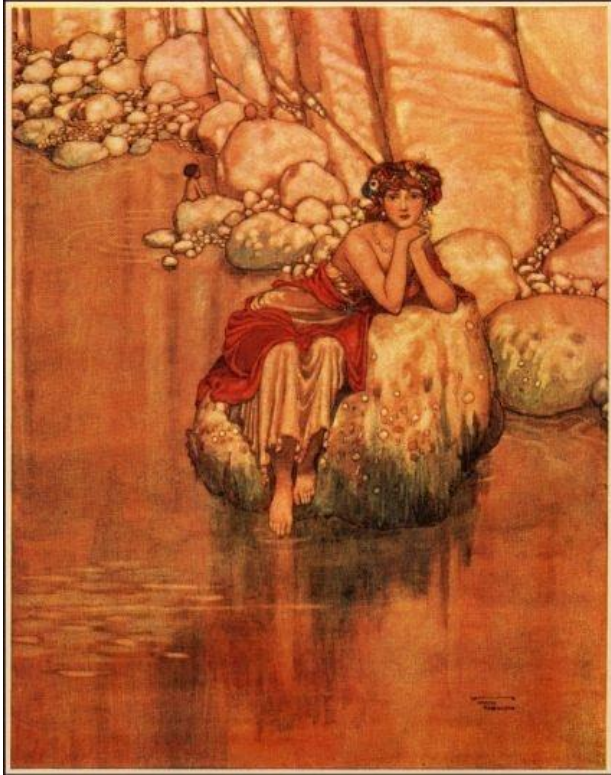


Fig. 16. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1915). W. Heath Robinson.



Fig. 17. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1915). W. Heath Robinson.

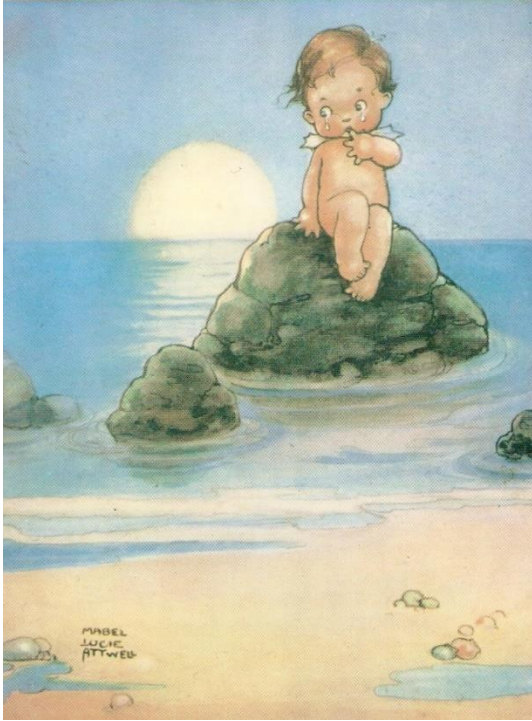


Fig. 18. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1915). Mabel Lucie Attwell.

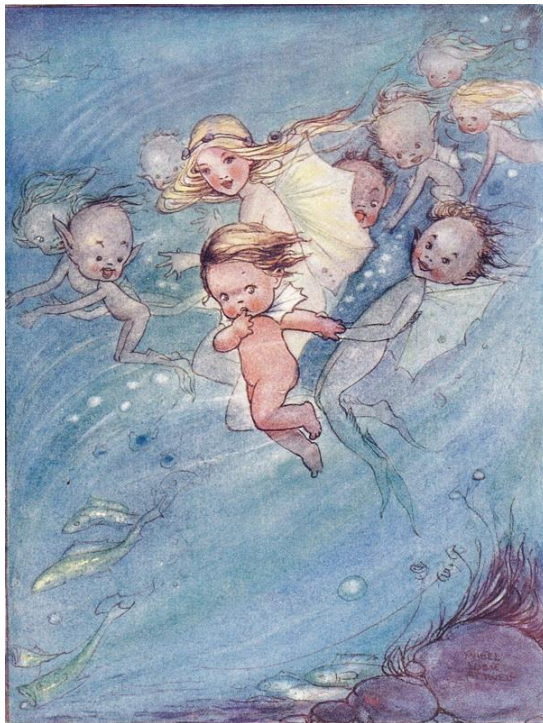


Fig. 19. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1915). Mabel Lucie Attwell.

water babies explain that Tom never had a mother, to which Mrs.

Doasyouwouldbedoneby replies, “Then I will be his mother, and he shall have the very best place” (161). Their body language simulates the same loving relationship between mother and child evident in so many of Smith’s illustrations. Even Mrs.

Bedonebyasyoudid, who proclaims “I am the ugliest fairy in the world; and I shall be, till people behave themselves as they ought to do,” is afforded an illustration in which she places a hard pebble into Tom’s mouth instead of a lollipop in return for his putting pebbles into the mouths of poor sea anemones (fig. 21) (153). But this moment has a gentleness to it that replaces the retribution. In addition to the smiling water baby at the bottom of the plate gazing at the viewer, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid’s placement of the pebble seems tender and her “ugly” façade kind.

Perhaps the best illustration reflecting this physical tenderness is Smith’s portrayal of Tom and the little girl water baby meeting after his solitary journey to become a water baby (fig. 22). The lonely Tom is thrilled to find another water baby like himself: “And it ran to Tom, and Tom ran to it, and they hugged and kissed each other for ever so long, they did not know why. But they did not want any introductions there under the water” (138). Smith interprets this moment with the same characteristic tenderness of her other illustrations, both in this book and in her broader oeuvre. Like her willingness to illustrate an unconventional scene from Alcott’s *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, so here is Smith the only illustrator inclined to depict this particular moment. The shocked expression of the fish indicates the proper surprised response to two young people kissing, but, at the same time, their mutual affection and youthful happiness outweighs

impropriety. And, after all, they are water babies in an innocent, fantasy world and not “real” children.

Like the idealized and unrealistic Phronsie Pepper in Sidney’s texts, Smith’s children were both charming, picturesque and romantic. As Carter notes, “her sympathy for children was more aesthetic than practical” and “removed from domestic reality” (88, 91). Schnessel agrees: “Some critics have noted that Smith was too sentimental. Her children are too innocent, too adorable to be real. Only a mother can verify or deny the truth of her images. Her popularity as an illustrator of over 35 children’s books and scores of magazine covers is perhaps testament enough to her effectiveness and to the truth in her work” (23). But perhaps the “truth” is what her work is lacking, and therefore what becomes so appealing about her images. Her children are not like “real” children, as the Romantic child within many Golden Age texts was similarly not a realistic portrayal. They are not dirty, messy, loud and squirming. In her later years, the financially-secure Smith began painting portraits of the children of prominent Philadelphia families, although she found the process frustrating without her use of photography due to rowdy (and realistic) children. She continued portrait work for the remainder of her career, however, as limited-edition prints of her illustrations sold and book royalties continued.

By the end of the nineteenth century, 106 artists were included in the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame, but only nine women were among those honored. Smith, Oakley and Green were among those nine women. Evidently the values of communal artistic womanhood extended beyond camaraderie and financial support. They helped sustain and bolster successful careers. Despite this illustrious career, Smith’s illustrations of children for children’s books and family magazines were, like illustrations in general,

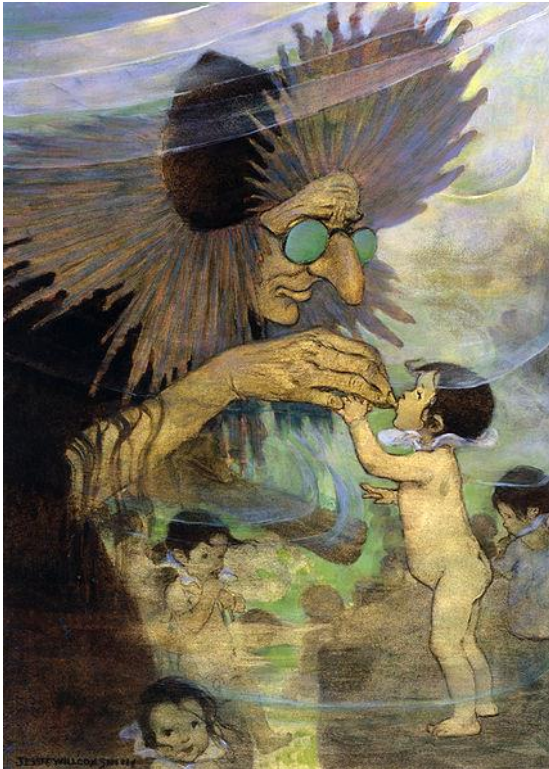


Fig. 20. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1916). Jessie Willcox Smith.

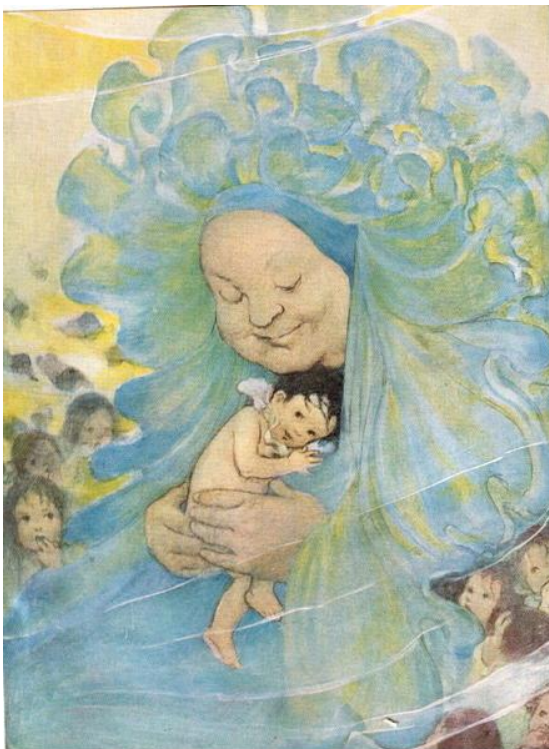


Fig. 21. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1916). Jessie Willcox Smith.

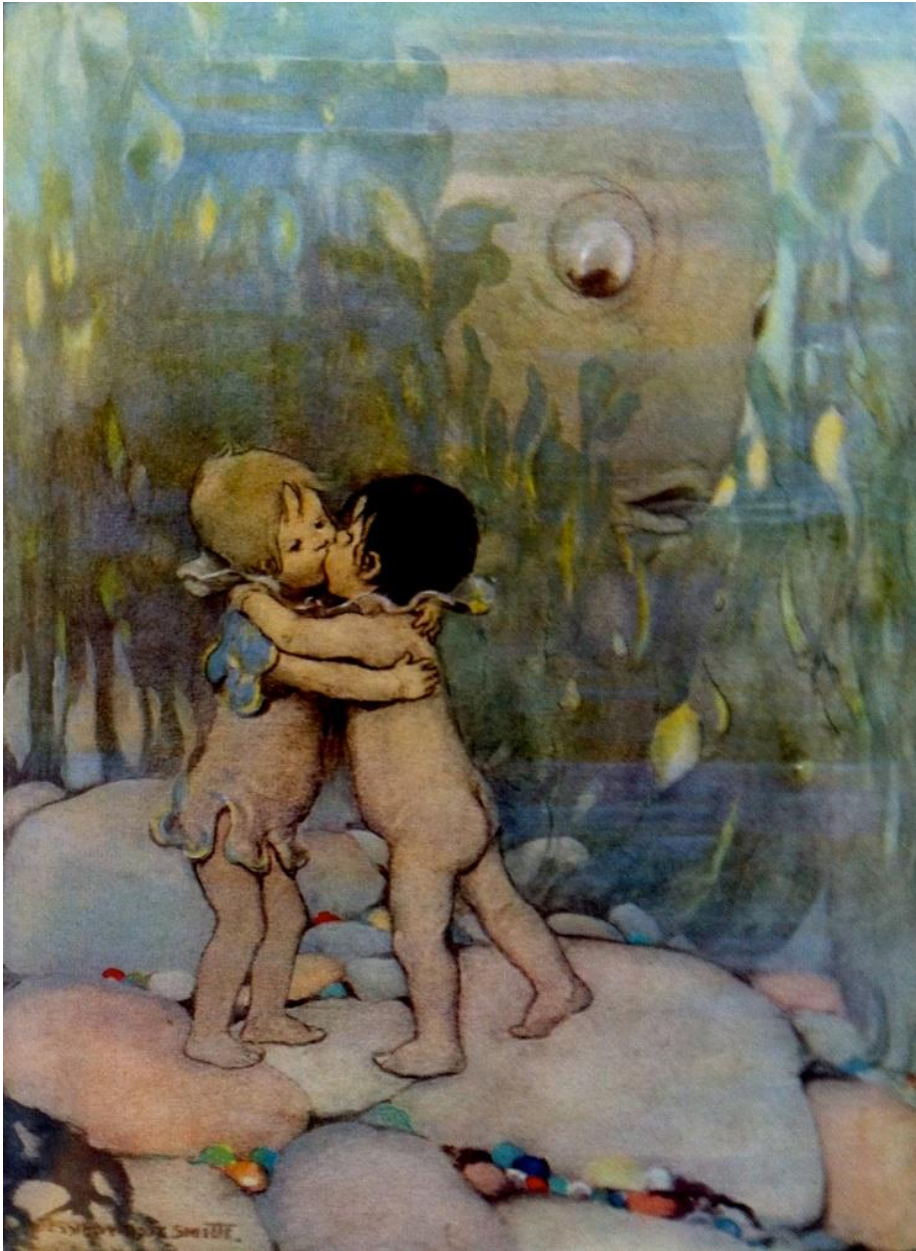


Fig. 22. Color-plate from *The Water-Babies* (1916). Jessie Willcox Smith.

still considered to be less refined, less formal, and less deserving of critical and scholarly attention than the “fine arts.”

In response to this chasm between mass-culture artistry and the “real” art world, the art critic Rilla Evelyn Jackman wrote in *American Arts* in 1929: “In the peculiar place which Miss Smith holds in the art world she is quite as worthy of our interest as are many of the artists who paint easel pictures for our great exhibitions or murals for our public buildings. In fact, she, more than most of them, is bringing art to the people. We are proud of the eagle, and fond of the warbler, but even for them we would not give up the robin and the bluebird” (qtd in Schnessel 195). Jackman champions for Smith and her accessible artistic work, reminding art critics and collectors that artists like Smith bring “art to the people” through their popular, and reproduced, works. Jackman also extends the argument of whether the public at large needs to have a certain refinement of taste to enjoy art, or that art needs only to be accessible to be enjoyed by the public, regardless of education in the arts themselves. But, most importantly, Jackman argues that the art world needs to resist the urge to elevate the museum-worthy fine arts while dismissing illustrations and art forms embedded in popular culture. The works of the “robin and the bluebird” as just as integral, if not more so, to the art industry. And the enduring legacy of Smith’s works, evidenced by reprintings of her illustrated children’s books available in bookstores nation-wide to prints and products of her illustrations sold frequently all over the web, illustrate the longevity possible for a women illustrator of Golden Age children’s literature.

CONCLUSION

Saying Goodbye to the Golden Age

Having made strides in terms of market share, a separate audience, and imaginative content during the Golden Age, children's literature paved its way forward in the American literary marketplace. Publishers and editors capitalize on the swiftly growing juvenile market. Young readers actively seek out and respond to books written just for them. Women pursue financial and professional success as writers of and illustrators for children's literature. Classic titles from this period – *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Water-Babies*, *Little Women*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Treasure Island*, and others – are continually republished in new, often more illustrated, editions. In short, children's literature had solidified into a formidable force in the literary, educational, and domestic spheres by the end of the Golden Age.

For most scholars, A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928) mark the end of this period of children's literature, when the fantasy element in children's books seems to wane after their publication. The Pooh books exemplify how children's texts from this Golden Age have helped shape our attitudes about what childhood is and what literature best fits child readers. In *Teller of Tales*, Roger Lancelyn Green summarizes this shift: "Suddenly children were no longer being written down to anymore – they were being written up: you were enjoying spring in its own right and for itself, no looking on it anxiously as a prelude to summer" (205).²⁵ As a distinct market, children's literature allows authors to continue to write entertaining, whimsical books aimed at a young reader. As Winnie-the-Pooh remarks, "I *like* talking to

²⁵ Green specifically refers to Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age* (1895) in this quotation, but the sentiment refers to a larger discussion of Golden Age children's literature and the end of the Golden Age itself.

Rabbit. He talks about sensible things. He doesn't use long, difficult words, like Owl. He uses short, easy words like 'What about lunch?'" (Milne 222). Milne's stories engage children, Paul Wake argues, "*precisely* because they are texts for and about children" (26). Children, like Pooh, enjoy, and relate to, the simple words and rhymes throughout the charming narrative of the Hundred Acre Wood.

At the same time, *Winnie-the-Pooh* enchants adult readers. The humor in the texts is universal in that both children and adults delight in its appeal. In her analysis of the more complex humor and allusions found in the books, Ellen Tremper notes: "They [Winnie-the-Pooh stories] are filled, that is, with witty work play and ironic repartee way over a child's head. So while the popularity of these stories may well rest on children's primitive identification with archetypal figures and situations, their high comedy is grownup business, of value to their writer and readers, not to their listening audience" (33). Furthermore, writers have repurposed Pooh and his stories in books for adult audiences. Frederick Crews reworks the novels in his critical theory parodies for adults, *The Pooh Perplex* (1963) and *Postmodern Pooh* (2001). Benjamin Hoff introduces adults to Taoism through the lens of Milne's characters in *The Tao of Pooh* (1982) and *The Te of Piglet* (1992). This complicates the reading of books for children being written specifically for, and about, children. Milne's stories, like many of the classics from the Golden Age, charm both child and adult audiences.

Books for children and books for adults are not mutually-exclusive, and that is the beauty of contemporary criticism about Golden Age classics, *Winnie-the-Pooh* included. Niall Nance-Carroll argues against the reading that Milne's books are not "really" for children, since the literary complexity is beyond the understanding of a child audience. In

fact, she demonstrates that the narrative structure, humor, and other so-called complexities are precisely what makes the Pooh stories universal, as “the tangled narrative paths of the Pooh stories are not flaws but features, central to the stories’ lasting appeal for children as well as for adults” (63). Nance-Carroll alludes to an important view of modern childhood: children are capable of understanding and appreciating complexity. Multiple layers, viewpoints, and other nuanced intricacies found in many of these children’s classics prove the integral mission of children’s literature scholars and critics, namely to establish the view that books for children should be taken seriously, not only because they appeal to adults, but because they appeal to children.

The final chapter of *The House at Pooh Corner* indicates a sorrowful end to childhood’s enchantment, as Christopher Robin says farewell to the Hundred Acre Wood to attend school and, presumably, to do the most dreaded affair: grow up. The ending, however, may not be quite as sad after all. Christopher Robin may grow up, but that does not mean that his love for things of childhood, or his appreciation for children’s stories, must diminish. As the final line states: “But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the Forest, a little boy and his Bear will always be playing” (344). Perhaps Milne, and other Golden Age authors, ask us to continue to enjoy their works, for both their humor and their complexity, long after are no longer child readers.

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